

Global trafficking networks and business studies³⁴

*Tommy Jensen*³⁵
Umeå School of Business
Umeå University

Johan Sandström
Swedish Business School
Örebro University

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the contours of the global network society and then searches for ‘the masters’ of this emerging environment. Judging from the management talk on flexible, decentralized and adaptable networked enterprises, these masters are found in the large global corporations, but closing in on practice, evidence rather points in the direction of illegal, or partly illegal, global networks. In the paper, we use global trafficking networks as the benchmark example, arguing that they are the real masters of the global network society and that they show us in which direction large global corporations might be heading. This raises several issues, of which the role and responsibilities of business researchers and business studies are discussed. We present three kinds of arguments to why we should study global trafficking networks – the ideologist, the scientific and the moral argument. The position advocated in the paper holds that the two first cannot be left to their own destinies; they need to be assessed on moral grounds.

Keywords: Business, globalization, trafficking.

Introduction

Sociologists such as Manuel Castells, Zygmunt Bauman, Richard Sennett and John Urry emphasize that we live in an emerging global network society and that this development is accompanied by radical changes and a demand for new forms of (social) management and organizing (Bauman, 1998b, 1999, 2000, 2002; Castells, 2000; Sennett, 1999, 2006; Urry, 2003). The global network society is also the ‘talk of the town’ in the business community and, accordingly, influential management researchers/consultants seek to develop and promote new forms of managing corporations, commonly phrased in terms of *flexibility*,

decentralization and *adaptability* (Hammer & Champy, 1993; Champy, 1995; Kotter, 1996; Peters, 1992, 2003; Hamel, 2007). Together, these three keywords could be seen as framing the challenge to, or attack on, the rigidity and inertia of large and bureaucratic corporate hierarchies; a challenge even turned into a plea by Tom Peters: “I beg each and every one of you to develop a passionate and public hatred of bureaucracy” (quoted in du Gay, 2000: 61).

In this paper, we describe the main characteristics of the emerging global network society and we link this description to the prescriptions of new forms of management and organizing deemed appropriate for corporations in the global network society. We

³⁴ Earlier drafts of this paper have been presented at the Creative Futures Conference in Pori, Finland, October 10-11, 2007, and at a research workshop at the ESC Clermont in Clermont-Ferrand, France, March 17, 2008.

³⁵ Corresponding author.

argue that those prescriptions oftentimes echo the rhetoric of large global corporations, but that when taking into account these corporations' practices, even though they are among the top beneficiaries of the emerging global network society and partly responding to calls for flexibility, adaptability and decentralization, they do not walk the talk, yet.

Following this, we move to the question of where to find a better match to the ideal global corporation *in practice*; a search that takes us to places that we might not want to go. It takes us in the direction of illegal, or partly illegal, global networks. Such networks are basically living the management talk for how a modern global corporation ought to organize. More precisely our search leads us to the global trafficking network, which seems to have an ideal design for organizing in the global network society.

A consequence of this, we argue, is that business studies of trafficking networks are needed (and of other illicit organizations and networks as well for that matter). As an academic field, with its particular expertise, such studies would increase the understanding of the way in which global trafficking networks organize and therefore be of valuable assistance in actions taken to terminate these organizations and their ruthless exploitation of (mainly) women and children. According to figures from the UN.GIFT (see reference list) on human trafficking alone (there are also other, both living and dead, things that are trafficked on a global scale), about 1.2 million children are subjected to trafficking each year. Of all victims (estimates indicate that a stunning 4 millions could be subjected every year), 95% experience violence or sexual abuse when trafficked. About half of the victims of trafficking know the perpetrator and for every 800 people trafficked, only one person is convicted.

However, even though this paper hopefully will assist in persuading researchers in the field of business studies to explore these networks in order to combat trafficking, the main aim of this paper is different. The aim is rather to bring forth another reason for why business studies on global trafficking networks are needed. In short, we argue that such

studies might be indicative of which direction large global corporations are heading. Hence, such studies might teach us about some of the dark sides emerging when legitimate and legal corporate operations are trying to walk the talk, trying to succeed in exercising flexibility, adaptability and decentralization. That global corporations have not yet become globally networked organizations also means that there is still time to prevent some of the dark sides from emerging in the future.

In the last section of the paper, we present three arguments to why we – as researchers in the field of business studies – should study these networks. The arguments are labeled: the ideological, the scientific and the moral argument. In our discussion, we emphasize the moral argument and draw out some of the implications for business studies based on this.

The globally networked corporation

Manuel Castells argues that the need for new forms of organizing is driven by a new technological paradigm: “What is new in our age is a new set of information technologies” and since “information processing is at the source of life, and of social action, every domain of our eco-social system is thereby transformed” (2000: 10). For Castells, information technology is paramount on all aggregate levels – it is *the feature* of the global economy as well as of the networked economy, populated by so-called networked enterprises.

