The future of history
Posthumanist entrepreneurial storytelling, global warming, and global capitalism

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It is essential that we rethink the paradigmatic limitations of the field of organizational history (Foster, Mills & Weatherbee, 2014), in particular as related to Management and Organization Studies (cf. White, 2013) and Critical Management Studies (cf. Leca, Gond & Cruz, 2014; Reis, 2014). The purpose of this chapter is to rethink the relationship between history and storytelling by integrating an entrepreneurial posthumanist take on the relation between global warming and global capitalism. The line of logic is as such. Storytelling is an integrative complex relation of posthumanist concerns. Often this is glossed over by simply historicity. If we bring in the polyphonic storytelling of historicity, we see that global warming and global capitalism are fundamental to history. Entrepreneurial posthumanism provides hope for praxis storytelling historicity.

Storytelling is the interplay of grand narratives, webs of living stories, and their interrelationships: antenarratives. A grand narrative is a societal narrative with hegemonic power. That is a big story that pushes down the stories of others. Living stories are just that, stories that live. They are always situated in a particular place, space, and time and intra-act with one another. Antenarratives are before-narratives; they are bets on the future, existing both beneath and between the past and future. As pre-narratives, they well up into what is coming into being. As bets, they represent a multitude of potential futures that an individual may see. As the in-between, they link a story’s past and future. Experientially they soon become the past. Beneath they link together non-linear patterns. Antenarrative is a systemicity, a system that is never complete and always ongoing in its creation (Boje, 2006, 2008; Boje & Wakefield, 2011).

There are preliminary distinctions that we feel we should make before moving on. First history is not the same as the past. Instead history is an emergent work of social and/or scholarly creation. This scholarly creation can be historicity, an authenticated past that is in line with other authenticated histories. History also has the potential to be historicality, a step beyond authenticated history that brings in the micro-stories which may be repressed by authenticated pasts. At its core, this chapter relies on what Rosile et al. (2013), call a materialist, praxis, antenarrative storytelling paradigm.

History can be historicity, a rather shallow grand narrative that is linear, and overly simplistic (Weatherbee et al., 2012). Historicity creates the sense of a linear, illusory, end that somehow justifies the present means (Agamben, 2000). Modern forms of History have been coopted by grand narratives that pre-construct how we are allowed to make sense of that which is historicized.
Historicality, by contrast, addresses the complexity of history, in a polyphony of entangled contexts. This untangles the concept of history from the naïve conception of it as statements of the past (Mills, Weatherbee & Durepos, 2013). The culturally indeterminate fields around which people interact are always in the middle of a kind of historicality. By taking the stance that historicality is the effluvial storytelling of grand narratives; we set our insights toward moving beyond the hegemony of grand narratives. The use of a storytelling perspective enlivens a potential for historicality that allows for entrepreneurial posthumanism.

**Entrepreneurial posthumanism**

Entrepreneurship is storytelling (Saylors, Boje & Mueller, 2014). The processes of identification, preparation, creation of resources, and the eventual telling of history that makes the firm a useful fiction are all functions of storytelling (Boje, Cast & Saylors, 2014). There are aspects of grand narratives, living story, and antenarratives integral to each.

The identification process centralizes around grand narratives, living story, and antenarratives. The feeling that there is a need is part of identifying with an opportunity. Without the ability to feel the need, a sense that there is a need worthy of exploitation is mitigated. The felt need comes from the living story of an entrepreneur: be it via vicarious experience, social learning, or personal experience. Once this feeling of need resonates with an opening in the market the entrepreneur makes antenarrative bets on a multitude of future past-narratives. As these bet-antenarratives develop, pre-narrative potentials are squashed by grand narratives (Boje, Helmuth & Saylors, 2014). As potentials for need fulfillment envelop the entrepreneurial storytelling-sensemaking process, the antenarratives move beneath the weight of grand narratives. Eventually, the pre-narrative bets move between potential futures that are not destroyed by grand narratives. Often these hegemonic influences over the entrepreneurial process are worded in terms of ‘markets,’ ‘competition,’ and ‘profitability’. By entering the word-game of a legitimate, thoughtful entrepreneur, many ideas are destroyed and only those that resonate strongly enough with the living story of the entrepreneur make it past the gauntlet of negativity. Once identification with opportunities occurs the entrepreneurial process moves on to preparation, through the creation of resources, which eventually ends in the telling of a history.

