



Methodological frameworks for the geography of organizations

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Abstract

In this paper, we present three methodological frameworks for the geographic study of organizations. These are situated within three meta-theoretical perspectives in human geography: spatial science, critical realism, and post-structuralism. Each framework offers a different theorization of organizations, and each prompts different research questions that can be used to guide their geographic study. The research questions we offer are general, and are pertinent to all types of organizations. To supplement the methodological contributions of this paper, we suggest how each of these frameworks might inform empirical investigations of Appalshop, a media arts organization located in Whitesburg, Kentucky. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Organizations; Spatial science; Critical realism; Post-structuralism; Media-arts; Kentucky

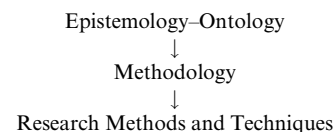
1. Introduction

This paper presents theoretical and methodological arguments aimed to enhance the study of organizations in geography. It does so, first, by arguing that organizations are valid, if theoretically complex, objects of analysis for geographers, and second, by theorizing the study of organizations with respect to three meta-theoretical perspectives of widespread use in the field: spatial science, critical realism, and post-structuralism. Each of these perspectives offers a different conceptualization of organizations, which in turn underwrites different methodological frameworks for their study. Contextualizing our discussion of these methodological frameworks is a discussion of the differences between organizations and institutions. We also present an historically-based review of the parallels between geography and organization theory, a subfield of the disciplines of management and sociology. We illustrate our theorization through a discussion of a media arts collective, Appalshop, located in Whitesburg, Kentucky.

Placing our effort in a general research context involves a recognition that the selection of objects of analysis, including organizations, is one of the key

moments in *methodology*.¹ The identification of any object is, however, logically subsequent to meta-theoretical decisions about epistemology and ontology, for these are instrumental in categorizing and theorizing the world, and hence objects, as such. Such meta-theories influence the conceptualization of organizations as objects by defining their boundaries, as well as their relations to other objects, to social relations, and to social power. In what follows we theorize organizations as objects whose contours are dependent upon meta-theoretical perspectives. These definitions, in turn, influence

¹ We understand methodology to refer to meso-level aspects of the research process (Harding, 1987). This distinguishes methodology from the meta-theoretical concerns of epistemology and ontology, on the one hand, and research methods and data analysis techniques, on the other hand:



Methodology requires the translation of epistemological and ontological precepts and assumptions into ‘data’ that can be analyzed. Stages in methodology include the definition and selection of objects of analysis, the conceptualization of appropriate data, and the formulation of research questions. It also involves assessments of reliability, validity, reflexivity, and research ethics.

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the kinds of research questions deemed to be appropriate to organizations, the determination of what constitutes appropriate data, and the techniques employed in empirical analysis.

Positioning the study of organizations within geography suggests an assessment of the relationship between this category of objects and those that have been asserted as foundational in geographic research. As the well-known story is told:² In this century's first fifty-odd years, *regions* and *landscapes* variously vied for position as objects of analysis. In the wake of quantitative geography, *spatial variations* – of innumerable sorts – reigned preeminent; this scientific turn was shortly thereafter augmented by the study of human spatial *behavior* through the turn to behavioral geography. A shift in the 1970s to the study of *perceptions, values, and meanings* was a primary contribution of humanistic geography, while marxist geographers promoted the dialectical study of *socio-spatial relations*. Feminist geographers, in turn, examined the *gendered dimensions* of these relations. The more recent turn to post-structuralism in geography has extended once more the array of available objects of analysis, including especially *texts* and *identities*.

Our rationale for systematizing the geographic study of *organizations* is twofold. At one level, we rely on the unassuming proposition that the aforementioned objects of geographic analysis are in fact produced through organizational activity, whether by large or small capitalist enterprises, elements of the state apparatus, or social, economic, and cultural associations – from families and trade associations to religious organizations and labor unions. The combined efforts of individuals networked within these social units stamp their ideological and material impress on regions and landscapes (as is the case for construction firms); they produce spatial variations (e.g., through state economic development offices); they help direct individual-level spatial behavior (through, for example, the strategies of geodemographic-marketing firms); they influence geographic perceptions, values, and meanings (through, for example, churches, schools, and professional academic organizations); they direct and redirect the unfolding of socio-spatial relations (as in the case of international non-governmental organizations); and, they promulgate texts (as in media collectives), give textuality to built environments (as in the case of historic preservation societies), and act to produce nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Natter and Jones III, 1997) of socio-spatial identification (as in patriotic youth organiza-

tions). Nothing, it seems, is beyond the reach of organizations: as William H. Whyte claimed of the mid-century in his groundbreaking treatise, *The Organization Man*, 'it is an age of organization' (Whyte, 1956, p. 12; his emphasis).

A more subtle rationale, beyond the readily demonstrated material and ideological effectivity of organizations in everyday spatial life, lies in the fact that organizations internalize social space, and they do so differently. One might anticipate, for example, that components of the state apparatus, which is typically hierarchically ordered, strictly delineated, and rule-bound, will internalize structured and ordered geographies, while looser networks and coalitions, such as voluntary food cooperatives, will operate with more rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) understandings of the world they engage. Organizations also internalize spatial contradictions, juxtapositions, and antagonisms, as well as the spatial possibilities and opportunities these disjunctures disclose. Organizations, therefore, do not simply produce geographies; they are, rather, infused with them, and these spatial ontologies and epistemologies are mapped onto their rules, procedures, and practices. What is more, these organizational correlatives feedback into the world. In this dialectical view, an understanding of the spatial orderings and geographical imaginations at work in an organization may provide clues to the geographic patterns it produces, the socio-spatial relations it structures, and the spatial discourses it deploys.

It is from this rationale that this article moves to integrate the study of organizations within three major meta-theoretical perspectives in geography. For each of these – spatial science, critical realism, and post-structuralism – we sketch broad ontological and epistemological coordinates. These are deployed to develop unique methodological stances toward organizations. The analysis is augmented by a set of exemplary research questions and appropriate techniques for analyzing data. The theoretical analysis is grounded by a discussion of how, respectively, spatial scientists, critical realists, and post-structuralists might approach the analysis of Appalshop, a media arts organization located in the eastern-Kentucky coalfield town of Whitesburg.