For Zygmunt Bauman, information technology, together with other current social transformational forces, such as individualization and consumerism, and liberalization and the dismantling of the social welfare, make up the rationale of what he terms a liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000, 2002, 2006). A key part of Bauman's analysis of the emerging global network society is that the “stuff of which a new hierarchy of power is built, the paramount stratifying factor” is the ability to be constantly on the move, never to get stuck, “while speed and acceleration are the principal strategies aimed at slanting that factor in ones' favour” (Bauman, 2002: 165).

On a business level, Castells claims (2000: 11) that this is made visible as “these networks connect among themselves on specific business projects, and switch to another network as soon as the project is finished”, shifting the focus from the formal organization (the corporation) to the temporary network (the project).

The network is thus a keyword in Castells’s analysis and he argues that the introduction of new information/communication technologies allows corporations to be continuously flexible, adaptable and decentralized, “thus asserting their evolutionary nature”. As a consequence “an unprecedented combination of flexibility and task implementation, of co-ordinated decision making, and decentralized execution, which provide a superior social morphology for all human action” (Castells, 2000: 15) can be observed. In the global networked corporation, flexible work, decentralized execution and adaptability of nodes, also become “the predominant form of working arrangements” (Castells, 2000: 11; see also Sennett, 1999, 2006; Bauman, 1998a, 2002).

Turning to influential advisors to top management of large global corporations (persons oftentimes with a chair in business studies as well), such as James Champy, Gary Hamel, Charles Handy, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Manfred Kets de Vries, John Kotter and Tom Peters, they primarily target the stiff bureaucracies that do not value leadership and team-ship, flatter organizational structures, risk-taking, imagination, creativity, and continuous innovation. They call for more responsibility to employees and less internal interdependencies within the company. The effective corporation will, they predict, regularly scrutinize its relations to different nodes in the network and eliminate those that are not relevant any more. There is also a need to be aware of the fact that those nodes that do not pass such evaluations will have to face terrifying machines of competition (Kotter, 1996). These management gurus also make the claim that most people would enjoy working in these types of networked enterprises since people thereby can

contribute to, it is argued, something meaningful.

Focusing on the three keywords, flexibility, decentralization and adaptability, the management gurus herald flexibility as the tool for cutting loose workers in time and space so as to liberate them from, in the words of the information system professor Jannis Kallinikos, “the collective and largely impersonal employment contracts of the past towards the (re)individualization and temporalization of employment firms [to] enhance the capabilities of independent work and initiative taking” (Kallinikos, 2001: 151-152 and 153). Criticizing this view, however, flexibility is also a strategy for making members of the corporation insecure, so that they quickly can be cut loose, would they, for some reason (usually cost-benefit oriented reasons), no longer be of use (Bauman, 1998a; Sennett, 1999, 2006).

Decentralization belongs to the tradition of Human Resources and constitutes a flagship of modern Human Resource Management, equipped with labels such as Gary Hamel’s radical decentralization or Charles Handy’s federalist decentralization. It is heralded as a tool to purposely, or as Tom Peters would phrase it, tirelessly empower lower levels of the corporation so as to achieve increased autonomy, that is, self-organization vis-à-vis the higher levels of the corporation. Kotter (1996) also emphasizes ‘doing it now’ and the need for new information systems that honestly and rapidly report how a specific node in the network is performing. The single node usually gets too little information about how s/he (or it) is doing, performance-wise, that is. Criticizing this view, however, decentralization is also a strategy to minimize risk by dispersing mistakes, failures (lower levels are to blame for errors) and certain responsibilities (keeping costs under control while increasing the influence of the income side of the balance-sheet) (Sennett, 1999, 2006).

Adaptability is heralded as the ability of corporations to adjust to current circumstances, perhaps most notably to radical shifts in consumer demand (Peters, 2003). As Richard Sennett (1999: 53) writes, “[t]he most strongly flavored ingredient in this new productive process is the willingness to let the

shifting demands of the outside work determine the inside structure". Criticizing this view, however, adaptability is also a strategy for corporations to pass "on dips in the business cycle or product flops to its weaker partners [suppliers, customers, regions, countries], which are squeezed harder" (Sennett, 1999: 53). Successful corporations practice "concentration without centralization" in which "domination from the top is both strong and shapeless" (Sennett, 1999: 56-57).

Flexibility, decentralization and adaptability are called for since there are great business benefits to reap for those re-orienting their activities to better match the changing context. The reverse is also true, of course. There are fewer opportunities for those maintaining their faith in rigid control structures and bureaucracies that only with great pains can respond to the advance of the network society. Put bluntly, in this context, it is the global networked enterprises that are celebrated as 'the masters'. Although the global networked economy and its networked enterprises are not solely dominating the world today, "[the global networked economy] does exert a profound moral and normative force as a cutting-edge standard for how the larger economy should evolve" (Sennett, 2006: 10).