It is in the telling of an entrepreneurial history that the previous weight of a grand narrative’s hegemony is integrated into the venture. As the entrepreneur creates a history that is in line with the dominant grand narratives, the legitimacy of being part of that which dominates is integrated into the story. Those antenarratives that were squashed beneath the grand narratives are destroyed. The history of antenarratives between narratives is erased. The bet narratives are called. The pre-narratives are extinguished. This is in service of submission to the grand narrative. But the living story abides. For every one of the antenarrative processes that are shut down, potential for another storytelling emerges (Rosile et al., 2013). It is in understanding the posthumanism-based implications of creating narrative history that we will find praxis implications.

Posthumanism is the recognition of the existence of a phenomenal life-world outside of the individual. From living story, to mother Gaia, to the spirits of entrepreneurship, capitalism, and Marxism, many agential forces exist that are non-human. In short, humans are only one of the many aspects of nature. Bringing entrepreneurial posthumanism into history allows for a historicity that was once lost under the thumb of capitalism. Here we focus on the denial of global warming as an example. The key to entrepreneurial posthumanism in history research is finding those living stories that have been muted by grand narratives. These can be found in the historicity of global capitalist firms. Theirs is the effluvial storytelling of grand narratives. Living stories can be drawn up and re-historicized from the perspective of a post-human agent: nature herself.
Global warming and global capitalism

The future of storytelling integrates an entrepreneurial posthumanist perspective on global warming and global capitalism. We cannot reduce global warming to a grand narrative of global capitalism by erasing webs of living stories of non-human species. Climate change is refracted through global capitalism’s grand narratives. The crisis is not a Hegelian dialectic of the movement of human history; rather the human species has become its own geological agent of change, to be found in global capitalism.

One often hears the refrain in open systems thinking that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. However, in climate change, “we have to admit the Whole is contained by its Part” the human species (Žižek, 2010: 333). The human species is now a geological agent of change. It has an effect not only on other species by hastening their extinction, but on their own species, hastening human extinction (Chakrabarty, 2009; Žižek, 2010; Wainwright & Mann, 2013).

“The discipline of history exists on the assumption that our past, present, and future are connected by a certain continuity of human experience” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 197). The planetary crisis of global warming (aka climate change) elicits a variety of responses, from denial, disconnect, and indifference to activism and engagements in practices of sustainability. With the possible extinction of the human species, the past and present disconnect from the future, as the continuity of human experience ends. This is a radical sense of posthumanism, a planet that continues to exist without humans. Chakrabarty’s point is that our historical understanding is thrown into “deep contradiction and confusion” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 198).

The debate on climate change, therefore, should be of interest to history researchers. The greenhouse gases produced by burning fossil fuel and industrial use of animal stock have a transformative consequence to how we think about human history and globalization. Thus, discussions of global warming, globalization, and posthumanism run parallel to each other. Globalization became a public concern in 1990s, global warming in 2000s, and posthumanism in 2010s.

The melting of the ice caps. Drought in Australia. More frequent cyclones, brush fires, and crop failures in many parts of the world. All are due to the increasing global footprint of the human population which will pass the 9 billion mark by 2050. It is time to say that globalization is affecting climate change and that posthumanism is taking on a new meaning.

Theories of globalization – Marxist analysis, subaltern studies, and postcolonial criticism – are beginning to grapple with the chaos resulting from capitalist economies having reached their ecological limits. Now globalization and global warming have “overlapping processes” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 200). For example, Oreskes’ (2007) review of 928 peer-reviewed papers on global warming published between 1993 and 2003 reveals that not a single article refutes the consensus to be found among scientists on the “reality of human-induced climate change” (2007: 201). There is only disagreement on the amount and direction of change. The foundation of our posthumanist perspective regarding history is built on three central theses:

Thesis 1: Collapse of the distinction between natural history and human history serves extant dominant narratives.

Hobbes contended that humans can have only a proper knowledge of the Leviathan of civil and political institutions because nature remains God’s work and is inscrutable to humans. Marx’s dictum was “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please” (cited in Chakrabarty, 2009: 202). Collingwood assumed that nature is just events, rather than nature being agential, and hence “all history properly so called is the history of human affairs” (cited in Chakrabarty, 2009: 203). Nature as events sets up a duality between human history and nature as being non-historical. The duality leaves human animals, their body and its activities and natural appetites, as being outside of human history.
Posthumanism returns humans to nature, not as a social construction but as part of the physical world. In social construction rocks do not exist unless humans think about them and all materialism became subsumed under the central doctrine of human thought, language games, and social construction of reality. Now critical materialist arguments for posthumanism are emerging to problematize humanism’s anti-materialism presupposition. Stalin reasoned that the human society changes more rapidly than changes in geographical conditions (Tucker, 1992), so a human relation to the environment was timeless and not a subject for historical materialism at all.

