
Making invisible forces visible. Managing employees' values and attitudes through transient emotions

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Abstract: This paper investigates managerial tactics of visualisation when a need to know and manage employees' values and attitudes is expressed. Using the Danish public school as a case study, we explore how school managers use teachers' emotions to render visible presumably invisible information about their 'true' attitudes and values. The paper draws on theories of affect as well as actor-network theory to analyse three incidents where managers turn their interpretations of teachers' emotions into such information. These incidents suggest that the efforts to render employees' attitudes and values visible install a normative emotional scale where an ideal employee displays emotional investment and self-control. This has implications, not only for employees who are expected to exhibit the 'right' emotions, but also for management, which comes to depend on transient emotions and co-presence in situations that cannot be planned for.

Keywords: management; emotions; visualisation; affect; actor-network theory; values; attitudes; public schools.

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1 Introduction

"You cannot work with development without rendering the invisible visible in the sense of finding the forces that create the situation. These will often be attitudes and values that in themselves are invisible." (Municipality of Odense, 2007, p.22)¹

This paper addresses a managerial challenge of visibility that emerges when management is perceived to be dependent on employees' invisible attitudes and values, as illustrated by the quote above. Thematising employees' attitudes and values in such a manner is related to an extensive set of vocabularies and practices in which the self and self-development of employees have become central topics of management. As scholars have argued, human subjects are exhorted to expand and intensify their contribution as selves (as 'human resources') in order to enhance production and maximise value, thus leading the organisation to success (Costea et al., 2008, 2012; Murtola and Fleming, 2011).

This means that increasingly more of the employee self becomes relevant to management (Andersen and Born, 2007; Hancock and Tyler, 2009; Andersen, 2007) and employees are encouraged to think, feel and act in ways that contribute to their improvement and thereby anticipate and contribute to the various and changing needs of the organisation (Andersen, 2012; Lopdrup-Hjorth et al., 2011, p.97). An implication is that work has become a central therapeutic stage set for engineering and managing emotions, well-being and even 'happiness' (Cederström, 2011). As Costea et al. (2007) have phrased it, organisations are increasingly places where "people work more on themselves than they do on work" (Costea et al., 2007, p.153).

Management, then, comes to entail efforts to cultivate personal commitment, informal culture, energy and processes of self-development as labour – as a contribution to the organisation and its productivity. This means that the commitment of employees to reflect upon possibilities of their personal development becomes a highly relevant issue of managerial inquiry. This can be understood in relation to the post-modern control problem directed towards a 'normative control', i.e., managing employees' cognitive efforts rather than the bureaucracy's rule-based civil servant (Kunda, 2006 [1992]; du Gay, 2000). As scholars have argued, a plethora of new techniques and technologies of visualisation towards that end has emerged (e.g., Power, 1997; Costea et al., 2008; Fleming and Sturdy, 2011). However, in our case study we found that the challenge of rendering visible employees' emotional investment also co-produced managerial ignorance, ambivalence and powerlessness. For this reason, we talk about *managerial tactics* of visualisation rather than techniques, as they proved difficult to turn into generic procedures.

While much critical management literature has explored to what extent the increasing intertwining of work and the employee self manipulates and capitalises the private self of the employee (e.g., Ray, 1986; Kunda, 2006), what we found in our empirical studies of the Danish school system (will be introduced later) was not so much issues of such

exploitation. Instead, we saw how the managers' interest in employees' attitudes and their willingness to work with them produced managerial ambivalences and challenges that cannot be reduced to such a diagnosis. Neither was it purely the therapeutic fostering of the 'right' emotions. Instead, emotions played a rather different role, related to rendering 'invisible forces' visible. Thus, we will explore managerial tactics of visualising 'invisible forces' that emerge when management is deemed contingent upon employees' presumably invisible attitudes and values. Emotions, we argue, become important in assessing the *authenticity* of employees' verbally expressed values and attitudes (Andersen, 2012). How can the managerial gaze know whether they see their employees' real, genuine and authentic selves?

Using case studies from the Danish public school system, this paper explores managerial efforts to make visible 'invisible forces' deemed to be contained within the subject. As the introductory quote indicates, the Danish municipality of Odense expects its school managers² to make visible the personal attitudes and values of their employees. They are furthermore expected to encourage their reflection on how these inform choices and behaviour, in order to make them visible to both management and the employees. The citation introduces two motifs that we will pursue throughout the paper. Firstly, how the invisible is described as something, which on the one hand is elusive and may escape a managerial gaze, but on the other hand, is nonetheless powerful, maintaining the capability of producing and even determining social situations. Secondly, how this invariably becomes an attempt to name and capture the invisible as personal attitudes and values.