Over the past thirty years, Appalshop has produced more than 100 films and videos exploring Appalachian culture, economy, and politics. Appalshop (2000) also runs a community radio station, a summer institute training teenagers in film production, and a travelling theater troupe, along with other community-oriented educational and arts projects. Nearly forty full-time employees work on these various projects, and the organization's annual budget approaches two million dollars. While there is no single driving mission behind these various projects, Appalshop workers and their

² In one view, geography's traditional objects of analysis are test cases of chaotic conceptualization (Sayer, 1991), but perhaps readers will agree that this short history is 'chaotically adequate and adequately chaotic' (see Doel, 1999, p. 192).

publications consistently state that the organization helps mountain communities by providing educational resources, means of communication, and honest representations of Appalachia and its inhabitants. We draw material for hypothetical studies of Appalshop from the three-year long ethnography undertaken by Hanna (1997, 1998). His work includes a history of the organization, a discussion of its internal operations, and a deconstructive reading of its films and videos.³ Though our choice of Appalshop partly determines the research questions we pose to it, it should be emphasized that its selection serves only by example: any organization can be theorized through the three meta-theoretical perspectives described in this paper.

What follows is divided into five sections. The first presents a discussion of the distinctions between organizations and institutions. We then present an overview of the field of organization theory from the perspective of geography's own evolution. Our theoretical and methodological contribution, presented as a detailed comparative matrix, then follows. We ground the matrix through hypothetical analyses of Appalshop, and we conclude the paper by arguing on behalf of multiple, meta-theoretical approaches toward organizations in geography.

2. Organizations and institutions

Before embarking on a brief review of organization theory and its broad linkages to geographic research over the past fifty years, it is useful at this stage of the paper to make some comments on the distinctions between organizations and institutions. At one level, these terms are distinguished by their historical deployment within the disciplinary language of organization theory, a field that in the main tends to distinguish between institutions (and institutional analysis) and organizations. Organization theory has historically made several uses of 'institutions' (see Tolbert and Zucker, 1996). One of these associates them with important and venerable organizations (Selznick, 1957); another, coming from a Parsonian (1951) sociological tradition, identifies sectors of society distinguished by their different values and practices, such as education, the state, the market, the culture industry, religion, and the family. In this Parsonian view, institutions are distinct from organizations, the concrete social units situated within institutions.

³ Hanna's research places Appalshop's films within the ongoing struggle over Appalachia's representation as a region, and over 'Appalachian' as an identity category. Hanna's work integrates portions of the meta-theoretical perspectives presented here, particularly that of post-structuralism, but the suggested analyses in the penultimate section of the paper are just that. For his research on Appalshop, see (Hanna, 1997, 1998).

In still another use of the term, 'institutional theory' refers to a mid 1970s critique of discrete and internalized conceptions of organizations, such as those found in systems theory and rational choice theory. According to Barley and Tolbert (1997, pp. 93–94), institutional analysis initially highlighted 'cultural influences on decision-making ... It [held] that organizations, and the individuals who populate them, are suspended in a web of values, norms, beliefs, and taken-for-granted assumptions that are at least partially of their own making'. As the institutional perspective developed, it came under the sway of structuration theory. Consequently, the larger 'environment' within which organizations were thought to be embedded was extended to include authoritative, regulatory, and allocative resources available to actors. Institutional analysis sets out to examine the 'shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships' (Barley and Tolbert, 1997, p. 96).

While a distinct contribution of the institutional perspective was the destabilization of the boundaries of organizations, in most quarters the field of organization theory remains wedded to the organization as an empirical object in its own right. As Clegg and Hardy note

[O]rganizations are empirical objects. By this we mean that we see something when we see an organization, but each of us may see something different. For instance, we can refer to 'the World Bank' as an 'organization', one with specific resources and capacities, with rules that constitute it; with a boundedness that defines it more or less loosely; with a history; with employees, clients, victims and other interested agents. These boundaries, these rules, this history, these agents must be enacted and interpreted, however, if they are to form the basis for actions. For example, a rule has to be represented as something enforceable and obligatory before it means anything, and may mean nothing or it may mean many things, to members and their experience of everyday life (Clegg and Hardy, 1996, p. 3; emphasis in original).

Consistent with this view, institutions can refer to the coalescence and interlocking of structural relations that arise from the innovation, habituation, objectification, and sedimentation produced by social actors embedded in concrete organizations (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996, p. 182). It is this distinction that leads one to think of the 'market' as an institution that coalesces capitalist social relations (as well as other social relations, such as patriarchy), and to reserve the term 'organization' for specific business enterprises. As Clegg and Hardy (1996) affirm, this ontological hierarchy still retains multiple ways of theorizing. One could, for example, elect to view the market as an independent structural relation

causally connected to other institutional relations (e.g., those of the state). Alternatively, one could view markets as *internally* related to and structured by other sets of relations, such that their analytic separation is untenable, as is consistent with some dialectical theories (Ollman, 1993; Harvey, 1996). In either case, the organization retains its integrity as an empirical object, though one ‘shot through’ with institutional relations.

Another view, however, flattens the ontological distinctions, making ambiguous the boundaries between institutions and organizations. In this constructivist perspective, it is discourses about the world, including ‘economy’, ‘society’, and ‘politics’, that bring forth objects and events and determine their relations to one another (Foucault, 1970; Gibson-Graham, 1996). This suggests that there are no *a priori* grounds for conceptualizing the independence, or even the ‘real’ existence, of institutions or organizations. Rather, discursive practices of innovation, habituation, objectification, and sedimentation construct both, assigning them, through processes of social signification, the status of objects, and endowing them with causal effectivity. The relationship between organizations and the theories we bring to their study can therefore be reversed from that suggested by Clegg and Hardy (1996), with the prior emphasis on the epistemological enframing that constructs the World Bank as an empirical object. This conceptual reversal, however, need not deny the ‘material’ importance of organizations (or institutions), for it is in their discursive crystallization that one finds the effects of discourses (making, for example, ‘the State’ something to obey; Natter and Jones, 1997; Jones and Natter, in press).

Based largely on the conventions of organization theory, we have elected here to use the term ‘organization’, but we do so in recognition of the fact that the distinctions between organizations and institutions – if any – remain open for discussion. More important for our purposes here is to suggest how organizations might be theorized from different perspectives within geography. Within spatial science, we would be inclined to theorize organizations as bounded units with a fixed membership, a defining set of rules and practices, and a precise locational extent. Within this perspective, which is consistent with functionalist approaches in organization theory (see Scott, 1998, for a discussion), an organization’s contours are relatively self-evident and unproblematic. Interestingly, these are characteristics not always shared by other spatial units of analysis (e.g., political districts), which are often fraught with complications introduced by the modifiable areal unit problem. Such simplifications in technical matters may involve no reduction in the amount or quality of available data: the transactions between organizations or the outputs (e.g., investments) of even a single organization can be used to develop insights into a myriad of processes influencing spatial variations.