So, searching for descriptions of best practice in this economy, we find the shady contours of a continuously emerging informational network of nodes, as Castells and Himanen call them, which "increase their productivity, profits, and market value by organizing themselves (globally) as networks, by applying information technology, and by focusing more and more on information (symbol) operations" (2002: 21). These networked enterprises are coordinated by one or several elite groups of boundary-less and mobile managers and they are not only Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 'change masters' (1983), but masters of change with the ability, in Bauman's words, to be constantly on the move, never to get stuck, using speed and acceleration to slant factors in their favor.

Ideally, global networked corporations thus know of no geographical borders in their pursuit of satisfying ever-changing customer demands and in exploiting highly profitable

geographical territories (finding cheap labor, natural resources, 'relaxed' regulation etc.) in the exchange for the highest possible profit. Traditional borders, such as nation states, socio-economic conditions, culture, law and politics, present business opportunities rather than barriers to trade in this emerging global network society. In its ideal version, the networked enterprise does not risk being sedimented in any long-term formal agreements that might hinder rapid responses to changing circumstances and preferences.

However, acknowledging the critical aspects of flexibility, decentralization and adaptability, the general advice on how to develop a cutting-edge organization moves the corporation towards doing more with less and towards socializing the remaining workers to accept that their employment last 'until further notice' (Bauman, 1998a). It also means letting go of risks and responsibilities by dumping it to lower levels while simultaneously investing heavily in digital surveillance systems so that in case of any mistakes, there is nowhere to hide in the network (Sennett, 1999). It would also mean a move towards developing a fit to the disruptive environment through post-Panoptical power relations, in which the "prime technique of power is [---] escape, slippage, elision and avoidance" (Bauman, 2000: 11).

Zooming in on practice, however, it is only with great difficulty that the flexible, decentralized and adaptable networked enterprise (or 'informational enterprise', 'terrifying machine of competition', 'network structured organization' etc.) is matched by any large global corporation, regardless of industry or niche. The primary example of the global network enterprise repeatedly used by Sennett (1999, 2006) and Bauman (1998b, 1999, 2002), operates within the global financial system and its centers (London, New York, Hong Kong etc.), but even enterprises within this global system face problems that need to be overcome if it is to match the prescribed criteria set out (see Sassen, 2007; Urry, 2003).

One reading of our story so far would then be that movements along Castells and others' lines are under construction, in process. On the other hand, another reading

would reveal that a responding re-bureaucratization of corporations is also occurring (du Gay, 2000; Jensen & Nylén, 2006; Kallinikos, 2004). Thus, even though we might experience more flexibility, adaptability and decentralization, bureaucratic processes in large global corporations still provide some obstacles. This demands, however, that we acknowledge that bureaucracy comes in many disguises and is “put into circulation by different regimes” (Kallinikos, 1996: 66; Jensen, 2008). Quality management systems, mobile work, project management systems, information management systems, environmental management systems, codes of ethics etc., can all be considered as modern examples of bureaucracy that through digital monitoring stretch themselves far out in the organization and its network. Consequently, contemporary bureaucracy does not so much discipline through concrete, physical surveillance as through:

detached observations and manipulation of screen data. Contemporary contexts of work become textualized as electronic writing increasingly reclaims the organization and coordination of human effort [---]. Bureaucracy, it would seem, is entering the age of *spectation*. (Kallinikos, 1996: 84)

An important observation is that the re-bureaucratization process in many aspects might prove just as fluid as the network and in some aspects even share epistemic traits with it, thus actually strengthening the movement towards networked corporations (du Gay, 2000; Jensen, 2008; Sennett, 1999), but that it might also prove that these new patterns of bureaucracy potentially will eat away at, or retract, what the network society has set loose. Put differently, a loss of control is regained by increased control through new control instruments (Bauman, 2000; Kallinikos, 2001; Sennett, 1999). New forms of bureaucracy might prove just as rigid as any older version of bureaucracy, thus, making things worse, holding back attempts to achieve the

necessary traits and skills of the prescribed global networked enterprise.

The point here, however, is that a loss of control to the forces of the global network society and efforts to regain this control do not render the emergence of a global network society less real. What it says is that re-bureaucratization and new forms of control could be viewed both as resistance and as a strategy to move closer towards the global network society. As far as we understand it, there is a lack of studies addressing this tension, but, for example, the process of dispersing risks to lower levels and to the outskirts of networks is evident, even though new forms of bureaucracy enter this process as a double-edged sword. New forms assist decentralization and the dispersing of risks by further blurring the connection between “intention and practical accomplishments, with the space between the two packed with a multitude of minute acts and inconsequential actors” (Bauman, 1989: 24-25). New forms resist decentralization because information technology sometimes makes events more transparent and thus weakens the credibility of top management’s attempts at blaming lower levels. In the information age, the ‘we did not know’ “type of excuse *adds to the guilt* rather than brings absolution from sin” (Bauman, 2002: 204). This, however, has in turn caused a shift towards the excuse that ‘there was nothing we could do’.