Clearly organization studies, like Stalin, have treated the ecosystem as a silent and passive backdrop to their historical narratives of institutions. Nature’s ever-recurring cycles play an active agential role in molding human actions. This role is almost timeless. It is not reaching a tipping point. The environment timelessly transforms itself with a speed that spells disaster for humans. This is a breach of the dualism of natural/human history. The breach of dualism gives rise to environmental history and human history combining into a posthumanist history. Posthumanist history is no longer straightforward in terms of social, economic, political, and cultural history. Humans are no longer the only agents. Further, humans have a newly described “geological agency” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 206). This means deconstructing the time-honored duality between human history and environmental history. This means human beings become much more than simple biological agents, but rather “wield a geological force” that is “changing the most basic physical processes of the earth” (Oreskes, quoted in Chakrabarty, 2009: 206).

We can no longer assume that Earth processes are immune to human chronologies, or that the vastness of geographical time and geological processes are not affected by global capitalism. Humans are geological agents, not just biological agents. Becoming geological agents both historically and collectively, in global capitalism, since burning billions of tons of fossil fuels is changing the chemistry of Earth’s atmosphere, melting polar ice caps, and raising sea levels on a scale large enough to result in a mass extinction of species. “Our footprint was not always that large” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 207). Humans have acquired geological agency since the Industrial Revolution, and a tipping point was reached after the Second World War. Organizations are not simply interacting with their environment; rather those organizations are now a force of nature in the geological sense.

Thesis 2: The grand narrative of globalization reveals a voluminous array of living environmental stories based on antenarratives that run before, bet, between, and beneath the linear narrative.

In this postmodern epic, the human production, distribution, and consumption processes of globalization are geological forces. Social, economic, political, and cultural contexts are no longer separate from the realm of nature and its ecological context. Kant, Hegel, and Marx’s ideas of human progress, human freedom, and human history to escape injection, inequity, and oppression do not display an awareness of geological agency that humans were acquiring in human-made systems of organizing and consumption rooted in fossil fuel (coal, oil, and gas). Our systemicity of organizations is energy-intensive, and has resulted in “anthropogenic climate change” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 209). Anthropogenic refers to something that originates from humans. Anthropogenic climate change refers to the pollution from burning fossil fuels that emit carbon dioxide, along with other human activities on earth. The anthropogenic effect on climate is now on a global scale and has become so ubiquitous since the 1750s that it deserves its own geological epoch. The Anthropocene is a critique of grand narratives of freedom, because the price of freedom is humanity’s increasing geological agency; the grand narrative of humanity’s role as planet killer to accomplish short-term survival in the midst of growing food and energy crises.
Thesis 3: By taking a posthumanist perspective on history we can avoid the human–nature dichotomy that presupposes the value of environmental destruction.

Anthropocene thinking requires us to put global histories of the Leviathan into dialogue with the species’ history of humans. Global capitalism exists, but its critics do not have a handle on the inseparability of human and planet history. “The problematic of globalization allows us to read climate change only as a crisis of capitalist management” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 212). Making management the focus misses the challenge of the Anthropocene era, where humans’ geological agency is “entangled with the now of human history” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 212). Ecosystem problems are emerging on a world scale at a rate unprecedented in the 10,000 years of recorded human history. Going beyond four centuries of textual archives means constructing a deep history of social, economic, political, cultural, and ecological change. This includes working out the consequences of global warming for the history of life on this planet. Posthumanism is becoming a critique of global capitalism along with its “multiplying modernities” in which “there is no universalizing spirit” and “there are, instead, many very specific, very material and pragmatic practices that await critical reflection and historical study” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 214).

Critical Management Studies (CMS) needs to address this world of multiplying modernities and the material and pragmatic practices of global capitalism that are in need of critical reflection. Human ‘being’ is no longer the only subject standpoint in world history. Humans are one among many species, and humans are dominating other species, in their acquiring of the status of a geological force. Given this condition, the search for Green Capitalism, or some utopian sustainable capitalism, is futile. CMS needs to realize the protagonists of their storytelling, the managers, and other persons, are reductions of the “embodied and whole human being” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 214). The grand narrative of global capitalism is part of a larger story of global domination, written in rather large carbon footprints of rich nations and richer socio-economic classes. Falling into anthropocentric decline is not inevitable. The stories of ‘discovery’ of oil by the oil tycoons are full of coincidences and historical accidents, rather than any inevitability. The dramatic increase in human population since the Second World War has pushed us into the Anthropocene. Both the capitalist and socialist nations burn fossil fuel to sustain their way of life in global capitalism; a way of life rooted in high-energy-consuming models of society that result in a mass extinction of species; all wrought by organizations.