For critical realists, by contrast, organizations will be theorized as object- or event-producing entities whose actors are embedded in wider social, economic, and political structures and mechanisms (Sayer, 1992). The dialectical embeddedness of organizations within these wider social relations greatly complicates their study, for such relations undermine the taken-for-granted delineations of an organization’s boundaries. And yet, even when conceived as dialectically embedded in the wider society within which they are situated, organizations provide researchers with operational entry-points through which the unfolding of social relations may be examined. Indeed, the socio-spatial complexity of necessary and contingent relations suggests that organizations may well help researchers frame their inquiries, for the alternative may be to trace these social relations across all possible objects of analysis, a task that may often be unnecessarily complicated or, simply, impossible.

Finally, post-structuralist geographers may take organizations to be contingently stabilized objects of discourse, but even here they serve as useful entry-points into the analysis of social power. Such researchers face the task of tracing an infinite spiral of intertextually linked meanings and elisions; this is made more complicated by the fact that intertextuality is also contextually mediated. In these cases, organizations can serve as sites for both tracing the dissemination of discourses and their contextually mediated dynamics. What is more, organizations are productive of certain meanings rather than others, and in this sense one can select them as candidates through which to view the operation of social power that limits what is thought, as well as what is thought to be possible.

Finally, a meta-theoretical perspective on organizations might make use of all three perspectives (Morgan, 1997). For example, one might begin an analysis of an organization through an everyday understanding of its self-defined limits (e.g., the Geography Department), but researchers may begin to unsettle this boundary by theorizing its organizational-level interconnections with other collectives (e.g., the College of Arts and Sciences, the Institute of British Geographers), with institutional networks (e.g., the academy, the state, the market), with social relations (e.g., of patriarchy, colonialism), or with discourses that make the organization possible and that stabilize its boundaries (e.g., geography departments are organizations that rely on and propagate discourses about something called ‘geography’).

3. Organization theory and geography

Having specified our position with respect to these two terms, we now turn to a brief discussion of the

historical development of organization theory.⁴ Interestingly, the post-World War II evolution of organization theory has significant parallels to the history of geography over the same time period. Organization theory matured in the immediate post-war era through funding by the US government and private foundations; their mandate to scholars was to create a scientific knowledge base for management practice. Researchers published their work in such journals as *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, and *Management Science*, and through the 1960s their research largely heeded Simon's (1945, p. 253) caution, echoing that of many scientific geographers, that 'administrative science, like any science, is concerned purely with factual statements. There is no place for ethical assertions in the body of a science'.

As in geography, the hegemony of positivistic-quantitative approaches in organization theory began to break down in the early to mid 1970s with the rise of various strains of critical theory (Silverman, 1971; Perrow, 1979; for a review see Steffy and Grimes, 1986). Organization theorists began to question, in the words of Smircich and Calás (1995, p. xix) 'the basic assumptions we are bringing to our work as scholars, as well as ... the ends that we are serving'. Researchers began to distance themselves from what were perceived as mechanistic approaches toward organizations in favor of 'organic' conceptualizations that called attention to the wider social context within which organizations operate. This led researchers to study values in organizations, to incorporate issues of gender, and to adopt critical-emancipatory stances toward their object of analysis. In attempting to free themselves from their role as 'handmaidens of management and industry' (Zey-Ferrell, 1995, p. 52), organization theorists began to study new social movements and other alternative organizations. In doing so, they argued that 'the proclaimed objectivity and moral neutrality of organizational research in fact favors established power holders and thus presents an inadequate account of the complexity of organizations' (Smircich and Calás, 1995, p. xx).

By the end of the 1970s, critical organization theory had begun to coalesce around both interpretive and radical perspectives – fueled in part by the influential studies of writers such as Braverman (1974), Burawoy (1979), and Edwards (1979). Burrell and Morgan (1979) 'mapped' (their term) these various efforts in their

influential work, which both introduced the concept of 'paradigm' (Kuhn, 1970) to organization theorists (a concept particularly new to those in North America), and legitimated the research of those theorists whose approaches were outside the mainstream positivist/managerialist paradigm. Yet, some of these alternative studies were also criticized for failing to overcome problems of class and technological determinism (Hillard, 1991), and for their neglect of the symbolic dimensions of organizational life (the latter point resonating with distinctions between marxist and cultural geographers in the 1980s and beyond).

The 1980s saw two responses to these critiques. The first of these is a reconstituted institutional theory that took seriously the interaction between agency and structure within organizations. This work was largely influenced by Giddens (1984), and more recently, in an effort to explicate the ontological and methodological grounds of structuration theory, some neo-institutionalists have turned to critical realism (Reed, 1997). A second line of analysis emerging out of, and in response to, radical organization theory draws its inspiration from cultural studies. The focus of this research is on discourses within organizations,⁵ and is driven by a list of post-modern concerns over epistemology (Knights, 1997).

Thus, at the present time we find that the meta-theoretical structure of organization theory closely parallels geography's own 'divisions' between scientific, critical realist, and post-structuralist approaches.⁶ The literature also suggests that the lynchpin of distinction among these approaches, at least as they resonate within and through organization theory, is the appropriate conceptualization of structure and agency. This, in the words of one commentator, is the 'most prevalent dualism in organizational analysis' (Knights, 1997, p. 3). In its positivistic and still largely structural-functionalist versions, organization theorists are comfortable in ignoring or effacing the dualism. Donaldson, a self-defined positivist (1985), remarks that the structure-action framework is not useful, and that 'a better approach is to persist with the pursuit of situationally deterministic explanations through models which deal in a limited number of variables and simple, parsimonious theories. Action-level variables should be included selectively only where needed to fill in gaps in explanatory power' (Donaldson, 1997, p. 88). On the other hand, critical realists are committed to studying actors and structures, and have attacked post-modernists for ignoring the

⁴ The terms 'organization theory' and 'organization studies' tend to be used interchangeably, with the latter more common in Britain than in North America. These different terms also are suggestive of the more 'managerialist' stance of North American organization theorists (see Clegg et al., 1996, p. xxiii).

⁵ As an early paper declared, 'leadership is the management of meaning' (Smircich and Morgan, 1982).

⁶ Organization studies also includes a considerable body of work in the 'interpretivist' paradigm (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979, chapters 6 and 7), which we briefly discuss later and in footnote 8, below.

difference by collapsing ontology. Referring to post-modern organization theory, Reed (1997, p. 27) a critical realist, writes

By analytically rendering down agency and structure to discursive practice, Foucault and his followers within organizational analysis disconnect the latter from the social actors and the action that initially generated them, while simultaneously obscuring, if not obliterating, the constraining or regulatory role that social structures play in the process of institution building. As in the case of ethnomethodology and actor-network theory, we are offered a one-level, unstructured and highly compressed social ontology in which there are no enduring and stratified institutional landscapes within which social actors and action can be located and explained. Agency and structure are analytically conflated in such a way that the interplay between the two and its vital role in reproducing and/or transforming social structures is denied by an ontological vision and explanatory logic that can only 'see' flat social surfaces without the stratified structural relations and mechanisms that give them space, consistency and continuity over time.