Re-bureaucratization is one example of large global corporations not being as networked as the networked economy and prescriptions of the network enterprise would have it. They for sure have the power to dominate, but power is restricted in the sense that the regime of domination, that is, the different strategies to exercise power, are firmly anchored to territories, to solid ground, and have limited capabilities to use speed and acceleration (Sassen, 2007). As a consequence, large global corporations are not yet capable of realizing extraterritorial business operations that run according to the ideal state of the “permanently temporary location” (Bauman, 2002: 113). Even though those corporations breed on, and are fed by, the “symbolic end to the era of space” and “the

emergence of the ‘era of speed’ marked by the devaluation of space” (Bauman, 2002: 87 and 102-103), they get stuck when they, according to the prescriptions, are supposed to move on.

A conclusion here is that large global corporations in certain aspects may be best-in-class in the year-book of the contemporary network society, but being in front does not mean that all the requirements are fulfilled. Castells also indicates that these global players may not be fully networked, not yet, but that they will probably be so in the future. A core assumption in Castells’s analysis is basically evolutionary in that we should expect more developments in the direction of a global network society: “Once introduced, and powered by information technology, information networks, through competition, gradually eliminate other organizational forms, rooted in a different social logic” (Castells, 2000: 16). Castells has a firm belief in the rise of the global network society, arguing that as time unfolds, our achievements move us closer to this society. Maybe time will prove Castells and other advocates of the global network society and the networked enterprise right, but it is nevertheless strange that these intellectuals seem to neglect certain (dark) sides of this development. This becomes evident when focusing on the real masters of change, the ones empirically providing us with examples of how to organize in this environment.

Masters of change – in practice

Where, in practice, might we find the networks making the most use of the emerging global network society? Large global corporations lean on the rhetoric of the network enterprise, but one global player that is not using the talk, while still flourishing in the emerging environment, is the global trafficking network. Trafficking is of course not a new phenomenon, but “the dynamics of globalization are fueling its growth” (Jones et al., 2007: 118) and “in its own raw and sordid way, illicit trade shows us some of the places globalization is going” (Naím, 2007: 36).

Financially, trafficking networks are also no small players. They represent a significant

part of the global economy. Given the nature of these networks, correct figures are of course difficult to find, but estimates from different governmental agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations on activities, such as money laundering and the amount of money sent home by prostitutes working abroad, amount to several percentages of many nations’ GDP. Figures from the UN estimate that the annual profits from human trafficking range between 7 and 10 billion dollars. For forced labor (slavery), the figures are between 22 and 44 billion dollars in annual profits. Estimates also have it that animal trafficking has about 8 billion dollars in turnover every year. Illegal trade with guns is bigger than trade with humans and animals, and drugs are by far the largest in both turnover and profits (UNODC, 2006).

This means that we cannot fend these networks off as insignificant for the global economy, or side-step them as ‘within the limit of miscalculation’, or as small and unintended side effects. We can also not fend them off as a few, big rotten apples, since trafficking is a multifaceted activity, moving in and between legal and illegal practices.

These networks are also not the mob, or the mafia, as in the days of Totò Riina, Tommaso Buscetta, Lucky Luciano and Al Capone, even though this image still seems to be strong among the public and among those fighting illicit trade (see Marine, 2006). The mafia is per definition a local and geographically anchored organization. It is about controlling a specific physical territory. The La Cosa Nostra, for example, both in Italy and in the US, consists of “organized crime groups called ‘families,’ with each family controlling organized crime activities in a particular region” (Marine, 2006: 216; also see Dickie, 2004). Their geographical base is usually accompanied by a cultural one: “A person must be of Italian descent to be a ‘made member’ of any of the LCN organized crime families” (Marine, 2006: 216). Even though many mafia groups have gone increasingly global during the last decades (and thereby less like mafia and more like global organized crime networks; see, for instance, Roberto Saviano’s vivid story on the

Italian *Camorra*; Saviano, 2006), these traits are not strengths in the emerging global network society. Global trafficking networks do not limit their actions or discriminate actors in such ways.

Moses Naím (2007: 32) compares the global trafficking network with the corporation and argues that corporations are still rigid hierarchies with a centralized authority and that: “The more organized crime groups resemble corporations, the more their hierarchies and their routines prevent them from optimizing their activities.” Naím then echoes the rhetoric of management gurus when claiming that the emerging global network society “gives an advantage to organizations capable of responding and adapting rapidly to new opportunities and able to constantly shift locations, tactics, and ways and means to make the most money possible” (2007: 32). A consequence of this, he argues, is that organized crime is becoming “more decentralized” (Naím, 2007: 32).

