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Ethical Business: An Ethnography of Ethics and Multiplicity in Commercial Settings

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Abstract

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This thesis is a study of ethics and multiplicity as found within contemporary commercial settings. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies (STS) sensibilities and ethnographic-style research, the thesis proposes that current ethical phenomena should be understood as a user-enacted chimerical object: an object that is multiple in its ontology and as much enacted by what it is, as what it is not.

This research is particularly pertinent now because the term 'ethical' has become commonplace in modern Western life, including crucially within commercial activities. In certain uses, doing ethics becomes synonymous with doing business. Despite the increasing prevalence of what is considered 'ethical business', the exploration of how the term is appropriated and enacted remains largely under-examined.

Through examination of research material gathered during extensive ethnographic studies in three self-avowedly 'ethical organisations' - an ethical start-up, an ethical confectionery company, and an ethical consultancy - the thesis addresses this research gap. By focusing on the users of ethical business, the investigation questions traditional market assumptions of homogeneity within producing organisations, the supposed linear transfer of ethical knowledge, what we can know about 'users', and the genesis of novel ethical realities. Through this questioning the thesis provides new insights on *the* ethical object. The thesis additionally builds upon questions of how far we can push the boundaries of what we can know about knowledge, and whether it is possible to bring *the* mess of investigation back into the reporting. Developing previous applications of constitutive reflexivity, the research symmetrically investigates the appropriateness of my application of STS sensibilities to ethical business as a new research area, and interrogates my thesis as an ethical object in order to address the underlying question(s) of whether 'STS means ethical business?'

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Glossary of Acronyms

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

ETI - Ethical Trading Initiative

FSC - Forest Stewardship Council

GB - Good Business

LC - Lux Choc

MNC - Multi-National Corporation

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisations

STS - Science and Technology Studies

Chapter 1. Ethical Business: An Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a narrative informed by interrogating ethics as an object in its contemporary commercial enactments. The thesis analyses and understands the ethical phenomena as a ubiquitous, ambiguous, messy thing, with a weighty occurrence that has grown to be part of everyday Western life. Ethics can influence the mundane morning coffee run and clothes shopping, along with more important decisions, such as who to trust with your pension or who to partner with in business.

Despite the fact that the term ‘ethical business’ is increasingly prevalent, the exploration of how ethical realities are enacted by those whose economic livelihoods and marketing messages are centred on it remains surprisingly under-investigated. There are no set guidelines to understand what an ethical label encompasses for its users. Targeting that gap, this thesis examines the deep-rooted, unaddressed assumptions about the use and currency of ethics and its application to products, institutions, and practices by evaluating the way ethics are enacted and used in multiple scenarios. To ensure these gaps are adequately and accurately explored, this thesis is based in the sensibilities of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and draws on the field’s proven frameworks and theories. Where STS falls short in its abilities to answer the ethical puzzle, other theories from different disciplines are used and novel explanatory frameworks developed.

The thesis aims to bring an understanding to the present “mess” and does not attempt to tidy it up into a neatly bounded, simplified singular object (as the singular terminology presently suggests). This work rather wants to explore, interrogate, and adequately

present the messy ethical object to understand how such an object can successfully survive unquestioned. In doing so, the thesis embraces the notion of mess throughout and equally strives to put the mess back into STS methods, which are presented as a neat entity even though they are just as multiple in their processes and realities. Further, the thesis pushes the boundaries of what can be done and discovered about STS knowledge production by being radically reflexive, not only upon the data presented within the thesis, but also upon how it came to be enacted as part of the research and was chosen and sustained to be included in this final doctoral work.

1.2 The Interesting Phenomena of Ethical Business

I solidified my ambitions to explore this idea in May 2009. When in a well-known coffee chain, I asked about the advertised 'ethically traded' espresso beans, my intent being to clarify what 'ethically traded' meant. The barista answered that it meant 'ethically sourced.' When I pushed for a more detailed explanation, he answered with an air of annoyance at my ignorance. His answer was tautological: 'It means ethically traded.' The meaning was assumed as obvious, and I was seemingly the odd one for not knowing.

For further clarification, I reached out to a woman named Laura who is a founding member of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). The ETI is an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations that focuses on and promotes workers' rights worldwide. In this conversation, Laura raised questions about whether the proliferation of ethics was just a fad (5/6/2009). We agreed it was at risk of becoming so. But, more importantly, we also agreed that the use of the word 'ethical' could be more than merely a trend. She noted that for a long time the use of terms such as 'small', 'niche',

and 'alternative' had been in use and that 'ethical' had not always been the definitive choice.

