

# **DIFFRACTION IN PRACTICE AND DIFFRACTION AS PRACTICE**

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# Barad's far reaching project

- ▶ A new ontology and ethics of difference as constitutive (world as entanglement)
- ▶ Find ways to think about the nature of causality, origin, relationality and change without taking these distinctions to be foundational or holding them in place' (Barad, 2011: 124)

# Barad's far reaching project

Diffraction as a way to illuminate the complexity of the always/already entangled processes of dis/continuous becomings that make up what we are used to calling 'world' (Thiele, 2014, p.207)

# Today

- ▶ A **modest** reading/betrayal of Barad
- ▶ Start thinking through the methodological implications of diffraction for social science
- ▶ “Diffractive readings bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with. They are respectful, detailed, ethical engagements” (Karen Barad)



# In the beginning it was reflexivity

“Reflexivity is about turning back on one self. It is about seeing oneself in the data. It is about... telling where the author is coming from.”

(Weick, 2002:984)

# Reflexivity

“Reflexivity ‘unsettles’ representation by suggesting that we are constantly constructing meaning and social realities as we interact with others and talk about our experience.

(Cunliffe, 2003:985)

# Problems with reflexivity

- ▶ Reflexivity often still adopts an ontology of separateness
- ▶ Reflexivity is still considered as a discursive affair
- ▶ Reflexivity and residual anthropomorphism: reflexivity is about people

# Problems with reflexivity: us /and them

Reflexivity is premised on an “ontology of separateness” that is a dualistic ontology that discerns among individuals and things, researchers and researched

(Keevers & Treleaven (2011))

# Problems with reflexivity: discursive sphere/anthropomorphism

Reflexivity 'unsettles' **representation** by suggesting that we are constantly constructing meaning and social realities as **we** interact with others and **talk** about **our** experience.

(Cunliffe, 2003:985)

# Moving beyond reflexivity: materiality matters



Language has been granted  
too much power

# Moving beyond reflexivity: materialism

Practices of knowing are  
specific material engagements  
that participate in  
(re)configuring the world



# Attention for the apparatus



An apparatus is the set of material-discursive practices with which we engage with the world



# The performativity is [in] the apparatus

Apparatuses produce distinctions that matter (...) they perform specific cuts



# From reflexivity to diffraction

- ▶ Diffraction: “the practice of reading insights through one another while paying attention to patterns of difference” (Barad, 2011: 3)



Diffraction can be a metaphor for another kind of critical consciousness

# From reflexivity to diffraction

- ▶ Understanding “entangled practices requires a non-additive approach that is attentive to the intra-action of multiple apparatuses of bodily production” (Barad, 2007: 94)
- ▶ “Diffraction allows you to study both the nature of the apparatus and also the object”

# Diffraction in practice

- ▶ Announcing diffraction
- ▶ *A method of study*: reading “data” and “texts” diffractively (diffractive reading)
- ▶ *A methodological tool*: juxtaposing apparatuses and reading one apparatus through the other to discover how they make a difference
- ▶ *Performing diffraction in practice*: producing situated interferences and inappropriate/d otherness (Minh-ha)

# Diffraction in practice I

## The video-production of organizational space

- ▶ What sort of space is showing up depending on the video apparatus we use to record coordination in clinical practice?



# The Panoramic View

- ▶ How does space emerge in this video?



# The Roving Point-of-view

- ▶ How does space emerge in this video?





# Focus on Diffractive Effects

## Viewing one Appartus through the other

### – Rewind the Panoramic View

- ▶ Now... how does space emerge – differently - in this video?





# The Performative Effects of Each Apparatus

## ► Panoramic View

- Space as physical extension
- Space as materialization of power

## ◎ Roving Point-of-view

- Space as practiced
- Affective dimension of spacing

Are these the performances of single apparatuses?

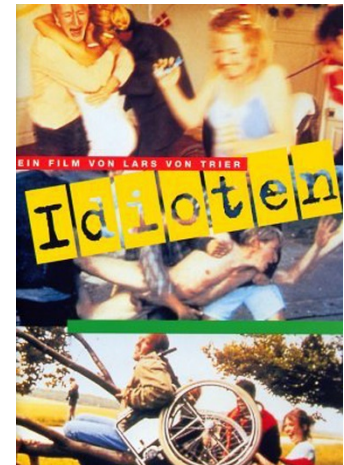
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# The Importance of Diffractive Effects

- the distal through the close
- the separated, (apparently) objective through the related, implicated
- the movement from within through the movement as collective choreography
- The emotionally affected through the panoptically withdrawn
- ...