These networks seem to follow the outline and predictions of Castells and others, but they also seem, as is common with change-masters (Kanter, 1983), to be at least one step ahead of the competition. They have, in practice (we do not know if these networks care about theory or ever listen to over-paid management consultants), shifted their focus from commodities to skills: “Their work”, Naím argues, “has grown easier to initiate, organize, and dissimulate, and they have adapted to take maximum advantage of these new possibilities” (2007: 36). “They are flexible, responsive, and rapid”, he continues, and “no itinerary is too complex, no supply deadline too urgent” (Naím, 2007: 36). This means that they can move “from product to product and market to market” and “arrange the procurement, transport, and payment of whatever ‘merchandise’ needs moving at any given time” (Naím, 2007: 182).

When describing how one of these trafficking networks operates, Naím (2007: 100) tells us that:

Even a sophisticated mass-consumer, multinational corporation would have a hard time

successfully pulling off such a dizzying array of coordinated activities in the fields of manufacturing, international trade, transportation logistics, inventory control, human resource management, distribution, product fulfillment, and financial control – not to mention security and secrecy. The existence of organizations with such fantastic managerial capabilities points to a business model capable of not only attracting talented managers but also generating huge profits.

This means that what the global network society has become for the traffickers is “a rather special kind of world map”; for these networks “it is a map of incentives to trade, where the greyer the area, often the greater the opportunity for profit” (Naím, 2007: 185).

These networks make efficient use of the global network society (see UNODC, 2006). Focusing on the prescriptions of the global networked enterprise, they might, unfortunately, even be considered as role models for organizing for the 21st century. The global trafficking network operates in a global, fluid, informational, risky and, not the least, highly profitable way. Or put differently, the global trafficking networks are excellently flexible, decentralized and highly adaptable.

Following Naím’s (2007) account, the trafficking networks are capable of quickly cutting off parts that endanger the network as a whole as they have large reserves of individuals and organizations that are prepared to immediately fill the gaps, and everybody is enrolled ‘until further notice’. These networks have the capability to respond immediately by creating new ‘nodes’ in the network, to quickly seize business opportunities. They also manage to keep interdependencies high between nodes, at the same time as knowledge and recognition of other parts of the network are low, implying that central nodes of the network are not jeopardized since a domino-effect is not possible (in a more theoretical language, the network has a loosely coupled organizational design). Decision-

making in these networks is dispersed and decentralized and every part of the network has a high degree of autonomy, even though every part is still conforming to some central nodes, what Sennett (1999) refers to as concentration of power without centralization of power. Finally, even if the central nodes of the network, its vital organs so to speak, are terminated, these are quickly replaced; management is soon up and running again.

Traffickers' capacity to use this emerging context has also made them difficult to separate from 'legitimate' businesses. There is a clear risk that some of our money (in funds, accounts, wallet) and some of the products we regularly buy to some extent have either been part of a laundering exercise, handled by nodes in a trafficking network that are slightly more licit, or produced by illegal workers (Marine, 2006). Naím's (2007: 36) experience is that the licit and the illicit "are coming together – ever harder to distinguish, both conceptually and in practice" and that the global network society here adds fuel to the complexity of the dilemma:

After all, illicit trade by definition takes place outside the rules. But herein lies a complicating problem: whose rules? [---] in practice what may be 'illicit' in one country may not be in another. Often, the laws have to catch up with the evolution of illicit trade, creating new concepts and definitions such as 'cyber crime' or 'digital piracy' in order to draw lines between innovative practices that are considered positive for society and ones that are viewed as harmful. (Naím, 2007: 184-185)

One way of emphasizing the pro-activity of these networks, their capacity to read and deal with the global network society, is to look at how crime fighters are responding to the threats posed by these trafficking networks. A simple answer is: with more bureaucracy (especially in attempts to fight crime through international co-operation between different institutions). The fighting of these trafficking

networks seems to reinforce the pro-activeness in how trafficking networks make use of the emerging network society. The crime fighters do not seem to be able to brake free from the structures of the 'old' modernity. Naím tells a story:

One senior customs veteran told me: 'I used to lose sleep wondering what new trick the smugglers and crooks and – since September 11 – the terrorists would pull on us, but now I found myself awake worrying sick because I knew that our own internal strife was making life far easier for all of them at a time when we needed to be at our most effective. I knew how quick, creative, and dangerous the bad guys are. And here we were spending all the time in meetings and watching PowerPoint presentations by lawyers and politicians.' (2007: 177)

One issue here is bureaucracy and Naím argues that "bureaucracies tend to be organized in rigid hierarchical fashion, making them less nimble in sharing information or coordinating efforts with others outside their vertical lines of command" (2007: 182). Marine (2006), however, working for the U.S. department of justice on these issues, shows how this is not only a problem of bureaucracy when he, despite acknowledging these 'non-traditional organized crime groups' (the global trafficking networks), categorizes them into "Chinese criminal enterprises", "Vietnamese criminal groups", "Russian organized crime activities" and "Albanian-based groups". Jones et al. also talk about the Yakuza in Japan and the transnational crime networks developed after the collapse of the Soviet Union (2007: 114). These groups, it is said, make it to the U.S., where they pollute legitimate businesses. These groups, that often set up what Marine calls quasi-businesses or "pseudo-legitimate companies", "cannot be true participants in the free market, where success is determined by which company best (most efficiently and cost-

effectively) meets supply and demand” (Marine, 2006: 228).