The paper explores how, in the case of Danish public education, employees' hidden attitudes are made visible not only with the aim of utilising them but also to reveal and prevent their precarious influence on the organisation. We will pursue how invisible atmospheres and affects are captured and named as individual emotions and attitudes. In our analysis, we argue that one effect of this is how employee emotions displayed during intense interactions become Archimedean points for managerial observations of the mind-sets of employees. This gives management of invisibility both a spatial and affective dimension.

We aim to illustrate how the problem of rendering invisible attitudes and values visible is reproduced across hierarchical levels in the school system. We use both empirical examples from assessment meetings between local authorities such as Odense Municipality and school managers as well as examples of how school managers engage in teacher-pupil conflicts. In both instances, we argue that intense emotions expressed during these interactions become a medium for revealing authentic forces within the employee, bringing them in to the open. The paper concludes with a discussion of how these tactics of visualisation constitute contrasts, categories and scales: a sort of 'economy of emotions'. We argue that when management directs its attention to the emotions displayed rather than the words uttered by the employees, emotions are considered more genuine indicators of employees' attitudes than their verbal accounts.

On a reflexive note, when the object of management is 'invisible forces', not only managers are confronted with the need to capture and 'feel' what is invisible. This problem is also transposed onto us as researchers who are to make assessments about elusive empirical 'objects', such as emotions and intensities. This paper thus also instantiates its own performance, parallel to those of the management practices we analyse, of rendering the invisible visible. We begin the paper with a reflection on this challenge through theories of affect and intensities (Clough, 2007; Massumi, 2002;

Thrift, 2008) and actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), from which we draw key concepts for analysing the management of employees' invisible attitudes and values. This is followed by a short introduction to the methods and empirical material forming the backdrop of the study along with a background section to introduce how employees' selves are thematised in education.

2 The affective turn: theorising what cannot be observed

To analyse how managers make visible employees' attitudes and values, deemed by management communication to be constitutive 'invisible forces' hidden within the subject, we suggest a rather different ontology than that of emotions as a property of the human subject *sui generis*. We draw our inspiration from post-structuralism's so-called 'decentering' of the subject, where instead of being the source of agency, it is theorised as a 'nodal point' through which networks of relations (Latour, 2005), power-knowledge (Foucault, 2000) and communication (Luhmann, 1995) flow and may come to a halt (Lee and Brown, 2002). This has implications for the status of 'emotions' in our analyses: rather than emerging from a bounded subject, emotions (or affect, as we theorise such pre-individual forces) circulate in a wide range of distributions, including those of communication, materiality, and spatiality. To conceptualise this, we will in the following present key concepts from theories of 'affect' and 'materiality'. Moreover, we reflexively consider how such theorising poses us with challenges somewhat similar to those of the managers we study: namely, that of making interpretations of phenomena that are theorised as invisible.

Over the last decade, an attention to emotions and affect has become widespread through what has been labelled 'the affective turn' (Clough, 2008; Massumi, 2002; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010). This 'turn' is often presented as an attempt to 'progress' beyond linguistic/cultural theory by theorising how not only discourse and language but also 'affects' are constitutive of the social, including the subject (Clough, 2007, 2008; Massumi, 2002). Following philosopher Massumi (2002), who draws his inspiration from French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, affect can broadly be understood as atmosphere, sensations and feelings. Affect is non- or pre-individual and is not something someone can 'be' or 'possess'. Instead, it unfolds and seizes subjects and relations by affecting, moving and touching them. Paraphrasing Massumi, Patricia Clough argues that affect can be defined in terms of "bodily responses, autonomic responses, which are in-excess of conscious states of perception and point instead to a visceral preceding perception" (Clough, 2008, p.3). These theories of affect take as a starting point the decentered human subject. Thus, affect theory offers a particular ontology about how subjects, and their bodies, come into being in situations where they are moved and touched (see Clough, 2008; Thrift, 2008, p.239).