Regardless, we agreed at the heart of this ethical, burgeoning trend is a will to do good, a quality that should not be lost in the unexplored quagmire in which ethical currently resides. The mere omnipresence of the term is not explanatory enough. Neither academic nor lay literature presently offers insightful or satisfactory explorations of how this ethical object can be as messy as it is (see Section 2.2). Despite this lack of insight, lay literature on ethical applications has flourished recently with the rise of ethical blogs and consumer guides, and academic interest has risen with the notable number of works dedicated to the topic indicated by the 16 journals established in the last two decades.¹ However, these pieces merely focus on prescribing what ethical should be and judging how well that was achieved, or assuming *one* common understanding of what ethical is with no explanation. No one is yet asking the question of what or how there could be a single understanding.

Certainly, this thesis does not make these assumptions, nor does it ignore the issue of multiplicity; it is not concerned with finding the 'right answers', but more concerned with challenging the definition of the problem (Yanow 2009). It explores the mess, and it disarms the taken-for-granted assumptions of ethical users, looking instead at how ethical realities are accomplished by its users. The use of the term 'ethical' presented in this thesis is informed by the principles of impartiality and symmetry (Bloor 1976). In other words, any discussion is based on the users' own application of the terms, not by my assumed 'author-ity' to prescribe its application (Woolgar 1988a). The work of this

¹ *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* (2010), *Teaching Ethics* (March 2001), *Yale Journal Of Health Policy*,

thesis not only addresses a huge academic gap in the literature, but is also important to organisations such as the ETI, mentioned above, which want to better understand what it means to be ethical in order to help prevent an ‘ethical backlash from misuse and misunderstanding’ (Laura, founding member of the ETI, in the same conversation as noted above, 6/5/2009).²

If we assume neither that this ethical phenomena is homogeneous, nor that there is something universal or inherent to the term and its use, we can then ask what new knowledge these questions will bring to light about the messy ethical object, the success of mess, and the adequacy of tools available to research mess. I am not the first to interrogate messy commercial trends: Neyland and Woolgar (2002) looked at accountability, and Korica (2011) focused on organisational governance, both suggestive of a ‘profoundly messy business’ (ibid.: 18). Likewise, ethical business is messy business, and I will argue that the ethical object can be thought of as *an* object — chimerical and enacted in multiple temporal reality(s) — found by embracing the tools of ethnography that are championed for ‘letting us see the relative messiness’ (Law 2004: 18).

1.3 Theoretical Inspiration

The questioning of assumed inherent qualities and the openness to explore mess is not completely new to my thesis, as it has been discussed in a body of literature commonly grouped as Science and Technologies Studies (STS). This is the field from which my exploration takes its inspiration to tackle the novel area of the contemporary ethical business puzzle, mainly encouraged by Latour, Woolgar, Callon, and Law, to name but a

² As a further indication of how necessary having a better understanding of the mess is, this project has been supported by Oxfam.

few. When considering how to tackle the mess empirically, ethics, like science, has been held in high regard by sociologists. They have been reluctant to treat ethics like other subjects viewed as sociological constructions applicable for analysis, perhaps due to a 'lack of nerve' to tackle such a weighty subject (Bloor 1976). This has fostered a strong parallel between ethics and science and highlights the utility that could come from taking a STS-approach to ethical business.

Further observation of STS theories helped bring about a set of unique and critical research questions about the enactment of ethics in the contemporary business context. The sensibilities pushed this research to move away from assumption-laden boundary labels of producers and consumers and centre rather on the users, whilst exploring how best to understand the phenomena as an object per se and interrogating the multiplicity found. The sensibilities bring forth questions of how and if the reality(s) of the ethical object can be transferred between users. It also prompted me to question if we can take one step further back to identify how ethical genesis can come about and not assume there was a start of the ethical object. Finally, taking this STS approach provides not only questions that will elicit new knowledge on the contemporary ethical phenomena to be found, but also questions on the discipline of STS. The whole research is intertwined and underlined with the question of whether I can adequately answer whether STS means ethical business.