Following Naím, though, it is difficult to separate one from the other when they are not just Chinese or Albanian, or when they are not just legitimate or illegitimate. According to Saviano (2006), the Camorra, making use of the global network society when growing into a globally networked organization (and predominantly a criminal one), owns and manages legitimate stores on main shopping streets in Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, London, Madrid, New York, Ontario, Paris, Vienna, and so on. Simple forms of categorization do not capture the complexity of these networks. Not surprisingly, as shown by Jones et al. (2007: 111), this has led to a “lack of a common, accepted definition”, which “has resulted in much confusion on how governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) ought to respond”. Somehow, this all seems to play into the hands of the global trafficking networks.

Implications

The discussion of who, or what, performs as masters of the emerging global network society, raises several issues, such as the dark sides of emerging globally networked enterprises and the role and responsibilities of business studies in dealing with these sides. We have chosen to focus on the latter in our discussion on implications and below we present three arguments for why business studies and business researchers should be more attentive to global trafficking networks. These are the ideological argument, the scientific argument and the moral argument.

The ideological argument

As business researchers, we represent a discipline with a traditionally strong empirical connectedness and with no real own theory of our own (economics, psychology and sociology tend to be heavily ‘translated’ by business researchers). This means that business studies, according to most proponents, has a responsibility to contribute to business practice, to help develop more

effective business practices (see Rehn, 2006, 2008). Taking this task seriously, one implication of this paper is that we ought to study these trafficking networks, to bring their networked ways of organizing under scrutiny, and go tell our stories not only to the scientific journals, but also to business managers. The need for a new, empirically driven research program on what we can learn from global trafficking networks on the issue of effective organizing in the global network society is thus highlighted.

From this ideological, pro-business viewpoint, global trafficking networks represent innovative players from which those saluting the image of global corporations on global markets can learn. It is obvious that these global trafficking networks are flexible, decentralized and are adapting well, and they have proven some degree of mastery of the global network society. This means that they have stories to tell and lessons to learn to those who are curious about better conquering the emerging network society.

The implication for proponents of the ideological argument is therefore that these trafficking networks deserve more attention from business researchers in order to help businesses in becoming more effective, more successful, and in better understanding the dynamics and consequences of the global network society.

The scientific argument

From the scientific viewpoint, these networks should be studied since they are a part of ‘what is’ in contemporary business life. A scientific discipline cannot limit itself to arbitrary decisions on what is legitimate to study and what is illegitimate to study *within* its field. A scientific discipline should study what is, what is done, who does it, how and why, within its field. This means that business studies is about what businesses do and as these global trafficking networks boil down to business and business operations – many times run and upheld through legitimate corporations – business researchers should study them.

One objection might be that: *as business researchers we do not study actors or organizations that include criminal elements.* But this is not a particularly fruitful position. Arguing that illicit networked enterprises should not be studied first of all neglects a significant part of what is and second of all, it makes the position of the discourse of business studies even more problematic: what is then really licit, or really illicit?

There is a strong tendency to categorize 'nodes' involved here as criminal or non-criminal, illegitimate or legitimate (Marine, 2006; Jones, et al., 2007). Rehn (2006) writes about the orthodox business studies, about how to do business well, in which the management of a construction firm by default is included, while the creation and marketing of pornography by default is left out. Pornography in this case, however, happens to be both legal and a very big and profitable industry, whatever we think of it. Furthermore, pornographic producers such as Private and Playboy have extended their brands into other segments on the market. Playboy works with products such as chocolate, clothes, coffee mugs and guitars. Still, according to Rehn (2006), pornography is basically left untouched by business researchers. The same, Rehn continues, goes with criminal activities (which he refers to as prime example of entrepreneurship; see also Rehn and Taalas, 2004) and the toy industry (which are referred to as an industry celebrating creativity and innovation). Behind these choices of what to study we sense arbitrary assumptions about what is appropriate to study and what is not.

Rehn's main point, which we adhere to, is that if business studies are limited to special parts and needs of the business community, which is argued for in the ideological argument, then business studies cannot be a science. Science should serve humanity and truth, not some chosen parts of it; parts that are arbitrarily deemed as 'appropriate'. This argument in a nutshell holds that the scientific discipline of business studies should allow and encourage the study of the global trafficking networks since they make up a significant part of 'what is'.