Scholars of affect theory distinguish between affect and emotion (see Massumi, 2002, p.27; Thrift, 2007, p.221). Affects are defined as non-human intensities and atmospheres; they unfold relationally and produce and transform bodies and subjects whereas emotions belong to subjects. With affect, the focus is not on the psychological individual as a container of particular emotions but rather on extra-subjective intensities that emerge between bodies and inhabit particular time-spaces (Massumi, 2002, p.27; Thrift, 2007, pp.221, 222). Affect is not a property of individuals but rather a property of singular events: "territories of becoming that produce new potentials" (Thrift, 2004, p.88).

The intensities that produce affect are autonomic. This means that they are “outside expectation and adaption, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration” (Massumi, 2002, p.25). In turn, Massumi defines emotion as a “subjective, sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point of defined as personal” (Massumi, 2002, p.28). While affects are pre-conscious intensities between bodies, emotions, in contrast, are defined as the selection and insertion of “intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions” (Massumi, 2002, p.28). In other words, emotions are affects that have become a conscious object of reflection, naming and attribution. Such processes of attribution, of course, are themselves constitutive of social relations, equal to the affective circuits constituting fields of emergence.

We draw on the distinction between ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’ to focus on how managers translate intensities and affect into interpretations of employees’ attitudes and emotions. Incidentally, parallel to Odense Municipality’s handbook, we theorise the social through conceptions of the ‘invisible’. Affects are defined by their pre-individual and extra-subjective properties; properties that are cancelled by our very attempt to grasp them, reflect on their meaning, and describe them. As such, we cannot ‘observe’ affect, only interpret how management makes interpretations of employees’ emotional investment and self-control. We do not claim to be able to observe extra-subjective affects. Rather, we use the vocabulary of affect to have a concept of a de-centred human subject, constituted by affective forces, which goes through processes of attribution. Our ambition narrows down to analysing the managerial attempts to harvest information about employees’ cognitive investments from affective and intense interactions. In that respect, just like management ‘seizes’, ‘freezes’, and ‘reduces’ complex affective forces to narratives about their employees, so do we when we interpret management’s assessments. While this involves a reflexive levelling of our respective endeavours and premises for undertaking them (cf. Woolgar, 1988), it does not implicate a paralysis of analysis (Ratner, 2012). Like management, we are to make assessments on imperfect grounds, a premise for any statement in and of the world.

Practically, we turn our attention to “moments of indeterminacy, undecideability and ambivalence” (Thrift, 2004, p.82) in order to grasp how the managerial ‘feel’ of singular events become constitutive in management’s efforts to make visible (and thus, fixate) employees’ true attitudes through their emotions. Whereas affect theory is difficult to operationalise for empirical analysis, given how affect is always-already outside of conscious perception, actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), or ANT, lends itself rather generously to such endeavour. While mostly renowned for analyses of science and technology with their digital, steely and machinist infrastructures, recent developments usually referred to as ‘post-ANT’ (Gad and Bruun Jensen, 2010; Law and Hassard, 1999) take ANT in new empirical directions, including that of emotions and subjectivity (e.g., Despret, 2004; Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Lee and Brown, 2002). We do not claim a perfect epistemological congruence between these ANT-inspired discussions and the theories of affect. There are important differences, namely with regards to the status of vitalism in theories of affect and their prioritisation of affect as *the* constitutive force. Our combination of affect theory with actor-network theory should be read as a minimum association, translating both ANT and affect theory in that process (insofar as it is possible to speak of these as singular and homogeneous theories).

ANT offers an ontologically relativistic vocabulary for tracing the assemblage of human and non-human entities that make up ‘the social’. Central is its principle of generalised symmetry (using the same vocabulary for explaining all phenomena) and free

association (abandonment of distinctions between the natural and the social) (Callon, 1986). ANT thus does not assign humans and non-humans a-priori asymmetric characteristics, such as human intention or material causality. Instead, the purpose is to describe how humans and artefacts construct each other through their relations in heterogeneous assemblages or networks (Latour, 2005, p.5). This entails a minimum concept of agency where an entity is only an *actant* if it influences the assemblage, or is seen to influence it (Latour, 2005, p.63). The implication for our analyses is that many different entities help enact emotions as something belonging to persons, on which basis management evaluate employees' self-management. As the analyses will show, such assessments do not only take place through communication but are contingent upon materiality and spatiality. More specifically, with the managerial attunement to intense situations, co-presence becomes a condition for managerial assessments.