In contrast to this view, post-modern organization theorists⁷ argue that in spite of the efforts of agency-structure adherents to theorize a duality, their enlightenment epistemology cannot help but reproduce the dualism they seek to reconcile (Knights, 1997, p. 13). As Knights (1997, p. 16) writes

If meaning cannot be rendered unproblematic, then encapsulating the world in terms of a dualism between ... 'actor' and 'structure' is no longer viable and its continued attempt can only be seen as reflecting a hidden desire for order and stability. Recently, the absurdity of hierarchical or present/absent dichotomies within dualistic thinking has been recognized, but instead of dismantling the dualistic edifice, attempts have been made to reconcile the terms of the polarity by generating some kind of balance between them ... Deconstruction theory, however, does not simply mean an overturning or reversal of the hierarchy of dualistic categories or a reconciling of the presence/absence dichotomy, but their complete eradication ...

⁷ 'Post-modern' is a more common label in critical organizational theory than 'post-structuralist' (e.g., Alvesson and Deetz, 1996; Hatch, 1997), although it is clear that the theoretical lineage involves many of the same thinkers. Hatch (1997, p. 5), for example, credits Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Rorty, and Baudrillard, among others, for contributing to the development of post-modern organizational theory.

This brief sketch of the broader contours of contemporary organization theory thus shows significant overlaps with ongoing theoretical debates in geography. Our approach in the remaining part of the paper is to offer a series of 'spatializations', geographic questions about organizations that are consistent with the larger theoretical rubrics that cut across organization theory and into the field of geography.

4. Three methodological frameworks

The presentation of our methodological frameworks takes the form of a matrix (Table 1), with rows indicating key features and columns corresponding to the three meta-theories under analysis. The first row offers parallels between geography's meta-theoretical perspectives and organization theory's paradigms and theories/approaches (see discussion below). We then present the distinguishing characteristics of organizations within spatial science, critical realism, and post-structuralism, specifically as their ontological and epistemological coordinates relate to (a) distinguishing features of organizations within each meta-theoretical approach; (b) methodological frames for the collection and analysis of data; (c) exemplary research questions related to the spatiality of organizations, their internal characteristics, and their external relationships; (d) assumptions pertaining to researcher-researched relationships; and (e) methods for analyzing research questions.

Though we have divided our analyses into meta-theoretical categories, we offer two cautionary remarks regarding the grid-like structure of the matrix. Firstly, at a purely theoretical level, we assume that the distinctions between ontology and epistemology that underpin meta-theories are themselves produced through a constitutive and exclusionary process, one that stabilizes a series of methodologically significant binary oppositions and concepts (e.g., objectivity/subjectivity). In this process, concepts are defined, hierarchically ordered, and differentially incorporated into ontological and epistemological frameworks and congealed into meta-theoretical positions. In doing so, however, the privileged moment in a binary pair is defined through the 'trace' (Derrida, 1987) of the excluded moment. As a result, meta-theories are themselves 'always already' defined not as positive essences, but as what they are not (Dixon and Jones, 1996, 1998), and therefore clean separation between meta-theories is not theoretically possible. Though the matrix invokes its own categorical imperative, we remind readers that it is only a heuristic device for framing interrogations.

Secondly, at an operational level, we note that the first row in Table 1 involves a 'mapping' of paradigms and theories/approaches in organization theory into geography's meta-theories, and that this process itself is

Table 1
Methodological frameworks for the study of organizations in geography

	Spatial science	Critical realism	Post-structuralism
<i>Organization theory</i>			
Exemplary paradigms	Paradigm level: <i>functionalism</i>	Paradigm level: <i>radical structuralism</i>	Paradigm level: <i>radical humanism</i>
Theories/approaches	<p>Theory/approach level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Systems theory</i>: Miller (1978), Thompson (1967), March (1965) • <i>Rational choice theory/bounded rationality</i>: Simon (1945), March and Simon (1958) • <i>Resource-dependency</i>: Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) • <i>Structural contingency</i>: Donaldson (1985, 1997) • <i>Strategic-contingencies</i>: Hickson et al. (1971) • <i>Strategic choice</i>: Child (1972) • <i>Population ecology</i>: Hannan and Freeman (1977) 	<p>Theory/approach level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Institutional</i>: Powell and DiMaggio (1991) • <i>Power-conflict perspective</i>: Alvesson (1987), Clegg (1989), Barker (1993) • <i>Structuration</i>: Orlikowski (1992), Roberts and Grabowski (1996) • <i>Dialectical analysis</i>: Benson (1977), Grimes and Cornwall (1987) • “<i>Normal accidents</i>”: Perrow (1984), Shrivastava (1989) • “<i>Garbage can</i>”: Cohen et al., (1972); March and Weissinger-Baylon (1986), Paterson (1998) • <i>Critical theory</i>: Steffy and Grimes (1986), Alvesson and Willmott (1992) 	<p>Theory/approach level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Post-modern organization theory</i>: Boje et al. (1998), Parker (1992), Burrell (1994, 1998), Calás and Smircich (1997, 1999) • <i>Feminist organization theory</i>: Martin (1990), Iannello (1992), Calás and Smircich (1996), Kondo (1990) • <i>Discourse theory</i>: Mumby (1988), Gephardt (1993) • <i>Actor-network theory</i>: Law (1991, 1994), Mol and Law (1994), Hassard et al. (1999)
<i>Geography and organizations</i>			
Distinguishing features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations (<i>i</i>) are viewed as distinct entities and can be treated as independent observations existing in discrete space (<i>X, Y</i>) and time (<i>T</i>) dimensions • Organizations have measurable attributes (<i>Z</i>), as do their sub-units • Organizations engage in transactions (<i>W</i>) with their external environment (which includes other organizations); sub-unit level interactions may also be examined • Agents (<i>j</i>) within the organization exhibit behaviors (<i>U</i>) that may be explainable in terms of the organization’s characteristics (<i>X, Y, T, Z, W</i>), or in terms of the sub-units with which the agent has interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations are viewed as objects and events produced by the interaction of mechanisms and structures (including institutions), both necessary and contingent • Organizational activity and impacts are contextually mediated at local, regional, and global scales • The structure and operations of organizations are produced by actors who are embedded in socio-historical-spatial relations and who possess practical knowledge of these relations, mechanisms, and structures • Actors can alter their practices in light of practical knowledge, and thereby transform social relations, mechanisms, and structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations conceived of as the temporarily-fixed product of capillary power relations that fix operating procedures, rules, and practices • Organizations are key social sites for the production of knowledge and meaning, and are sites through which social interpretations are contested • Organizational practices and discourses are key in understanding the production of identities and the performance of subjects • The discourses of organizations are intertextually and contextually linked to the wider operation of social power flowing through organizations; in this sense, there is no ‘outside’ to the organization
Methodological frame	<i>Mapping the organization</i>	<i>Contextualizing the organization</i>	<i>Deconstructing the organization</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical geographic studies would examine variations in organizational or sub-unit variables (<i>X, Y, T, Z, W</i>), agent level variables (<i>U</i>), or their interaction, with particular emphasis on the generation of spatial patterns in the organization or its external physical and social environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical geographic studies would examine the organization in its socio-historical context, with attention to the causal effectivity, both necessary and contingent, of structures and mechanisms and their dialectical relation to the organization, its actors, and its external physical and social environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical geographic studies would examine the textuality of organizational life, and in particular the production and dissemination of spatial discourses flowing through the organization, with attention to stabilizations and de-stabilizations of power and identity through social space