With STS sensibilities fuelling my theoretical orientation, this study breaks from the scholarly ethics mainstreams and draws on an intellectual eclecticism smorgasbord of diverse vocabularies and frameworks to answer my questions about the ideas of objects, multiple realities, actants, users, configuration, bricolage, reflexivity, and the later

introduction of some of my own novel framings to this, such as chimerical objects. In a quest to reflect the messy multiplicity found, this selective theoretical approach combined with my own novel creations allows me to critically engage rather than shoehorn my findings into pre-existing frameworks.

1.4 Context

The task of exploring the mess and looking at ethical business through a user-centred approach is achieved in this instance through the investigation of three ethical organisations that I called tribes. The terminology of tribes was how the organisational groups referred to themselves, but it also suited my investigative style. To study these tribes, I used an ethnographic approach — the most appropriate toolkit for my line of questioning — which brings about a style of knowledge in ethical explorations not yet found. Additionally, in a radically reflexive stance, the research symmetrically investigates the appropriateness of my application of STS sensibilities to this new research area. I interrogate my own thesis as an ethical object and consider my own research process via an examination of my ethnography.

Much planning and thought was put into selecting the ideal field sites; however, luck mixed with persistence won out as the ultimate field site decider (discussed further in Chapter 3). Three tribes were chosen due to both similarity and difference. They were relatively different to each other in size, industry, and location, yet they all shared and met the basic requirements for my research: the common characteristic of being self-avowed ethical organisations, and most importantly, organisations where ethics were enacted frequently as part of everyday life.

The first site was Good Business, a small London-based ethical start-up that provided services rather than products. This was followed by and overlapped with a research stay at Lux Choc, a large, long-standing, product-based company. The final site was an ethical consultancy, Ethicentre, which was in some ways my greatest example of planned serendipity even if it was a somewhat 'known unknown' site in its initial stages. It was not planned so much as a seized opportunity much later in my research process, when I realised it would provide a rich source of data for answering my thesis questions about genesis (Chapter 7). Its later inclusion means data from this site only inform the relevant later empirical Chapters 7 and 8. I was already a participant of this tribe, working alongside my doctorate to help fund my studies, when the opportunity for observation was spotted and it became a very important addition to my research sites. It was a research site that produced different challenges to maintaining the role of critical participant-observer necessary within an ethnographic investigation (as discussed more in Chapters 3 and 4).

1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2, 'Critical Literature Review', I first outline my critical literature review, which is separated into two sections focusing on two bodies of literature: neo-Foucauldian studies of ethics and consumption, and STS ideas on ethics and businesses. In the first section, the review establishes the reasons this area of ethical literature is focused on, how Foucauldian ideas are taken forward into contemporary neo-Foucauldian work, and the limitations that are present. It is also intertwined with the next section that discusses how this thesis will avoid similar limitations and assumptions. The second section demonstrates the rationale for drawing upon STS in this novel area of study and

delineates what this will bring to the thesis. It also covers the answers that I seek to discover, all whilst exploring what contributions this style of approach can make to STS and academia more broadly.

Overall, the literature review has then three purposes. First, it undertakes a critical examination of the relevant literature on ethical business and casts a critical eye on the contemporary knowledge of the institutions and practices (realities) to which the label 'ethical' is applied. In doing so, it is possible to illuminate some problematic assumptions and question previously presented conclusions. The critical gaze is further extended to question assumptions of the identities of the users involved in ethical discourses, notions such as the consumer/producer divide and the basic idea of *an* ethical market that permeates the literature. Second, the literature review discusses the extent to which ethical-labelling construction and the STS 'construction of scientific knowledge' (and the later 'turn to markets') can be paralleled fruitfully to be used in my exploration. It is at this stage that the notion of STS is unpacked. STS is used as a labelling term for the sake of textual coherence, but exploring it illuminates the heterogeneity of the field, potentially lost in the way the term is used summarily. Intertwined with this second aim is the third: to identify what the appropriation of STS sensibilities in ethical business research may mean for the broader applicability of STS sensibilities. This idea is encompassed and reflected on throughout the thesis under the question 'does STS mean ethical business?'

Chapter 3, 'My Methods', addresses the rationale for the research tools employed for my investigation. Tools have comprehensive introductions and reviews of their previous use in research, and I locate how they allow my own fieldwork on ethical enactments to

be effectively conducted. The main data for this investigation are various forms of ethical enactments (enacted, spoken, written) in the core ethical tribes. Thus, the main research tool selected for this exploration, as noted, was ethnography. Ethnography enabled the various streams of my investigation to be explored simultaneously. The use of ethnographic studies is prominent in STS-style research (see Hess 2001 and Hine 2007 for discussion of multi-sited approach). As a result, the use of this method additionally allows for testing the applicability of STS methods in a novel area, aiding the discussions on whether STS means business.