We have conducted ethnographic observations at four Danish schools that educate pupils between the ages of 5 to 15. We observed both interactions between local authorities (public servants from municipalities) and school managers (the first analysis), focusing on the perspective of the local authorities. The second and third examples follow school managers turning employees' emotions, expressed during conflicts with pupils, into information about their attitudes and values. One methodological strategy for collecting data was to observe a year's cycle of interactions between the municipality and schools, such as supervision and meetings on information and assessment. Another was to 'shadow' school managers, totalling 40 days of observation over a period of six months to observe the many places of (dis)organising (Czarniawska, 2008). In addition to these field observations, 10 semi-structured interviews with school managers, eight with local authorities and six with union representatives and other teacher representatives form the background of the study.

3 Invisible forces in the Danish Public School

In the case of the Danish Public School, a demand for self-reflective employees is partly produced by pedagogical ideals that gained popularity in Denmark throughout the 2000s. In particular, 'inclusive' pedagogies turn teachers' attitudes and values into objects of management. Roughly speaking, these pedagogies assume that the teacher's fundamental values and attitudes towards pupils influence the pupils' possibilities for learning and participating (e.g., Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Values and attitudes then emerge as entities that managers and teachers should turn into objects of conscious reflection and – if necessary – change. Such management of teachers' so-called invisible forces often involve reflection processes where teachers are encouraged to question their assumptions and a significant amount of teacher training focuses on the teachers' ability to reflect, maintain a positive attitude and think in possibilities rather than limitations (Ratner, 2012).

Under the slogan of making teachers and managers "researchers of their own practice" (Local Government Denmark, 1998), a range of methods and techniques have spread throughout the school sector with the purpose of engaging teachers and managers in processes of monitoring and self-reflection (Pors, 2011; Ratner, 2012). The trope of 'reflective practitioners' (Schön, 1991 [1983]) is considered a particularly important means for managing 'dangerous' values or attitudes (Erlandson, 2005; Fendler, 2003; Pors, 2009; Ratner, 2012; Wright, 2004).

Entailed in this idea is also the concern that what is not made visible and is outside the reach of reflection processes poses an obstacle, or even a threat, to a desired change (Pors, 2011; Ratner, 2012). This is exemplified in a citation from a municipal management handbook:

“[we need to] consciously take a stand towards the here and now situation and its causes. This is necessary because our actions are determined by the foundational assumptions that we carry around. If these assumptions are not made visible and conscious, they will naturally also in the future influence the actions of individuals and groups and possibly counteract the wanted change.”
(Municipality of Odense, 2007, p.36)

Here, something invisible is seen to determine behaviour. The assumption is that it is necessary to make it visible in order to manage particular situations and organisational development. Invisibility is linked to the unconscious, and visibility to the conscious. Rendering something visible is thus a matter of getting the employees to relate themselves to their ‘foundational assumptions’ through reflection – and if necessary, work to change those fundamental assumptions. Reflection becomes a stage for the employees’ meeting with their unconscious attitudes and assumptions. Thus, one managerial tactic of making the invisible forces visible is to witness employees’ processes of reflection as this is where the hidden attitudes move from non-conscious to conscious.

These pedagogical ideas circulate widely in school settings, hence ‘equipping’ municipal consultants and school managers with particular tactics, along with installing new modes of accountability. The following three analyses will explore how emotions become a way to render visible personal attributes assumed to be hidden from surface interactions.

4 The double-sided mirror: intense atmospheres as signs of authentic self-investment

In interviews, public servants often describe their management of schools as a matter of engaging school managers in the portfolio of municipal school policy. Generally, they consider the managers’ honest and sincere engagement in implementation to be crucial in making teachers invest their energy in translating political goals into improved teaching practices. The annual assessment meetings we have observed take place at the schools. Often, the school management team has arranged a guided tour around the school before the meeting begins. They visit classrooms, the library, outdoor areas and hopefully in the process meet a lot of enthusiastic teachers and well-behaved children absorbed in book reading, studious pursuits (e.g., examining beetles) or group discussions. After such a tour, the attention is turned towards the school managers’ self reflections.

Making visible the self-reflection of the school manager is related to a fear of hypocrisy: that the everyday practice of the school does not correspond with accommodating talk from official meetings or with positive self descriptions in reports. The municipal public servants thus express interest in making managers realise their *true* practice; this self-knowledge is considered essential if the employee is to change behaviour. And the assessment meeting becomes an event in which the municipal public servants arrange for the school managers to meet themselves. A public servant explains this in an interview, using the metaphor of a mirror:

“I really think that the most dangerous pitfall is the case where one [a school manager] does not observe one’s own practice critically – where one does not direct the questions towards oneself. I think that often when you try to communicate your own values, then you talk about the ideal situations. You wish it were like that. So I am often in the position that – when I am in dialogue with the school managers, I have to hold up the mirror. If I listened to what they said, then we would talk about the wrong things. We have to talk about what they *do* and what comes out of it. And then they have to talk – actually to themselves. And I think that is a great challenge for people in the school world: to relate oneself to one’s own management practice.”