Table 1 (Continued)

Exemplary research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the spatial pattern of the organization's inputs and outputs (capital, goods, services), and how do these affect spatial patterns in the organization's external environment? • What is the economic, political, and social impact of the organization in its local and regional setting? • To what extent is the reach area of the organization: (a) correlated with the spatial distribution of need; or, (b) a function of the spatial distribution of demand? • How do the site and situation characteristics of the organization influence the activities (e.g., commuting patterns) of people inside and outside the organization? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organization link, mediate, and transform macro-level restructurings (e.g., globalization) with local restructurings (of race, class, and gender, for example)? • How do locally varying contexts of social relations differentially affect the internal structure and external relations of the organization (and how does this process differ for similar organizations in different places)? • How is space both a resource and a constraint to actors embedded in organizational settings, and how do organizations, in turn, structure socio-spatial relations through the production of different objects and events? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the spatial imaginaries at work in the organization, and how are these propagated beyond its 'borders'? • What are the contestations over meanings produced in the organization, and to what extent do they influence its spatial praxis? • How are spatial knowledges and their conformative practices reproduced through the organization's discursive regulation of rights, rules, and responsibilities? • How, in turn, do these spatial epistemologies within the organization themselves become imposed upon and enacted in social space more generally? • How do organizations spatially mark socially constructed identities?
Research/researcher relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjective impulses are controlled in favor of objective forms of research analysis and presentation • Researcher maintains a 'distance' between subject and object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher and research subject are both embedded in larger social and spatial structures, and thus the research findings are contingent on these structures and must be taken into account • Researcher and research subject can both challenge and reproduce structures of social relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher eschews total knowledge, understanding that her/his interpretations are 'views from somewhere' and, therefore, not whole, definitive, or final • Reflexivity includes a monitoring of the researcher's positions with respect to the organization and to other organizations, such as the university, of which she/he is a part
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive and inferential statistics • Cartography and GIS • Structured survey/interview analysis • Network and transaction analysis • Controlled subject experimentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnography • Participant observation • Structured and unstructured interviews • Descriptive statistics • Participatory action research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnography • Participant observation • Unstructured/open-ended interviews • Discourse analysis • Textual and visual interpretation

an act of interpretation. We employed Burrell and Morgan's (1979) organization theory paradigms. They distinguished them by their distribution across two sets of binaries: the subjective and the objective (distinguishing the character of epistemological approaches), and the conflictual and the orderly (distinguishing the character of ontology, i.e., the view of the social world held by the researcher). This two-by-two typology resulted in a fourfold paradigmatic structure: functionalism (objectivist/orderly), interpretivism (subjective/orderly), radical humanism (subjective/conflictual), and

radical structuralism (objective/conflictual). Within this framework, spatial scientific approaches are most closely mapped onto functionalism in organization theory; critical realism shares an affinity with radical structuralism; and post-structuralist approaches are most associated with radical humanism (even though the formalization of post-modern and post-structuralist perspectives in both geography and organization theory arrived subsequent to Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigmatic analysis). Interpretivist research, which supports, for example, studies of organizational culture

(Trice and Beyer, 1993), symbolism (Young, 1989), and the meaning of work (Besser, 1996), are not clearly linked to any meta-theoretical perspective in geography, and was omitted in Table 1.⁸

Subsumed within these organization theory paradigms, moreover, one finds particular theories and approaches. These also appear in Table 1, structured according to their relevance to geography's meta-theories, but here again, caution is urged. The institutional approach, which we represent as critical realist, is a multifaceted body of literature whose edges variously shade into functionalist, interpretivist, and post-modern paradigms. What is more, even those organization theorists whose work is dedicated to one or another theory or approach, often borrow concepts, variables, and research questions from theorists working in other organization paradigms (see, for example, Sutton and Rafaeli, 1988). The multiplicities found in any given theory or approach, together with researchers' unevenly developed adherence to ontological and epistemological strictures, makes any such mapping, particularly when attempted for another discipline, a necessarily partial approximation.

Rather than review here in detail the table's contents, readers are invited to examine the matrix in relation to their own substantive research, and to formulate their own research questions. In lieu of the table's description, the following section illustrates an application to one such substantive domain centered on the organization of Appalshop.

5. Analyzing Appalshop meta-theoretically

5.1. Spatial science: mapping Appalshop

A spatial scientific approach toward Appalshop would first place the organization in time and space, determine its sources of funding, personnel, and other resources, describe geographic patterns in both the content and reception of its films, recordings, and associated products, and measure its connections with other organizations. With these data researchers might investigate the following:

- What is the impact (social, political, economic) of Appalshop's presence on the city of Whitesburg,

Kentucky, specifically, and the region of central Appalachia more broadly?

- Is there a spatial correlation between the sources of grant funding and the locations of Appalshop's presentations and sales?
- What socioeconomic variables predict the distributions of Appalshop's products?
- How does Appalshop compare to other community media and arts organizations, and what accounts for the differences?

Based on these questions, a number of analyses could be performed that map Appalshop's location and measure its impact on Whitesburg and other communities with which it interacts. Appalshop lies at the heart of the Appalachian Region, as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). All of its divisions are headquartered at the Appalshop Center in Whitesburg, although its Roadside Theater division has additional office space in Wise County, Virginia. Overlaying its location on maps of socio-economic conditions in the ARC reveals that Appalshop is located in an area of high unemployment, low incomes, and high poverty rates (Fig. 1). Given this location, a spatial scientific researcher might be interested in the economic impact of Appalshop on the depressed community of Whitesburg; in this case, an economic base analysis of the impact of the organization within the larger economy of the area would be suggested.