Participant observation was supplemented by interviews with key informants and textual analysis of tangible and virtual documents that included both 'official' documentation used to interact with those external to the company and other documentation produced, such as sticky notes, memos, and emails between company employees.

The chapter introduces and reviews my methodological commitments, which arguably can be labelled as ontologically 'nominalist' and epistemologically 'interpretivist' (Burrell & Morgan 1979). The chapter then explores how access was secured to my three research sites: Lux Choc, Good Business, and Ethicentre. It details the organisation type and speciality, size, reach, and age, and gives a full description of my time spent with them before outlining the full stock of data accumulated — recordings, notes taken, and my process of analysing them to write my empirical chapters. Finally, the chapter addresses my own ethical considerations.

Chapter 4, 'Becoming and Being "Ethical"', draws upon my findings and acts as a bridge between the previous theoretical chapters (2 and 3) and the empirical chapters to follow

(5, 6, 7, 8). It explores the question of 'being and becoming ethical' and what it took to (appear to) enact and maintain legitimate ethical-membership of the tribes. It also acts as a critique of my preliminary tool of use — ethnography — and reflects on the notion of being a participant-observer, gaining access, gaining membership (differently), and being a participant, not just an observer. This chapter helps to set the scene of the ethical tribe research sites: reflecting on the language of the tribes, learning the native tongue, and understanding the rules of the ethical tribes. This discussion is based on my field notes, and it includes a reflection on the subject of emotions in the field and the difficult messy process of 'leaving' the tribe, an important stage of ethnography all researchers must go through but which is rarely discussed in final research documents.

Chapter 5, 'Chimera Reality - The Object of my Investigation', starts to address the underlying question of 'does STS mean ethical business?' It is an overview of the whole corpus of data found during my stays at the sites of self-avowed ethical organisations: Lux Choc and Good Business. The chapter starts by reflecting on the difficulty and trials of locating my object of study and frames the mess that was found in this stage and throughout the research. At this starting point of analysis, this mess is framed and embraced and not lost within neat empirical chapters. After locating the object, the chapter interrogates and explores what (even if temporarily) enacts ethical reality(s) for the self-avowed ethical organisations. The discussion finds a messy multiple object that is enacted as much from what it is as what it is not. Due to this, the chapter progresses to interrogate and develop the STS frameworks of 'objects' presently offered (and reviewed in Chapter 2) to see how and in what ways they can be usefully employed to explain this ambiguous ethical object. In the end, no present framework was found

satisfactory in explaining the ethical object, so the novel framing of a chimera object is put forth. The chapter ends by interrogating the notion of actants enacting objects and pulls apart present use in STS literature of actants as homogeneous entities, when instead it seems that actants are just as multiple as the objects they enact.

Chapter 6, 'Configuring the Ethical User ', focuses on a smaller subset of the data — specifically internal and external marketing material collected in field. It uses this to analyse the ideas and assumptions of Lux Choc and Good Business regarding internal and external users, as well as the issues of (attempted) transfer, framing, and configuration of the ethical organisations ethical reality(s). The chapter explores the possibility and utility of transfer being more appropriately analysed again through a user-centred approach, this time drawing on the sensibilities of configuring the assumed user. Further, the chapter considers if we can establish whether configuration has occurred and what technologies and tools are employed to attempt ethical configuration from the ethical organisations to their (assumed) internal and external ethical users.

Chapter 7, 'Genesis of Ethical Enactment', is the last chapter to focus on my external ethical research sites, and it discusses the ethical consultancy, Ethicentre. It focuses on a workshop that I attended and questions some of the assumptions made in my research so far, specifically whether the genesis of an ethical object can be identified per se. It does this by chronologically detailing and analysing the different stages of work of the workshop. It also focuses on the toolkit of the workshop including both human and non-human actants, such as sticky notes, pens, and break out groups and what they help to enact throughout the different stages of meeting. How the different human actants

involved from two disparate organisations and the facilitators and what their presence, expertise, and membership as part of their greater organisations enabled. The chapter finishes by critically reflecting on how all of this leads to a seemingly achieved agreement of a new ethical partnership and plan to cement it that came as somewhat of a surprise to all involved, even though it had been the planned outcome of the meeting. This provided an opportune moment to think through the thesis' mantra of 'it could have been otherwise.'