Thesis 4: By showing in juxtaposition the living stories of species history and human history we can re-historicize in such a manner that the unity of the fate of the human animal is clearly linked to the destruction being wrought by globalization.

Cross-hatching species history with a history of global capitalism moves CMS beyond just human experience to historical consciousness allowing critical reflections on how our pasts connect to the possibility of our species’ future survival. Will humans even have a future, that is, a history, given the crisis of global warming and a world without humans? The duality between human and ecosystem history has been breached. Humans are now historical geological agents. Climate change refracted through global capitalism’s unintended consequences lets us appreciate that it is not a process of “Hegelian universal” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 222). Our shared sense of catastrophe calls for “a global approach to politics without the myth of a global identity” because unlike the Hegelian universal, our future cannot subsume particularities, and we are served with a rather negative “universal history” (Chakrabarty, 2009: 222).

Wainwright and Mann (2013) argue that we have entered the era of Climate Leviathan. This is an age of hegemonic institutional modes of governance and accumulation that continue to thwart responses to climate warming and unfolds in directions unplotted by Thomas Hobbes or Job (Job 41:1–34). As Walter Benjamin concludes, “the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is the rule” (1969: 258).
Our concept of systemicity must keep pace with this insight. It is the task of CMS to bring about a real sense of this state of emergency. A state of emergency is the normal state of organizational systemicity: seeking standards and norms of the regulation and control of the state of emergency: the “neoliberal contagion of financial crisis and market disorders” and “global climate change” that produced the normal condition of “the paradigm of security as the normal technique of government” (Wainwright & Mann, 2013: 2).

CMS can draw attention to how this Leviathan is bringing about the conditions of planetary crisis. This is not some open system theory. Rather it is the very end of open systems. “Our global carbon emissions jumped by 5.9% in 2012” (Wainwright & Mann, 2013: 2). The International Energy Agency, no revolutionary outfit, warns us that “the world is likely to build so many fossil-fuelled power stations, energy-guzzling factories and inefficient buildings in the next five years that it will become impossible to hold global warming to safe levels” (Fiona Harvey, The Guardian, November 9, 2011: 3).

CMS can help the Leviathan contemplate the socio-economic-political future in an ongoing war for the world’s energy supplies without reduction in global carbon emissions that continues to change the chemical composition of the atmosphere. We may be past the tipping point, and it is no longer possible to tame global capitalism, and avert its deadly consequences. Sustainability is now a relatively weak, frenzied, and marginal reaction to climate change; rather than any change of the material conditions of the world’s capitalist nation-states. Green Capitalism is now a grand narrative of great incredulity. The grand narrative of Enlightenment progress is being displaced by a grand narrative of ecological collapse in as in Hobbes’ war-of-all-against-all.

Can posthumanism be constituted into planetary sovereignty where management is reconstituted for the purposes of planetary sustainability? This would be a paradigm shift away from Leviathan. This shift is necessary because of the collective action involved in carbon sequestration.

**Discussion**

The future of storytelling in organizational history holds potential for praxis intervention. These praxis interventions are based on scholars working with history taking entrepreneurial posthumanism seriously. This has four major normative consequences for storytelling history.

First, the service provided to dominant narratives of global capitalism by those who perpetuate an a-environmental historicity should be resisted. We must focus on humans as care-maximizing entities. The basis of faith in economics is that people fundamentally want to do well for themselves. We should attack this faith in homo economics. Instead, we need to work on an alternative paradigm. Instead of being lost in the esoteric weeds of philosophy we must ground our research in a way that resonates with a fundamental ethos of care. We must share our ideas so others can understand how one might act in a caring way in any context. As Asdal (2003) has pointed out this can be achieved by integrating posthumanist thought.

Second, the opportunity to draw entrepreneurial posthumanism into historicality should be exploited. We have the opportunity to be entrepreneurial in our integration of posthumanism into history. By creating new normative influences on how we read history we can subvert existing power structures. Further, by unveiling the falseness of linear historicists we can open readers to the fullness of historicality. This allows us to bring forth the limited lines of thinking that are allowed by those with power. Finally, this opportunity allows a repositioning of anthropocentric thinking. Long ago humanity moved past the idea of the Earth as the center of the universe, but somehow humans themselves remained there. Even on the most fundamental levels we know this dichotomy is false (Ley, Knight & Gordon, 2007).
Third, the implicit impetus to accept the human–nature dichotomy should be deconstructed. As the future of storytelling in history becomes more entrepreneurially posthuman, the implicit raising of humanity as outside of nature is implicitly deconstructed. From this implicit deconstruction, we should move to history that directly deconstructs this disconnect. For example, when we write about institutional history the influence of the physical environment should be incorporated. This sort of critical integration is just on the horizon (Suddaby, 2014).