Performing ‘the mirror’ is here described as a means to twist the conversation from the desired conditions to actual conditions. The mirror becomes a way to confront the school managers with their actions. From the point of view of the public servant, the mirror enables school managers to meet a ‘truer’ version of themselves in need of more critical self-reflection.

The municipal consultants use the meetings to create an experience that enables them to determine whether, and how, the school managers take the initiative to *genuinely* engage in the facilitated processes, and – by means of reflection – change their own dispositions. Thus, the public servants are looking for signs that school managers are actually affected by meeting themselves in the mirror. An intense atmosphere can here be interpreted as indicative of genuine investment in school managers. In an interview, a consultant states: “These conversations are very difficult but when I leave”, the school managers say: “oh it was so nice that my school received your full attention for three hours. Thank you for being so well prepared”. Thus, consultants make success visible through the gratitude expressed by the school managers.

Also, the consultants emphasise that the conversations are difficult. They refer to a meeting that dealt with very personal issues, such as dysfunctional cooperation of the management team. That the meeting took place in an intense atmosphere is interpreted as an indication that the school managers will be affected, as they have been ‘moved’ emotionally. Affects that are interpreted as emotional investment and enthusiasm give the meeting an air of authenticity. This convinces the consultants of the effect of the meeting and of their influence on the school managers. The emotional investment displayed by school managers renders an otherwise perishable conversation durable.

We may describe the mirror as a double mirror. It not only allows the school management to gaze into their true selves, but also allows the public servants to catch a sight of their influence as they are reflected in the school managers’ emotions. Throughout the empirical findings, public servants see intense interactions as a sign of influence on the school managers’ self-management. Often statements like “we can never keep the time because we all get so absorbed by the intense conversations” or “afterwards [the school managers] say that it was hard but very good” are used to make such assessments. The intensity of interactions in the meeting becomes a way to assess whether the school managers just obligingly provide accommodating responses or truly engage themselves through self-confrontation, gratitude and struggle.

Using assessment meetings to make visible school managers’ ability and willingness to confront themselves and their management practice is not only a matter of getting them to provide a verbal report. Rather, public servants express their dependence upon creating or observing intense interactions, in which emotions can be felt and experienced, to interpret whether self-management is taking place and whether their engagement is genuine (see Staunæs, 2011). To manage school managers from a distance thus means to

turn oneself into a sensory apparatus for interpreting and generating affect in rare interactions. Public servants come to depend upon their abilities to register the resonance of the intensities that enable the extraction and translation of particular emotions, attitudes and atmospheres. Moreover, the study of assessment meetings suggests that the art of translating affects into management information is also an art of reading certain signs. If meetings can be interpreted as difficult, emotional and enthralling, it can be concluded that school managers are authentic in their self-investment.

5 Conflicts at the school: leaky classrooms and uncomfortable emotions

When it comes to the relationship between school managers and teachers, they conduct their everyday interactions at the same location, which makes both the management more all-encompassing but, as the analysis will illustrate, also gives it a rather arbitrary character. At several occasions during fieldwork, the school managers at the schools emphasised that it is not sufficient to register teachers' accounts of their attitudes and values. As was the case with the municipal consultants, this is generally seen as entailing the risk of hypocrisy, for example with teachers saying one thing and doing another, or simply mis-representation if teachers cannot formulate the precise reasons and effects of their choices. Instead, managers seek to obtain information about teachers' attitudes and values through other means: by observing their direct interactions with pupils and by talking to pupils about their experience with specific teachers.

In the following two examples, we show how school managers attribute particular (unwanted) attitudes to teachers through interpreting their emotions. Not surprisingly, this happens during situations of conflict that are intense and often experienced as overstepping boundaries set by the teachers. Here, it proves difficult for teachers to control their emotions, which can result in behaviour that school managers recognise as exposing the wrong, non-appreciative values, risking marginalising pupils. We have two such situations: one where the school manager observes a conflict in a hallway connecting the staff room to management office. The other is when a teacher asks for the school manager's help inside the classroom to solve a conflict.