This chapter also develops two other STS topics of research not yet covered in the prior empirical chapters. First, the STS turn markets and the ideas of performativity — in the sense of something being performed (or rather enacted, in the terminology used in this thesis) to make it *real*. More specifically within this topic, the chapter builds on theories of market research, and neuro-marketing. Secondly, the chapter also speaks to the more traditional focuses of STS studies of fact creation, specifically the work done to enact scientific facts and seemingly solidify them through inscription.

Chapter 8, 'The Reflexive-Reflexivist: Does STS Mean Ethical Business?', re-examines my whole thesis and the underlying research processes. In doing so, the chapter analyses the discussions, frameworks, assumptions, and theories I've identified throughout.

The chapter draws on data, or rather 'enacta', from my fourth internal research site. The first section of the chapter is used to explore the utility of the reflexivity, based on idea of 'symmetry' — a development of Bloor's 1976 notion that beliefs, no matter how they are judged (scientific or not, true or false), should be explained using similar frameworks and arguments. By reviewing my use of STS sensibilities and frameworks to analyse my data, I bring a radical reflexive perspective to my study. Rather than simply discussing

STS applicability as an instrumental utility, the chapter identifies the applicability of my own theories — specifically the creation of my enacted ethical reality. I accomplish this by extending previous ideas of reflexivity; creating an examination of my ethnography also termed as the ‘ethnography’ of my own ethnography (which becomes my fourth research site); examining the changing story of my own thesis; analysing my use of a patchwork of other authors’ theories; and discussing how I have modified those theories for the purposes of my own research. This analysis adds an additional context in which to prove and test my theories. The reflexive-reflexivist voice is intertwined throughout and looks at my ontological politics and my closeness in my research of data found and presented. Such a voice also comments on and critiques the previous discussion where appropriate in aim to achieve near-real-time analyses.

The second section of the chapter focuses specifically on providing a reflexive and critical answer to ‘does STS mean ethical business?’ This is divided into two subsections, two views of the same question: the intuitive inquiry and the enacted inquiry. In the first subsection drawing on the chapter findings so far and the greater research context of the thesis, I extend reflexive sensibilities to add to the debate about whether STS can or should move beyond the boundaries of its namesake areas — the intuitive reading of the question. The second subsection comments and critiques on the answer prefacing it as well as the thesis at large to explore ideas of whether we can answer if STS does enact ethical business — a more counterintuitive reading of the question.

Chapter 9, ‘Concluding Thoughts’, summaries the arguments developed in the thesis, focusing on the claims that were made in relation to the empirical material. The chapter

also reflects on the kinds of arguments I made and the personal journey the whole processes took me on. It revisits the research motivations and questions at the core of this thesis to assess the extent to which they have been answered and to reflect on how well my research has addressed the knowledge gaps that were noted and explored in the critical literature review. It further judges my attempt at questioning the equally important and intertwined research agenda of whether STS sensibilities can be usefully appropriated to address the contemporary ethical object and whether such use in a new area of study furthered knowledge about the utility of these sensibilities. In other words, whether this thesis was successful in its aim to push the boundaries of what can be done and discovered about knowledge within the conventions of a doctoral thesis.

Chapter 9 then highlights the key findings of the research, taken both from the empirical chapters and that of the thesis overall. In particular, the chapter reflects on the whole thesis' embrace of mess. This is followed by a reflection on the status of my description and suggestions of further areas of research. Included are discussions of how my findings could add to present strands of research on ethical business and additional thoughts on the advantage to other fields of research in taking a messy, multidisciplinary approach. The thesis concludes with my closing remarks.

Chapter 2. Critical Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following literature review details the rise of multiple research questions this thesis will explore. It highlights the need for a less prescriptive approach in addressing questions concerning the ubiquitous yet ambiguous multiple use of 'ethical' in contemporary commercial settings. The review shows the large gaps in our current knowledge of this area and specifically highlights the dearth of investigation around self-avowed ethical organisations, their users, and how those organisations and their users interpret 'ethical'. The review is separated into two main sections focusing on two main bodies of literature: (1) neo-Foucauldian studies of ethics and consumption and (2) Science and Technology Studies (STS) ideas on ethics and business. These sections are previewed with the rationale of why these two main bodies of literature are focused upon and other ethical literature is not. An integral part of this rationale is a review of the relevant history of ethical markets and consumption in order to establish the contemporary commercial and academic setting in which this thesis presides.