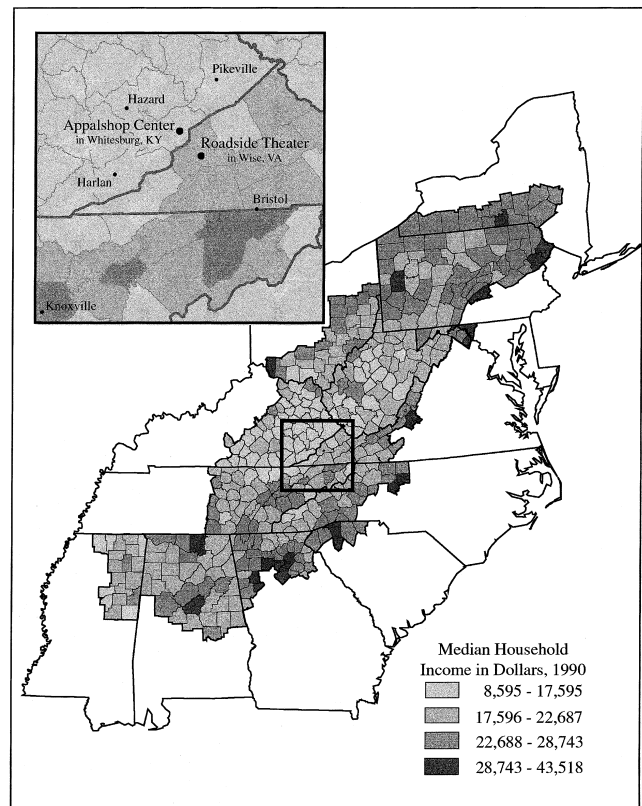


Fig. 1. Appalshop in the Appalachian Regional Commission area.

⁸ Interpretivist approaches developed in the 1980s, and took their inspiration from a host of symbolic interaction and interpretivist social theorists (Berger and Luckman, Geertz, Goffman, Ricoeur, early Barthes, de Saussure; see Hatch, 1997, p. 5). This lineage set the stage for a 'linguistic turn' in organization theory, but it was not yet nor is it today post-modern (or in geographic terms, 'post-structuralist'). Without a strong parallel in geography, this paradigm in organization theory has not been analyzed.

Secondly, a spatial scientist might be interested to map Appalshop's inputs and outputs and pose hypotheses related to the spatial patterns of these variables. As regards the organization's inputs, Appalshop could not survive without the grants it obtains from government agencies and private foundations. Fig. 2 presents available data on the geography of the organization's grants for the years 1996–1997. Statistical analysis might suggest that the distribution of grants be positively correlated with the number of corporate headquarters or governmental and non-governmental agencies existing across space. Other variables, such as average income, might enhance such an analysis, allowing Appalshop's members to target areas underpredicted by a regression model based on such variables.

Fig. 2 also suggests that Appalshop's donations are spatially constrained to the eastern United States: though it has been successful in obtaining funds from outside its economically depressed region, there are many untapped areas where funding might be sought. The geography of Appalshop's outputs, shown in Fig. 3, might augment the analysis of grants described above. Unlike its sources of funding, the distribution of Appalshop's products is national in scale. The organization not only successfully targets major metropolitan areas for the distribution of its products, but also many poor rural counties, an effect of the organization's interest in linking its activities with those of other similarly focused artistic collectives throughout the country (Hanna, 1997). In matching the geography of its presence in communities with its successes in obtaining funds, a researcher would necessarily have to take into account the uneven distribution of wealth across the United States.

At the internal level of the organization, one can note that each of Appalshop's nine divisions, while sharing personnel, office space, and other resources, have

themselves quite distinct patterns of inputs and outputs. Research could be directed to understand differences in the spatial range of each sub-unit, taking into account not only the division's mission, but also its funding level and other resources. For example, the works of Appalshop's American Festival Project, Roadside Theater, and film divisions are distributed at national and, at times, global scales. Broadcast rights for the films making up Appalshop's Headwater Television series, for example, were purchased by public stations in twenty-six states, while the largest consumers of video tapes are college and university libraries. Its Appalachian Media Institute and WMMT radio station, on the other hand, are locally constrained.

Finally, Appalshop seeks connections with like organizations through cultural exchanges of its films, videos, and other products, as well as through its presentations at conferences, festivals, and state-sponsored cultural events. In addition, the organization has exchanges with other collectives and organizations in England, Sweden, and Indonesia, among other countries (Bienko, 1992). A graph-theoretic analysis (Lowe and Moryadas, 1975, chapter 5) of such interconnections might reveal the larger spatial and structural patterns of community-based media organizations across the globe.

The analyses suggested above would require geographically referenced data on: the organization's employment, operating expenses, revenues, and grants; the distribution of its products; and its transactions and interconnections with similar organizations. Together, such analyses could shed light on the impact that an organization such as Appalshop has on its immediate location, and on the spatial variability of the artistic sector at regional, national, and international scales.

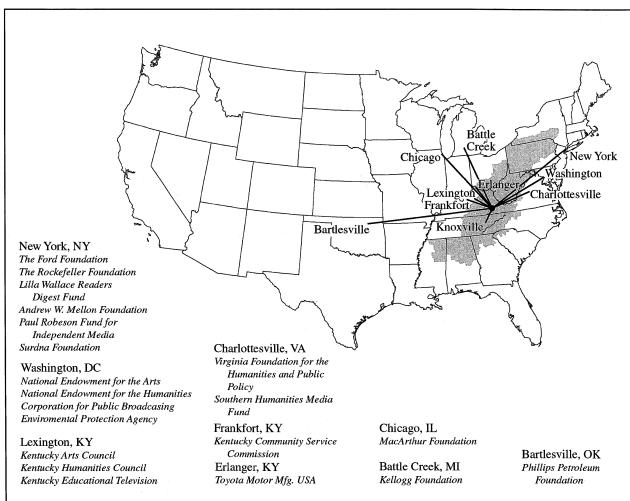


Fig. 2. Appalshop's major government and non-government (corporate) funding sources, 1996–1997.