6 The school hallway: a spectacle of a teacher controlling her invisible forces

Outside the school manager's office is a small hallway. It provides a passage to the classroom corridors, the staff room, toilets, and a staff working space with computers and a copy machine. There is a couch, table and three chairs. Sometimes parents wait there for a meeting with a school manager. Sometimes teachers pause and talk as they bump into one another on the way to somewhere else. Usually two to four pupils (mainly boys) hang around on the couch, even if it is during class time. They laugh, sob, do homework at the table or fool around. For different reasons, they have been excluded from the teaching space, often due to conflicts with the teacher or with another pupil. When the class is over, the teachers come down to the staff room and talk to the pupils to resolve the conflict. This is where the teacher's self-conduct becomes visible to the school manager. The passage of the hallway becomes a passage to what is otherwise invisible behind the classrooms' closed doors. As the following description will show, such

conflicts constitute an opportunity for the school managers to observe how teachers cope in emotionally tense situations.

“A boy sits on the couch outside the school manager’s office. The school manager asks him in a friendly manner why he is not in class and the boy explains that he had a conflict with his teacher. During recess, the teacher comes down to talk to the boy, the school manager observing them from a short distance. The situation is very tense. The boy stands up and shouts and the teacher is emotionally touched as well. Her voice is in a very high pitch, her body is tense and she moves closer to the boy as her voice rises. It is difficult for her to stay calm and she asks the boy to shut up, that he did not listen in class and that he does not listen now. She calls him ‘impossible’ and for a moment, the conflict looks deadlocked. However, within a few minutes they find a compromise, agreeing that both felt that the other was unfair. Afterwards, in the office, the school manager explains that it was a very interesting incident. ‘We have a conflict between a teacher and a pupil. In the beginning, the teacher is very agitated and speaks to the boy in a boundary exceeding way. But then she enters into a dialogue and begins to see the situation from his perspective. And in the end, everything is solved’.” (Excerpt from field notes 2009)

For the school manager, two important things take place. First, the conflict is solved. More importantly, he can observe how the teacher changed her conduct (for the better) during the conflict without his help. He interprets that she took control of her emotions – which did not reflect the value of taking the pupil’s perspective – and then took control of her own feelings of anger. The school manager looks for appreciation and a shifting of perspective from the teacher’s point of view. The manager’s focus is in other words on the teacher’s self-conduct rather than the (mis)behaviour of the pupil. The conflict provides an opportunity to view the teachers’ ability to react on her own ‘invisible forces’, namely her initial negative attitude (and associated emotions) that escalated the situation.

Teachers’ attitudes to pupils and control of emotions become visible in the tense interactions, like the one just described, where they are put at stake. Learning about these is enabled by the transport of conflicts from the classroom to the hallway. It is a place for overflowing (Callon, 1999) of relationships, emotions and attitudes that are otherwise relegated to the somewhat isolated space of the classroom. The hallway becomes a location for producing knowledge about teacher-pupil relations that are otherwise outside the management’s spectrum of vision. Attracted by the intensity of the situation, the school manager gains a perspective into the processes of emotional self-management of the teacher. Moreover, the spectacle provides an occasion for the school manager to make management decisions. Shall he intervene and bring one of those involved to the office, thereby signalling that this conflict is not just a passing matter but one that requires his intervention? As the following example will illustrate, the assessment moreover enables the distribution of responsibility and guilt.

7 Event re-engineering: retrospective ordering from a meeting

The next example is a meeting between the management team and the union representatives as they discuss an episode involving a teacher and a seventh grade class. Upon arriving to class, the teacher found a big drawing (A1 paper size) full of statements

in crude writing, such as “*You are evil*” and “*we want you to leave*”. The teacher demanded to know who did the drawing and, while interrogating the students, discovered two gobs of spittle on her pants. Some of the children had spat on her, but she did not know who. She then fetched a school manager and they talked to the class about it during recess. Later that day, the episode is discussed in a meeting

“School manager (M): I went to talk to the class afterwards with Christina. I used the whole recess to talk to the class and I feel that I got somewhere by acknowledging what they had to say. They admitted who had written the statements on the drawing and apologised. However, Christina did not hear anything. She only focused on the gobs of spittle. She did not listen at all, she did not hear their apologies. She kept asking who it was, looking for someone to blame, instead of acknowledging how far we already had come with the drawing. [...] It is important to divide the episode into two parts. First, there was the drawing. Second, there were the gobs of spittle. And they claim that they did not spit. But they admitted to have made the drawing and apologised. But Christina was so freaked out that she didn’t react on the opening the children provided.