The first part of this chapter moves into the neo-Foucauldian review. This section is labelled as such because the literature and theories reviewed here are based around or derived from Foucauldian ideas to frame their ethical consumption and market findings. The review looks at Foucault's relevant original work on ethics and then identifies the main Foucauldian ideas that have been brought forward into contemporary neo-Foucauldian work. The review then identifies the limitations present in this approach to help my research avoid the limitations and assumptions found in past literature.

The next section of this chapter, STS ideas on ethics and business, demonstrates the rationale for applying STS in this novel area of study. The review develops the proposition that drawing on previously underutilised STS frameworks and sensibilities can enable new knowledge to be generated about ethical business. Additionally, the review explores the use of frameworks on ontological heterogeneous objects and actants from Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The employment of STS and ANT frameworks promises to overcome many of the shortcomings of the present literature, and this thesis will serve as a conglomerate of critical theoretical underpinnings that lead to a distinct and unique approach. The section ends by delineating what this framework will bring to the thesis and the questions that I aim to explore with my research, whilst also exploring what contributions this type of approach can make to STS and academia more broadly.

Through these two main sections, the chapter achieves three things. First, I undertake a critical understanding of the relevant literature about ideas related to ethical business, most often described using the terminology of the ethical market. Within the rhetoric of ethical consumers and consumption, I cast a critical eye on contemporary knowledge of the assertions, intuitions, and practices to which the label 'ethical' is applied. It is possible to illuminate some problematic assumptions and question a number of conclusions previously presented by others. The critical gaze is extended to question assumptions of the identities of the actors (actants) involved in the use of 'ethical' discourses, specifically furthering present attempts to break down assumed dichotomies that permeate the literature, such as the consumer/producer divide and the basic idea of *an* ethical market.

Second, I discuss the extent to which I can develop my research agenda by way of parallels to the construction of ethical labelling, the STS construction of scientific knowledge, and then later turn to markets. Intertwined with this is the third aim, to identify what the appropriation of STS frameworks in ethical market research may mean for the broader applicability of STS sensibilities.

Next this chapter goes on to highlight the most pertinent points of knowledge lacking in the reviewed contemporary literature, including research space for a new ethical object: a chimera object. Plus, it examines the missing investigation of the genesis of these objects of study. Genesis is a condition that previous authors have just assumed to have somehow come into use. Here, the focus specifies the novel idea of how objects come to be and how they could be studied by using the framing of bricolage — drawing on existing parts that are at hand to create something new. Lastly, this chapter specifies the four questions that arose from this dearth that form the basis for this thesis investigation.

It is quite important to reiterate at this stage that this thesis is not about defining what ethics are or adding another prescription of how to achieve ethics. Numerous examples are already present in academic and lay literature. This thesis is about exploring and understanding how multiple definitions can exist together under one label: 'ethical'. Specifically, we focus on the underexplored and growing area of the use and users of this 'ethical' label in commercial settings.

The ongoing quest and study of defining what ethics are (and should be) belong to another discipline called moral philosophy. This is the area of philosophy concerned with theories of ethics and how they intertwine with life and how they ought to be achieved

by people. This area of research may touch upon the contemporary ethical market, but it is not the main focus of the search here. It is not relevant or useful to this research because moral philosophy assumes universality not only in the geographical sense, but also in a temporal sense. It also provides grandiose homogeneous definitions based mostly in theoretical abstractions, not research grounded in seeing and being part of the doing of ethics, as is done here. Even in examples where those philosophical theorists attempt to move beyond the traditional philosophical approaches, the style of study and processes drawn upon leave the same limitations present (for example, see Bynum 2006; Ess 2006; Hiruta 2006).³ This style of literature forms part of the history of the study of ethics and is reviewed as part of the following historical section to help set the scene of where my research resides and the large gaps in our knowledge in this mix of theories. But these moral philosophies are not reviewed further because they don't help find the knowledge missing in studies pertaining to the doing, creating, and use of ethics in the contemporary ethical market. Thus, only literature addressing such applications are at the centre of this review, predominantly neo-Foucauldian literature focusing on ethical consumption.

The use of the term 'ethical' presented in this review is informed by Bloor's (1976) principles of 'impartiality' and 'symmetry'. Discussion is based on how the ethical literature being referenced uses the term and, later in the thesis, the application and use by ethical tribes (my research sites).