The moral argument

The scientific argument expands the ideological argument of why trafficking should be studied. We cannot exclude significant parts of the economy. It does not matter the nature of 'what is'. However, this expansion is based on a view of science as value free, objective and neutral. That is to say that we, as business researchers and as parts of the collective of business studies, should only observe what 'is' out there, but never put forth why we 'ought' to study trafficking and what we 'ought' to do with the findings generated from doing so.

Turning to the moral viewpoint we have in mind here, it could be argued that if we *sense* or *feel* that trafficking is destructive for people, animals and nature, we, as business researchers, are *obliged* to act and try to do something about it. The scientific community of business studies and its researchers ought to take responsibility by not only critically studying everything 'that is', but also trying to prevent bad things from happening as well as promoting good things in society (such as coming up with visions for a good society). The scientific realm of 'is' (truth, objectivity, neutrality etc.), however, excludes trying to do good for its own sake and the moral obligation in trying to do so, but from the moral perspective drawn upon here, there is simply no rift between 'is' and 'ought' (see Jonas, 1984). This does not, however, leave out reason as a fundamental basis for morality. It just points to that the moral obligation to act cannot entirely rely on knowledge beyond scientific doubt and on distinct categorizations. Thus, from 'we sense that people, animals and nature are harmed' follows 'we are obliged to try to do something about it'. This is the case with trafficking networks, the front-line actors in the emerging global network society.

Withholding the rift between 'is' and 'ought' is a commonly held position among the ideologists (stretching from mainstream to more critical researchers). But when the scientist enters the field to observe 'what is', the ideologist stays put, not only because business studies are limited to special parts and needs of the business community, but also

because of the positioning of him- or herself, the research community to which he or she belongs to, and to what 'is' going on out-there as *morally neutral*. The position held, as we see it, then essentially becomes an amoral position (Bonnedahl, Jensen & Sandström, 2007).

As a consequence of this amoral position, trafficking networks are excluded, but so are also so-called derivative stakeholders (Philips et al., 2003), i.e. groups or individuals who can do direct harm to businesses, but that are not part of the corporation's moral obligation since they do not contribute to the corporation's value creating process. Excluded here are usually poor people, the natural environment, activists, competitors, NGOs, media, consumer organizations, governmental bodies etc. Such stakeholders could indirectly be considered as moral subjects and objects if a normative stakeholder, to which the corporation has moral obligation (Philips et al., 2003), demands this. On the other hand, this amoral position of business researchers and the business community makes it perfectly legitimate to partake in the study of global corporations that are active in areas such as chemistry, food, cars, mining, oil, weapons, including their so-called normative stakeholders, such as financiers, managers, employees, customers, suppliers and owners, with the purpose of finding out the unique competitive advantages that make these practices profitable.

The position we take holds that by studying trafficking networks or other masters of change untouched by business researchers, we have the opportunity to learn about the global network society *in action*, which in turn could also prove to be where (some of) the large global corporations are heading. There are also good reasons to think that this is the direction that those with strong positions of power, such as the managers and owners of large global corporations, actually will strive towards. Consequently, the dominant interests will certainly attempt to speed-up rather than hinder the overall diffusion of the global network society. Of course, this does *not* imply that global corporations strive towards becoming traffickers, but that the route for

achievement, prescribed by management gurus (and others), do share the capabilities and skills that trafficking networks have acquired in order to successfully organize themselves in the emerging global network society.

We also have the possibility to map out pros and cons of the network society. As we have seen, this is a valid scientific argument and it might also prove to be a valid ideological argument. However, matters of good and evil must also be allowed into the analysis. For as Naím (2007) argues, the effects of illicit trade are raw and sordid, and the rise of the network society and networked enterprises certainly contains moral dilemmas as well as concrete moral problems of such a magnitude that it cannot be up to ideology and science to decide upon. The question of what could be deemed as good and evil is here left out and the crucial point is that the ideological and the scientific argument lack a moral compass. Put differently, the effects of the emergent global network society cannot be reduced to the dimensions of 'excellent organizing and economic efficiency' or 'is' or 'truth'.

To summarize the moral argument, we suggest two questions for researchers in critical organization inquiry to continue working with:

- If large global corporations learn the rules of the emerging global network society and follow their own rhetoric, based on management prescriptions of flexibility, decentralization and adaptability, striving to organize the way the traffickers have been presented in this paper, corporate predation will most likely increase. What consequences will that have on derivative stakeholders, normative stakeholders, democracy, human rights, equality, justice, solidarity etc.?
- On what moral grounds could the *modus vivendi* of trafficking be condemned as something bad and how could the 'bads' be translated into practice by business researchers so as to actively help prevent the 'bads' from happening?