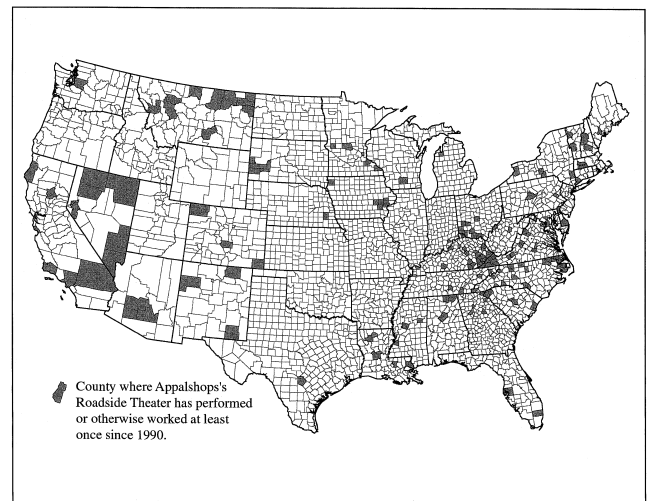


Fig. 3. Locations of roadside theater performances, workshops and exchanges, 1989–1999.

5.2. Critical realism: contextualizing Appalshop

A critical realist analysis of Appalshop would examine the organization within larger sets of socio-spatial relations and institutions, with a focus on the change producing properties of the organization and the impacts of various socio-spatial contexts upon Appalshop itself. Such study might examine the following questions:

- How are spatially constituted social relations, operative at local and wider scales, formative of Appalshop and its day-to-day operations?
- In what ways does Appalshop produce and reproduce socio-spatial relations?
- How does Appalshop link, mediate, and transform the relationships between global processes and local social relations?

Appalshop's location in the Appalachian coalfields is definitional to the organization's origins, missions, goals, and internal forms of organization. Most members align themselves with the left of the American political spectrum and view the organization as a force for progressive social change in Whitesburg and beyond. Many feel deep allegiances to Appalachia's working class history, and many of Appalshop's films focus on the struggles of coal miners, farmers, and other economically poor or powerless mountain residents to challenge the power of capital and the state.

From a critical-realist perspective, Appalshop's characteristics can be partially understood as local manifestations of more extensive socio-spatial relations. Drawing on dependency theory and internal colonialism models of Appalachia (Lewis and Knipe, 1978; Walls, 1978; Hanna, 1995), the region can be defined as a resource-producing periphery underdeveloped through a century of exploitative relationships with the industrial core of the United States. Deep cyclical depressions, caused in part by the resulting over-reliance on coal mining and other primary industries, created the impoverished conditions that led to government programs enacted in the 'War on Poverty' during the 1960s. One of these programs, funded by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity, established five community film workshops, including one in Whitesburg that would evolve into Appalshop (Office of Economic Opportunity, 1973). Appalshop's members are contextualized by their experiences within the structural relegation of Appalachia to the periphery: the region has always included unionization drives, strikes, and other forms of class-based struggle that form important parts of many staff members' personal or family histories. Finally, media coverage of Appalachian poverty in the 1960s underlaid the intentions of some of the teenage founders of Appalshop to create alternative images of their region, images that emphasized the richness of mountain culture or that spoke to the true causes of the region's problems.

In interviews conducted by Hanna (1997), many Appalshop staff members reflected on the aspects of Whitesburg that have made the organization's growth and success possible. It is clear that while many long-term residents of Whitesburg have harbored deep suspicions about the group throughout Appalshop's history, the existence of a liberal local newspaper, and the willingness of an older generation to talk about their past, has given the organization sufficient support to enable it to gradually become a fixture in the local community. In addition, the embrace of a particular version of local mountain culture, combined with a rejection of mainstream bureaucratic standards, has ensured that members reproduce Appalshop as a relaxed, loosely structured organization, one that is more dependent on the actions of individuals than on enduring institutional properties.

The structural relationships causing Appalachia's economic difficulties, and the effect of local context on Appalshop, can be seen in the day-to-day practices of its members. No place within central Appalachia, including Whitesburg, has the economic resources to support Appalshop, whether through donations or the purchase of products. This has led each member of the collective to become a part-time fundraiser. Viewed within the context of Appalachia's underdevelopment by corporate capital, grant writing and other forms of soliciting funds from corporate foundations and government agencies become acts of socially- and spatially-redistributive justice. Additionally, the integration of Appalshop's members in the Whitesburg community can be thought to influence the content of its products in contradictory ways. On the one hand, the members' familiarity with the local area might enable Appalshop to approach topics that would be inaccessible to outside filmmakers; on the other hand, living in Whitesburg could make Appalshop filmmakers more accountable to local reactions to their work, potentially placing limitations on the content of films and videos.

That Appalshop shares structural contexts with other organizations representing marginalized people and places helps to explain the depth and breadth of its interconnections with other arts collectives whose projects and programs also developed in response to the conditions caused by marginalization. Comparative research on such groups could be regional, national, or global in scale. For example, one might examine the different local contexts that influence the successful collaborations between Appalshop's Roadside Theater and performance groups from inner-city New Orleans and New York. Similarly, the differences between Appalshop and similar organizations in other marginalized places could be explained through the necessary and contingent mechanisms operative in their local contexts.

Finally, as an organization of resistance, Appalshop could be understood as forging alternative relationships

between the local and the global for the communities with which it interacts. Most studies of underdevelopment and industrial restructuring focus on how localities must react, often regressively, to the demands of global capital. Yet, it is conceivable that organizations such as Appalshop can use the global networks created by capital and the state for their own potentially progressive or subversive ends. Relationships among like-minded organizations across the globe can give local communities access to information and resources that may help peripheral areas overcome their structural restraints and, in the process, redefine the character of their communities. Appalshop is a member of several national coalitions of community and media/arts groups, and it actively seeks to collaborate with other such organizations. Even its dependence on the state and corporate foundations is carefully negotiated, as Appalshop avoids relationships, where the funding agency has creative or political input. These increasingly global connections enable the organization to bring resources into Whitesburg in ways that do not directly reproduce core-periphery relations. Examining the geographies of the organization in this form may help geographers avoid the conflation of structure with ‘the global’ and (reactive) agency with ‘the local’ (without losing the coherence of these concepts: see Sayer, 1991).

5.3. *Post-structuralism: deconstructing Appalshop*

Deconstructing Appalshop involves the recognition that the organization both produces texts and is itself a text, albeit a self-consciously and proudly messy one. Just as its films have been produced within, reproduced, represented, and challenged the intertextual social space known as Appalachia, Appalshop has emerged within a region defined and regulated as a space different than the rest of America. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the uneven history of struggle over the meaning of Appalachia formed by the dualisms of insider/outsider, traditional/modern, and resistant/hegemonic, is constantly at work in Appalshop-as-text. Interested researchers could search for how these meanings and other significations of Appalachia are contested within the organization, as well as how those tensions are productive of relationships among Appalshop, Whitesburg, and other organizations within and beyond the region. In addition, the films, plays, and education programs scripted within Appalshop could be read as simultaneously parts of and produced within the always emerging organization-as-text. These avenues of research can be summarized through the following questions:

- What spatial epistemologies inform Appalshop’s representations of Appalachia?
- How are Appalshop’s definitions of its communities and region produced by and productive of discourses

of control, leadership, and artistic freedom within the organization?