³ All these papers were taken from the special edition of *Ethics and Information Technology*, based on a 2006 Conference of the same name, which purported to be looking 'out of the philosophical box' on ethics.

2.1.1 A History of the Ethical Market and Ethical Consumption

Contemporary discussion of ethical markets and consumption begins more than a century ago. Radest (1969) importantly reminds us that ideas of 'contemporary' ethical markets are not as new as we may assume. Radest argues that the idea had its beginnings in 1860s America, brought to the fore by Felix Adler, who was heavily influenced both by Kantian philosophical ideas of ethics and Ralph Waldo Emerson's call for a pure ethical religion. This society movement peaked in the early 1900s with around 30 cities having small but stable groups self-labelled as 'ethical culture societies'. The focus of these ethical societies was not primarily on consumption, but the movement was nevertheless 'intricately and consciously bound to events of the world around it' and drew upon new sources of mass media for the basis of discussion and for members' suggested behaviour (Radest 1969:7). However, these early ethical forays constituted fringe movements at best.

Hirschman, who focused on moral orders and markets, provides a bridge to the current era by questioning how commercial activities 'become honourable at some point in the modern age after having stood condemned as greed ... and avarice for centuries past' (1997: 9). Hirschman theorised very different reasons and explanations for morals in markets compared to other reviewed historical accounts. These disparate histories question both the idea of the singular ethical/moral market development and, returning specifically to the ethical literature listed, question the newness of consumer culture, '[from where] the particular notion of an ethical consumption has primarily arisen' (Harrison et al. 2005: 3; see also Trentman 2006 and Fourcade & Healy 2007).

Nicholls and Opal (2005) look to a more recent past and describe how the idea of ethical consumption practices, most notably Fair Trade, has moved from the margins of society into their current mainstream placement via four waves. The first wave started shortly after World War Two with charities in the West, such as Oxfam UK, importing handicrafts from Eastern Europe to aid post-war recovery in those countries. The second stage occurred concurrently with the advent of Alternative Trading Organisations (ATOs) such as Britain's Traidcraft and Germany's GEPAG (German acronym for Society for the Promotion of Partnership with the Third World). These ATOs allowed producers to trade directly with the developed world. The third wave involved 'naturally sympathetic retail businesses,' such as the Co-operative Group in the UK and Wild Oats Markets in the USA (ibid.:20). Such mainstream suppliers enabled Fair Trade products to be more widely promoted and to become more easily accessible to a large consumer base. The success of products such as Cafédirect and Divine Chocolate and the development of Fair Trade product certifications also helped the concept move from the fringes to the mainstream. The final wave consists of the continued solidification of Fair Trade ideals into the mainstream:

[I]ts success has encouraged the market entry of more traditional players including Costa Coffee, Sainsbury's, Starbucks, and Sara Lee. Of particular importance has been the emergence of supermarket own-label Fair Trade products.

ibid.: 20

Schelzmer (2010) also focuses on waves over a historical timeframe, but interestingly theorises that consumer activism led to contemporary ethical markets. Mainstreaming happened not because people bought, but rather that they boycotted items, starting as far back as the early 19th century (ibid.: 223).

Lang and Gabriel (2005) also outline four waves of consumer activism, different from Nicholls and Opal (2005), that build on their own earlier work (Lang & Gabriel 1995). In their recent work, Lang and Gabriel (2005) explore the ambiguity of the various forms of 'consumption' and the plethora of meanings the term has in modern societies. One type they discuss is the 'active consumer', which develops to become the contemporary ethical consumer found in the fourth wave. The build-up starts with the first wave of activism, the 'co-operative consumers'. This was a working-class movement that started in 1844 in Rochdale in the UK as a reaction to excessively priced and poor quality goods. The second wave, the self-explanatory 'value-for-money consumers', started in the 1930s and built upon the earlier 1891 US Consumers League in the USA. The third wave, 'Naderism', also began in USA in 1965, with Ralph Nader as its figurehead. Nader highlighted the dangers of current car designs and revealed the low priority of consumer safety which pervaded manufacturing companies at the time (1965). The last wave, 'alternative consumers', had modest beginnings in the 1970s and became more significant during the 1980s. Lang and Gabriel (2005) suggested this consumer had many elements: 'green, ethical, Third Solidarity and Fair Trade orientations' (ibid: 48). They argue that the 'alternative consumer' position lacked coherence until the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the stronger element of the 1980s, 'green consumption,' lost dominance to the broader 'ethical consumption'. The contemporary active consumer is heavily influenced by the alternative consumer, and there is a convergence of the elements of all the waves of activism that allowed this kind of ethical thinking to become mainstream.