Union representative (UR): But is there an opening in this situation?

M: Yes. But she cannot isolate the two situations.

UR: It must be really difficult to convince her to go into that class again.”
(Excerpt from field notes 2009)

At the management meeting, the drawing and spittle event can be divided in two (pairing drawing with the resolution and spittle with the conflict), which creates an opportunity (“I feel that I got somewhere”), signifying the pupils as willing to cooperate while the teacher emerges as being too preoccupied with her emotions to seize the opportunity. This assessment brings to light the absence of the teacher’s account of what happened; her interpretation is dismissed as a result of being ‘freaked out’. This generates an understanding that the teacher was not allowed to react emotionally to the situation. The union representative tries to take seriously her emotions vis-a-vis the situation. He worries about her well-being: is there an opening? Dividing the event in two and excluding the teacher’s experience enables the management team to find new solutions; in this case finding a different teacher for the class solved the problem.

In the office it is possible to generate such realities. The office is detached from the intense situation and, as a narrative, the conflict can be ordered in a way that allows for the ideal of an appreciative teacher to persist; if only the teacher had been more appreciative of the pupils’ apology, the conflict could have been solved. However, reverting to Massumi, one could also say that the drawing is not the same kind of actant in the classroom and the office. Talking about the movement of a successfully shot arrow he says: “when it comes to a stop in the target, it will have undergone a qualitative change. It will not just be an arrow. It will have been a successfully shot arrow” (Massumi, 2002, p.7). In the context of the classroom, the drawing was different. It was entangled in fear, hate, ambiguity, noise and gobbles of spit. Perhaps there was little opportunity for signification or interpreting the drawing in the manner that the office meeting allows for with its closed doors, choreography of talking, listening and blocking out disturbances from the outside. Intervening in the conflict enables the school manager to see the emotional state of the teacher. Later, in the office, the school manager can reengineer the conflict and distribute responsibilities and emotions. This creates a foundation for decisions about what to do with the class and the teacher.

8 Concluding discussion

With a point of departure in the case of Danish public education, we have explored how managers turn their gaze towards employees' values and attitudes, conceptualised as the 'invisible forces' of organisations. We have showed that interpreting strong emotions displayed during intense interactions become tactics for visualising mind-sets of employees. We have studied these managerial tactics in three different situations: at an annual assessment meeting between a municipality consultant and school managers, in the hallway of a school where a conflict between a teacher and a pupil unfolds, and in an office where another conflict between a teacher and pupil is handled separately. In all three examples, we have showed how interpreting affects as information about attitudes of employees constitute managerial tactics of visualisation as respectively the consultant and the managers interpret the emerging emotions as a sign of the Other's true attitudes and values.

To analyse these tactics of visualisation, we combined Massumi's theory of affect and ANT. Affect theory has helped us conceptualise how managers attribute emotions to employees and through this make the 'invisible forces' such as employees' attitudes and values visible. ANT has helped us trace the spatio-material assemblages allowing for this tactic of visualisation to take place. In this concluding discussion, we will first sum up how the managerial tactics of visualisation work in our three empirical examples, and, second, discuss their implications more generally.

As the first example shows, an intense atmosphere is connected to a positive judgement of individual commitment. When an assessment meeting can be sensed as difficult, emotional and enthralling, it can be concluded that school managers are genuine in their self-investment. Enthusiasm, struggle and gratitude become indicators that the self-exploration may continue outside the meetings. In other words, an intense atmosphere gives the meeting an air of authenticity that convinces the public servants of the lasting effect of the meeting and its supervision of the school managers. Thus, emotional investment displayed by school managers is interpreted as authenticity and the otherwise perishable conversation can be thought of by the consultants as durable. This also means that municipal management of schools comes to depend on establishing correlations between certain emotions and certain normative conclusions about their employees' mindsets.

At the school, conflicts between teachers and pupils provide occasions for local school management to sense the invisible attitudes and values of teachers. In the second example, the resolution of a conflict between teacher and pupil is interpreted as a sign of the successful self-control of negative emotions of the teacher, indicating that she contrary to the manager's initial impression inhabits the right attitude towards the pupil. The other example takes its point of departure in a class conflict. Intervening in the conflict enabled the school manager to see the emotional state of the teacher. Later in the office, the school manager could reengineer the conflict and distribute responsibilities from interpreting the teachers' emotions. He concluded that these were indicative of her lack of appreciation of the pupils, and this laid a foundation for decisions about what to do with the class and the teacher.