Conclusions

In this paper, we have raised the issue of who, or what, performs as a master of the emerging global network society. We have concluded that, on paper, it should be the large global corporations, but they do not seem to meet all criteria (flexibility, decentralization, adaptability). Instead, a forerunner in action in terms of organizing in this society is the global trafficking network. This raises several issues for several areas (business studies, political science, sociology, gender studies, business practice, management consulting etc.), of which we have pursued the area of business studies. Three arguments to why we, as business researchers, should study global trafficking networks have been presented (the ideological, the scientific, the moral). Each of these arguments leads to the study of trafficking, but the position advocated in this paper, through an emphasis on the moral dimension, is that the two first cannot be left to their own destinies.

REFERENCES

Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1998a). *Work, consumerism and the new poor*. Celtic Court: Open University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1998b). *Globalization. The human consequences*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1999). *In search of politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z.. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2002). *Society under siege*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2006). *Liquid fear*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bonnedahl, K.J., Jensen, T., & Sandström, J. (2007). *Ekonomi och moral. Vägar mot ökat ansvarstagande (Economy and morality. Routes towards increased responsibility)*. Malmö: Liber Ekonomi.

Castells, M. (2000). Materials for an exploratory theory of the network society. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(1), 5-24.

Castells, M., & Himanen P. (2002). *The information society and the welfare state. The Finnish model*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Champy J. (1995). *Reengineering management*. London: Harper Collins.

Dickie, J. (2004). *Cosa Nostra. A history of the Sicilian mafia*. New York: Palgrave.

du Gay, P. (2000). *In praise of bureaucracy. Weber, organization, ethics*. London: Sage.

Hammer, M., & Champy, J. (1993). *Reengineering the corporations. A manifesto for business revolution*. New York: Harper Business.

Hamel, G. (with Breen, B) (2007). *The future of management*. Harvard: Harvard Business School Press.

Jensen, T. (2008). Voluntary ghettos and mobile bureaucracy. Civic activity and acts of citizenship under threat. In Hislop, D. (ed.), *Mobility and Technology in the Workplace* (43-53). London: Routledge.

Jensen, T., & Nylén, U. (2006). Striving for spontaneity. *Bureaucracy strikes back. Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 4(2), 144-158.

Jonas, H. (1984). The imperative of responsibility. In search of an ethics for the technological age. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Jones, L., Engstrom, D.W., Hilliard, T., & Diaz M. (2007). *Globalization and human trafficking*.

Jensen & Sandström

- Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 34(2), 107-122.
- Kallinikos, J. (1996). Technology and society. Interdisciplinary studies in formal organisations. Munich: Accedo Verlagsgesellschaft mbH.
- Kallinikos, J. (2001). The age of flexibility. Managing organizations and technology. Lund: Academia Adacta.
- Kallinikos, J. (2004). The social foundations of the bureaucratic order, *Organization*, 11(1), 13-36.
- Kanter, R.M. (1983). The change masters. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kotter, J.P. (1996). Leading change. Harvard: Harvard Business School Press.
- Marine, F.J. (2006). The effects of organized crime on legitimate businesses, *Journal of Financial Crime*, 13(2), 214-234.
- Naím, M. (2007). Illicit. How smugglers, traffickers and copycats are hijacking the global economy. London: Arrow books.
- Peters, T. (1992). Liberation management. London: Macmillan.
- Peters, T. (2003). Re-imagine. Business excellence in a disruptive age. London: Dorling Kindersley.
- Phillips, R., Freeman, E.R., & Wicks, A.C. (2003). What stakeholder theory is not, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 13(4), 479-502.
- Rehn, A. (2006). Företagsekonomi och "la trahison des clerics" (Business Studies and the Treason of the Intellectuals). Stockholm: Pink Machine Books.
- Rehn, A. (2008). On meta-ideology and moralization. A prolegomena to a critique of management studies. *Organization*, 15(4), 598-609.
- Rehn, A. & Taalas, S. (2004). Of crime and assumptions in entrepreneurship. In Hjorth, D., & Steyaert C. (eds.), *Narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship* (235-250). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Sassen, S. (2007). The places and spaces of the global. An expanded analytic terrain. In Held, D., & McGrew. A. (eds.), *Globalization theory. Approaches and controversies* (79-105). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Saviano, R. (2008). Gomorrah. London: PanMacMillan.
- Sennett, R. (1999). The corrosion of character. The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism. London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd.
- Sennett, R. (2006). The culture of the new capitalism. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Urry, J. (2003). Global complexity. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2006). Trafficking in persons. Global patterns. April 2006. See http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006-04.pdf
- The United Nations. Global initiative to fight human trafficking (GIFT). No date stated. Human trafficking: the facts. See http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/labour/Forced_labour/HUMAN_TRAFFICKING_-_THE_FACTS_-_final.pdf

Copyright of TAMARA: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science is the property of TAMARA: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.