Fourth, storytelling should unify the fate of the human animal with the destruction wrought by global exploitation. Often this is done in terms of the environment posing some threat to the human condition. Through storytelling cross-hatching between the environment and the human animal becomes possible. We can do research that brings in environmental interactions between organizational history. In its most advanced form a kind of dithering, where bits of the environment appear to provide a greater shade of understanding of human history. The outcomes of our four theses hold the potential to restore history in a way that incorporates posthumanism.

**Environmental rehistorying**

The point of restorying is to resist existing sensemakings and produce new ones (Cast et al., 2013). In the case of integrating the environment into history, we restory to create a new narrative about an organizational event. Take for example Cemex, the world’s third largest cement manufacturer; a firm with monopolistic control of cement production in many countries. The dominant narrative of Cemex may be of producing walkways, hospitals, and the like. But once we find that cement manufacturing is the cause of 5 percent of all CO₂ emissions and that Cemex is controlled by a group of elite oligarchical family groups (Sargent, 2005), we have a much different story. And when the history is written using a posthumanist entrepreneurial perspective a new historicity, a historicity that acknowledges this fact, can emerge.

There are seven basic steps to environmental rehistorying. Each of these must be refracted through the theorization of the past that is guiding the researcher (cf. Durepos, Mills & Weatherbee, 2012):

- **Characterization:** where environmental impact is brought to light.
- **Externalization:** where environmental impact is shown as something different from the firm.
- **Sympathization:** where why the environmental impact exists is accepted.
- **Problematize:** where despite the sympathy the environmental impact is still functionally troublesome.
- **Strategize:** where a new idea of what the firm is, now sans this environmental impact, is developed.
- **Rehistoricize:** develop a new historicity out of the strategization.
- **Publicize:** where the firm takes on both blame and praise for its new structure.

In this way, the future storytelling of organizational history can integrate the four theses of entrepreneurial posthumanism.

The following steps outline the process whereby a theorized rehistorying can be achieved:

1. **Characterize** – Portray the environmental impact in the history of the firm. This is where a historicity perspective is key. The research must move beyond simply accepting the linear narratives of history to show how there are characterizable environmental impacts.
2. **Externalize** – Show that this impact is not the total function of the firm. By showing that the firm has positives that are manifest aside from the negatives, the dominant historicity is
not destroyed, but rethought. This research moves into multiple voices, respecting differing perspectives.

3. Sympathize – The environmental impact of the firm is something that was written off as a necessary evil some time ago. Consider the experience of that decision in historical context. Give strong motivations that allow for such a justification.

4. Problematize – Despite the sympathetic motivations the environmental impact is a problem. Look into the historical impacts that run contrary to what was sympathetic previously. For example, if a firm is founded on helping people live better, perhaps there are examples of how the environmental impact mitigates or even negates that intent.

5. Strategize – Create a new story around the firm’s interactions between various historicists. This is a detachment of the meaning of the historical context from the now problematized environmental impact. This strategizing can be built on ‘little wow moments’ in the history of the firm that affirm the firm’s disengagement from its previously accepted past.

6. Rehistoricize – Bringing forward all those ‘little wow moments’ to develop a new kind of historicity. From these historicities, new historicalities can be drawn. The firm can be rehistoricized as though a fundamental part of its ethos is sustainability.

7. Publicize – Engage the network of storytelling processes that uphold the previous history. By working together to integrate a sense of the unified fate of humans and our environment, we can turn away from the economic narrative. As we utilize entrepreneurial posthumanism to change normativity around organizational history, we also disempower those that seek to exploit and destroy for short-term gains. There will be a backlash. Because of this the quality of the historical evidence and storied integration of it into the firm’s past is paramount.

Conclusion

If we rethink how history and storytelling relate to each other, our storytelling history research can have a praxis future. In integrating entrepreneurial posthumanism into our storytelling of organizational history, we can draw a stark connection between globalization and global warming. This is because storytelling integrates the complexity of posthuman concerns. Thus, the complexities that are glossed over by historicity can be brought to light. When a polyphony of living stories are expressed the complexity of the link between globalization and global warming becomes paramount. Thus, the entrepreneurial posthumanist re-reading of historical matters advances praxis. Though the thesis of globalism is powerful, we have offered four counter-theses that also have powerful potential. In the end the ability to change the history of the organization is a practical theory (Weatherbee, Dye & Mills, 2008). This method for changing is how we could go about theory in a way that improves the world.

References