Across all three examples, employees' emotions become a medium to visualise such personal characteristics as they are deemed to signify the authenticity of employees' inner and unconscious values. By being present in and sensitive to intense interactions, consultants and managers can catch a sight of otherwise invisible forces. This involves

capturing affective forces and attaching them to individuals as emotions for which they can be held accountable. As the examples also show, this means that emotions are considered more genuine indicators of values and attitudes than employees' verbal accounts. Especially the final example shows how using emotions as authentic information risks excluding verbal versions of 'what happened' from the management decision, which in this case doubtlessly had consequences for the teacher in question. Thus, the tactics of visualisation also co-produce managerial ignorance as certain versions of reality are excluded when emotions become an emblem of truth.

The act of visualisation is never an innocent operation in the way it seizes and transforms its object to something that can be addressed by managerial decision-making. The tactics of visualisation analysed in this paper lead to the construction of a certain economy of emotions. As the examples have shown, not all emotions have the same worth. The ability to be absorbed in a conversation and engage in difficult self-encounters are deemed signifiers of genuine involvement and are therefore granted positivity. Emotions as fear or anger, on the other hand, are seen as lacking capacity to exercise control and are therefore granted a negative value. Using emotions to judge employees' 'true nature', then, installs a political affective economy where some emotions are considered higher and others lower (cf. Thrift, 2007, p.225). The distribution of these emotions takes place in intense events where management tries to 'sense' the affective frequencies in order to distribute them to subjects and make judgements. While low currency emotions such as anger and fear are used to make distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' teachers, they can potentially also, in the worst cases, result in the exclusion of the teacher through firing (Ratner, 2012). On the one hand, emotions become the manifestation of true engagement and true commitment. Only when the municipal public servants can sense the enthusiasm, struggle and passion of the school managers can they believe that engagement is sincere and true. On the other hand, the emotions granted a negative value become a symptom of a lack of the right values and attitudes.

The tactics of visualisation are exactly tactics and not strategies, in the sense that management cannot produce an overall strategic framework for rendering 'invisible forces' visible but tactically becomes parasitic on situations where intensity is produced. The expression of such emotions and generation of such atmospheres cannot be planned for (Ratner, 2009). Thus, management needs to be ready to sense this for instance when a conflict between teacher and pupil arises. As shown, tactics of visualising invisible forces enrol the management subject in affective ways. In the process of visualising managers turn themselves into a sensory apparatus for interpreting, generating and absorbing affect in intense interactions. Managers need to be able to seek out, or be drawn to, affective sites and signs. Management subjects come to depend upon their abilities to register the resonance of the intensities that enable the extraction and translation of particular emotions to personal attitudes and values.

This means that management comes to depend on spatial nearness and co-presence that cannot be planned for. Becoming dependent on such emotions and atmospheres gives the already elusive management object a rather random character. Managers have to be present when conflicts spill over to 'public' spaces from behind the closed door of a class room. In our empirical studies we did not only encounter incidents where managers used employees' expressed emotions to make assessments about their personalities. We also found the frustration that comes from the perception of being dependent on such emotional expressions: instances where managers felt that they were never at the right place at the right time to know what *really* had taken place; interactions where managers

were unsure about how to interpret the emotions; situations where the employees failed to express emotions, thus keeping the 'invisible forces' out of sight. In these situations, management appeared rather powerless. Managers were equipped with the knowledge that invisible attitudes and values can control the organisation, yet they experienced that these invisible forces often escaped them.

It seems the managerial sensitivity to invisible forces means that management becomes a matter of catching a sight of the unsaid, the unconscious and indeterminate atmospheres – phenomena that are outside verbal communication. Thus, the managerial reflection upon the limited amount of information available in verbal communication may mean that managers are haunted by a sneaky feeling that important information is always hiding beneath verbal accounts. The problem of making visible invisible forces leaves management simultaneously powerful and resolute, since it is informed by more and more information extracted from intensive interaction. It also makes them powerless and bewildered, since the extraction depends on what might be coincidental presence in situations where affects and intensity unfold.

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Notes

¹Translations of this quote, along all other empirical examples that follow, are always our own.

²Equivalent to the English headmaster or US principal.