# Further Entanglements and Diffractive Effects





# Bodies That Matter:

Taking a New Materialist Approach  
to Organisational Measurement

# Karen Barad's Onto-ethico-epistemology

- ▶ Inter-active gives way to intra-active
- ▶ Entanglement & material-discursivity
- ▶ Agential realism and making participatory choices as an ontological reality





# Creating and Revealing Invisible Practices through Diffraction

- ▶ What ever happened to the body?
- ▶ What is *diffraction* in practice?
- ▶ “Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every “thing”—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation.” – Barad, 2003.
- ▶ How does a body performing in space generate performativities that heighten/ create visibilities?



# Some Performativities in Performance!



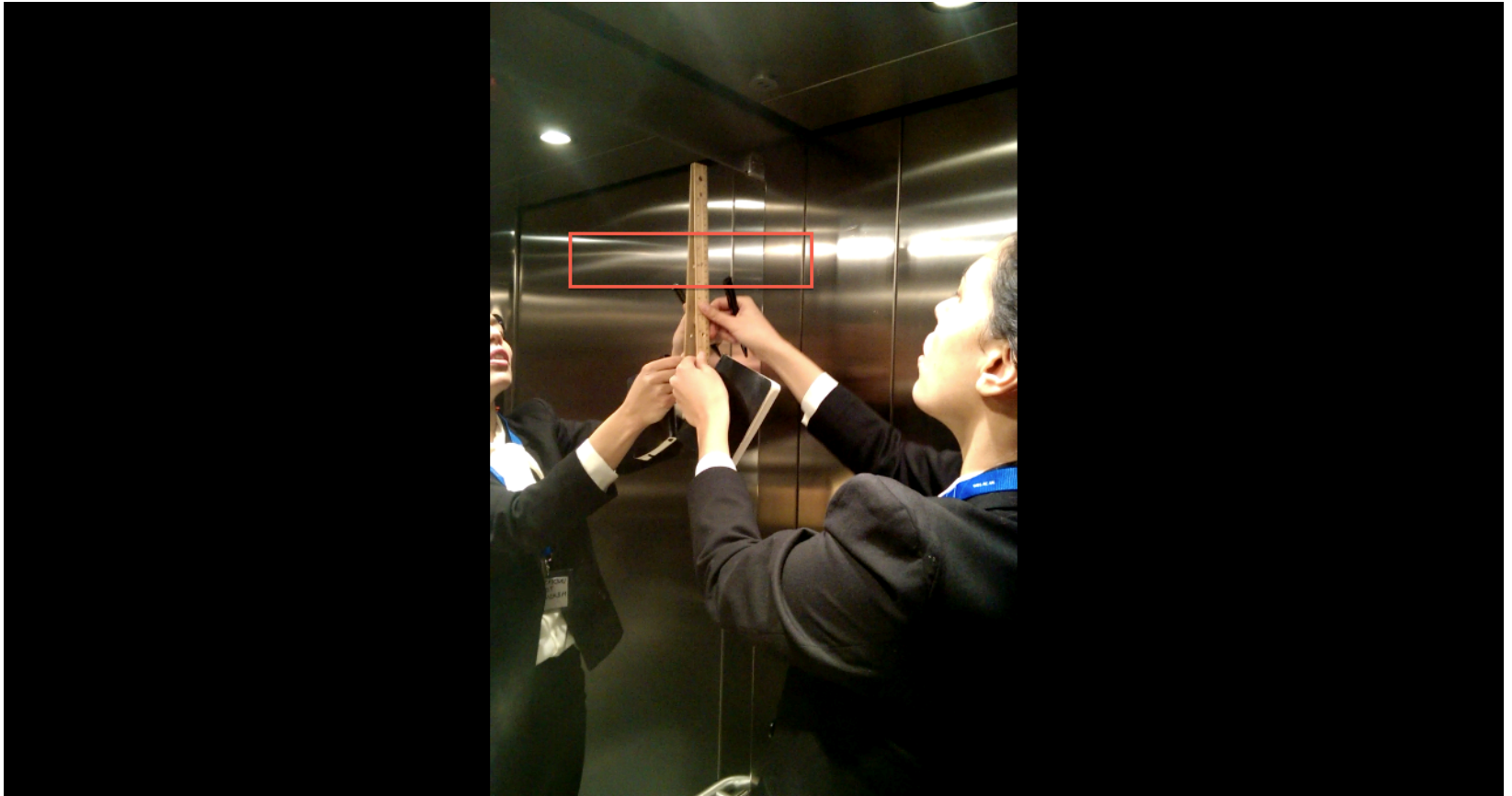










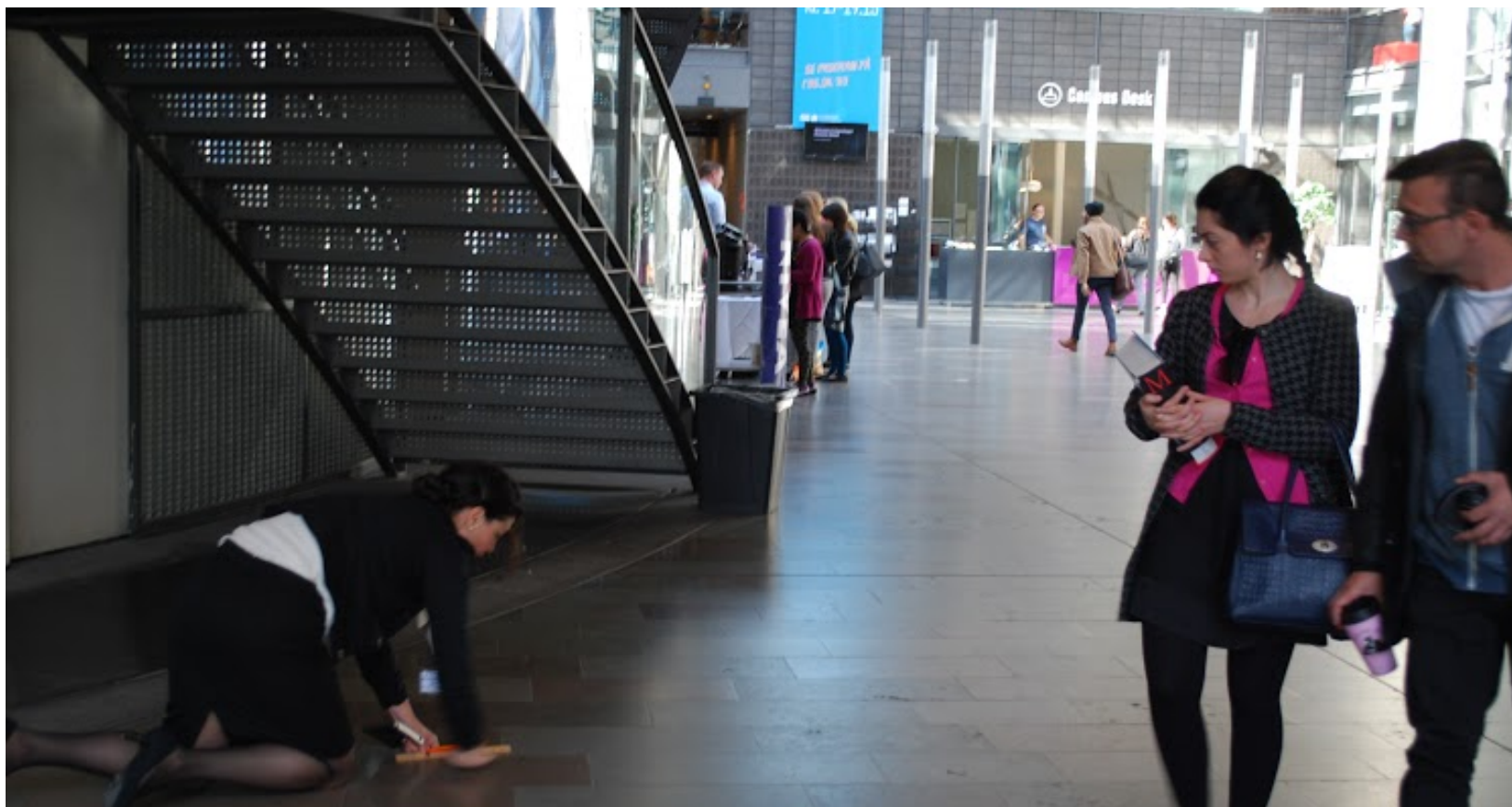




# Now at Copenhagen Business School...

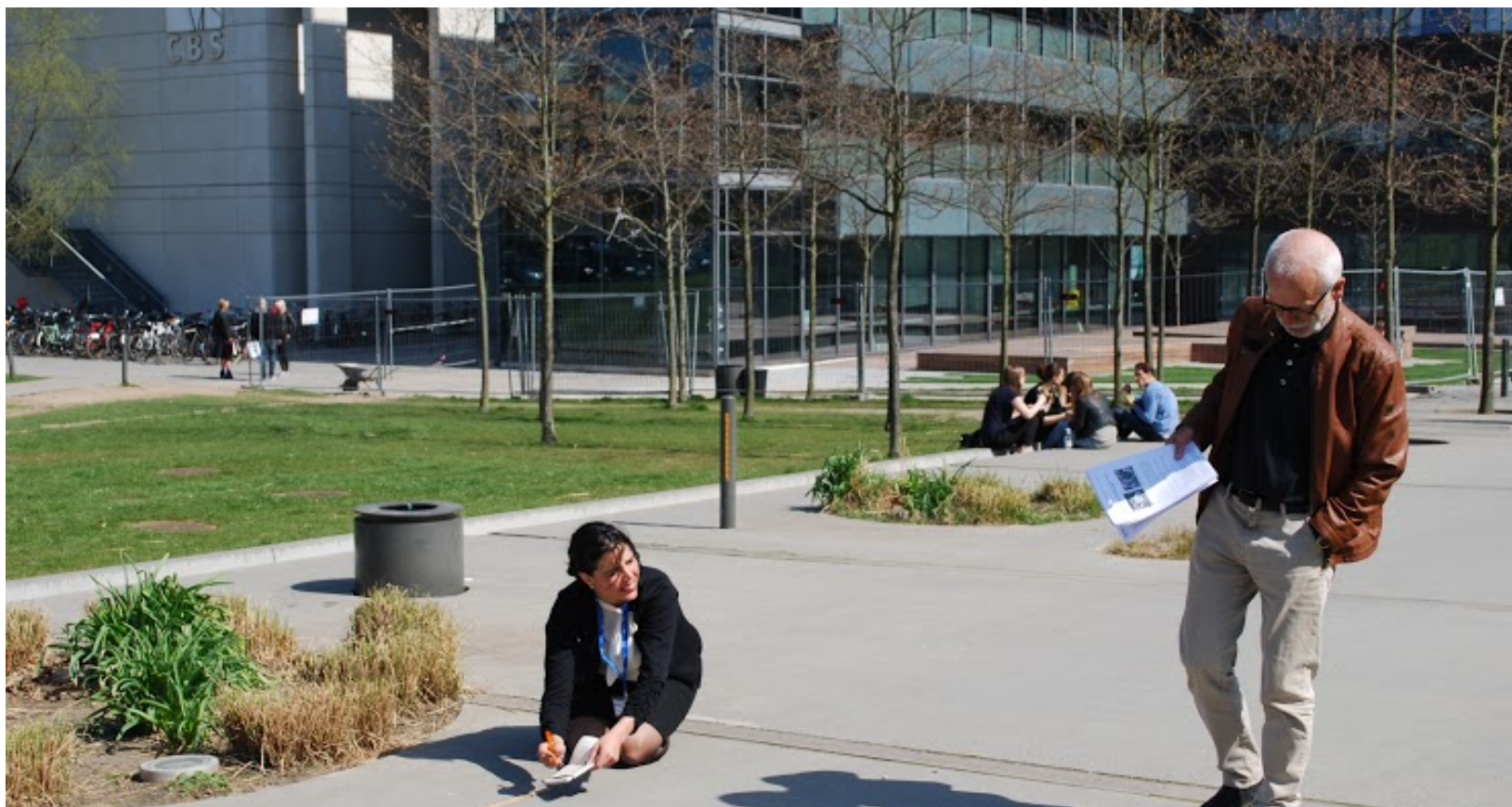


















# Just a few of the performativities emerging and made visible through diffraction *via and with* the body...

- ▶ Measuring and Gender
- ▶ Measuring and Turns of Power
- ▶ Measuring and Affect



# Diffraction the Two Methodological Styles through Each Other

- ▶ Bodies of documentation
  - Video documentation of a live event. (There are bodies moving and diffracting to produce new phenomena)
- ▶ Performing bodies
  - Physical “documenting” of a live event.
- ▶ Both ‘breach’ the everyday, but the response to having a performing body exceeding the boundaries of the everyday produces heightened responses / affects / diffractions
- ▶ Could this indicate that the visibility of actual practices is writ large via the kind of breaching implicit in a performing body?
- ▶ This arguably has huge implications for the role of (arts-based) transdisciplinarity in the development of practice focused methodologies.