- How does Appalshop produce, reproduce, redefine, and resist essentialist identity categories such as ‘hill-billy’ or ‘mountain person’?
- If Appalshop is a text written of resistance, how does it employ its definitions of space and identity to challenge hegemonic attempts to naturalize Appalachia as an inferior other within America?

As an organization whose major product is representations, the spatial imaginaries of Appalshop and its members are readily readable in its films, radio programming, recordings, and newsletters, as well as in the public words of the filmmakers and others working within the organization. Yet, they are also to be found in the internal debates, conflicts, and divisions present in the writing of the organization-as-text. A researcher may find that like most organizations, Appalshop is constantly rewritten through internal struggles for resources and control involving both gender relations and discourses of seniority. At times, such debates may focus on Appalshop’s position within its community and region.

The concerns that many in the organization had about the wisdom of a particular film project, *Stranger with a Camera* (2000), is a case in point. This film uses the 1967 murder of a Canadian documentary filmmaker by an eastern Kentucky landlord to question the role of the insider–outsider dichotomy in the production and interpretation of representations of Appalachia – especially those produced during the War on Poverty. A discursive analysis of the film’s six-year production process would have to include the internal conflicts over this controversial project. On the one hand, members of Appalshop most concerned with local community relations questioned the value of *Stranger with a Camera* (2000) because they believed that the film either would be interpreted as condoning the murder or would undermine local resistance to stereotypes produced through War on Poverty social programs. Both could damage Appalshop’s relationship with Whitesburg and beyond. Alternatively, opposition to *Stranger with a Camera* can be read as a resistance to the self-reflexive style the film’s subject matter demanded. As it questions the attachment of validity to Appalshop’s insider identity, the film might threaten those artist-activists who base their work and politics on the idea that Appalshop provides a locally constructed window to the real Appalachia.

Deconstructing the messy text of Appalshop or any other organization needs to recognize that such texts are further complicated by the presence of the researcher. Reflexive research includes an understanding how our *own* situatedness within an organizational setting – the university – actually contributes to the frame through which the organization is viewed.

Reflexivity involves not only an openness to discourses that challenge a researcher's starting assumptions (e.g., such as those underlying mainstream development theory), but also an understanding that the researcher is part of the complex social fields that flow through the organization. Returning to Appalshop with this multiplicity in mind, a researcher may find that, while some members cling to the belief that their representations and practices are authentic and politically legitimate because of their insider status, others increasingly challenge such certainties, becoming at times celebratory of the betweenness of their places in Whitesburg, Appalachia, and the world (Hanna, 1997).

Juxtaposing and interweaving these distinct discourses would highlight how some of the ambiguities at Appalshop play out in their production of representations and identities. At one level, Appalshop is 'in the business' of representing an identity category, one defined by its location and relationship with a particular physical and social environment, a mountainous Appalachia. The organization's celebration of this identity can be read in many of its films, in the use of mountain profiles on its letterhead, and in the call letters of its radio station – WMMT: Mountain Radio. The key question to be asked of this reproduction of Appalachian identity is, however, the extent to which Appalshop problematizes its own (re)construction of such categories. In his readings of Appalshop's films, Hanna found that the organization's works in the 1970s were much more likely to use the same cultural codes and dualisms used in pejorative mainstream representations of Appalachia, but to assign positive meanings to these signs. Thus, the negative connotations of 'backwards' and 'primitive' were overturned by assigning to them, respectively, a deep appreciation for the past and a celebration of a sublime nature. In later films, however, Appalshop filmmakers were more nuanced. While the existence of an Appalachian identity category remained unchallenged, films in the 1980s were more likely to be explicitly partial representations from particular points of view, rather than attempts to naturalize and fix Appalachian identity. Finally, a few projects in the last decade seem to be questioning the homogeneity of *any* definition of Appalachia (see *Dreadful Memories*, 1988, as an example), potentially challenging the very stability of the category (Hanna, 1998). Such work explores the tensions between Appalachia's foundational dualisms, rather than asserting the value of the repressed binary or celebrating the region's 'otherness'. Further investigations of Appalshop may well reveal similar trends in the cultural products of the organization's other divisions, and these investigations could well be extended in comparative studies of other media and art collectives in different impoverished regions.

6. Conclusion

This paper has offered a methodological program that takes seriously the role of organizations in the creation of spatial patterns, the production and reproduction of socio-spatial relations, and the construction of socio-spatial texts and identities. The frameworks are organized around contemporary meta-theoretical perspectives in geography, linking these to dominant paradigms and theories/approaches in organization theory. This aspect of the research is aimed to produce productive linkages between two social sciences that heretofore have had little formal interaction. Though the methodological frameworks and research questions presented in the matrix shown in Table 1 are by no means exhaustive, the overall program and the suggested analyses of Appalshop have, we hope, provided the basis for an expansion of research on organizations in all types of geography.

We conclude with a comment on the implications of this analysis for theory and methodology in geography. As pointed out in the beginning of this paper, the history of geography shows that most shifts in programmatic thinking have been accompanied by efforts to posit unique objects of analysis, with the frameworks developed underwriting specific methodologies, research questions, and data analyses. Yet organizations, as we have shown here, are relevant to all other geographic objects of analysis and to all meta-theoretical approaches: they are not easily contained within any single perspective. This is, quite simply, because organizations are socially complex and densely spatial objects of analysis. They are, paraphrasing Mann (1986, p. 4), messier than our theories of them. It seems prudent to suggest, therefore, that any "focus on organizations as objects of analysis" in geography be undertaken with sensitivity to the different contributions of each meta-theoretic perspective. Indeed, we hope that the Appalshop case presented here serves as a demonstration on behalf of multiple theoretical approaches.⁹ What is more, rather than view organizations from multiple perspectives, researchers might also work the creative tensions among the theoretically permeable fault lines between existing meta-theories, transgressing theoretical and methodological boundaries (Grimes and Rood, 1995; Lewis and Grimes, 1999). And, if organizations serve as an entry points into more general cross-meta-theoretic discussions and interactions in geography, so much the better.

⁹ For example, an interesting dissertation might be found in a comparative analysis of a single organization through the different frameworks presented in this paper. Exemplary studies of this sort in organization theory, but without a geographic perspective, can be found in Graham-Hill (1996), Hassard (1991), Lewis (1996).

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