Turning to literature that discusses the more recent mainstream wave of ethical market activity, specifically consumption, many authors (Low & Davenport 2007, Castells 1997, Harrison 2005) consider this stage to be the burgeoning of significant ethical consumption. Harrison (2005: 55) commented that ‘...ethical purchase behavior ... [and] the flowering of ethical consumer activity around the world over the last twenty years appears to be unprecedented.’

This contemporary blossoming continues into the subsequent review, where the plethora of knowledge produced by theorists of this modern ethical business will be developed and divided into two main parts: neo-Foucauldian studies of ethics and consumption and STS ideas on ethics and businesses. Within both of these sections, the availability and volume of different methodological approaches and influences found in the literature will be discussed in order to identify the largest and most pressing gaps in our current knowledge, which will inform the path this thesis investigation will take.

2.2 Neo-Foucauldian Studies of Ethics and Consumption

The largest body of literature presently available on ethical business can be grouped under the title of “neo-Foucauldian”, owing to the heavy influence, identification with, and use of Foucault’s ideas on ethics. Before reviewing the neo-Foucauldian literature, the important aspects of Foucault’s work that inform these pieces are reviewed to explore and understand where the ideas came from and note which of Foucault’s ideas were utilised in the later ethical explorations. This review explores foundational texts and then brings to the forefront the limitations found both in Foucault’s own work and the later development of his ideas in other’s work, highlighting the gaps which remain

unaddressed in the later work. Such a systematic review will enable this thesis to avoid similar limitations in its own endeavour, whilst also helping to guide this investigation to new theories that are not equally plagued by the limitations analysed.

2.2.1 Foucauldian Ethics

Foucault's work relating to ethics is substantial (to list a few: 1970, 1976, 1978, 1984, 1992). It includes historical comparisons of the disparate connotations of the meanings of the term throughout its somewhat varying existence. This point of historic variation alone emphasises the problematic nature of the philosophical ideals of ethics, discussed above, which appear to assume universality not only in the geographical sense, but also in a temporal sense. Foucault himself thought such a position was preposterous: 'the search for a form of morality acceptable by everyone in a sense that everyone would have to submit to it, seems catastrophic to me' (1984b: 37). Foucault instead focuses his attention on the contexts of human identity and how conceptualisations of the 'ethical self' occur.

In *The Order of Things* (1970), Foucault brings forth the notion of the modern ethical self as an identity. This is arguably the first instance of such a portrayal. His idea remains prominent in a large amount of later ethical market-related research, to be reviewed shortly below. In his 1970 work, Foucault discusses the idea of the modern man and lightly mentions ethics. Foucault returns and expands upon the subject of the modern man in *History of Sexuality* (1976), where he conceptualises the notion of the ethical self. This concept draws upon his early work on power relations and his ideas of governmentality (1978). Foucault builds on his theories of 'technique domination' and

applies them to the human context, formulating the notion of 'techniques of the self', which he suggests are involuntary forms of self-policing. The temporal divide claimed by Foucault is contextualised by his additional analyses of historical constructions of the ethical-self. By comparing two historical time periods, the ancient Greek and the later Christian era, Foucault describes how the ethical self was constructed differently, owing to the dominant ideals and behaviour of the disparate time periods. Chosen 'real behaviour', which was selected by the individual free from normalising pressures, formed the basis of Foucault's characterisation of ancient Greek ethics. This sits in stark contrast with his conceptualisation of the Christian era, where the basis of ethics was no longer 'ethical behaviour', but rather 'dictated morality'. The freedom of the Greeks was replaced by Christian ideas of prohibition and obedience, imposed by dominant external decision-making institutions. For modern man however, 'Foucauldian ethics of the self [are] not based on externally imposed moral obligations, but rather on an ethic of who we are said to be, and what, therefore, it is possible for us to become' (McNay 1994: 145). In other words, ethics are more characterised by behaviour and deeds, conceptualised to be 'intentional and voluntary', through which individuals transform themselves to achieve an ethical self. New self-constructive systems of morality replaced dictated morality due to society's growing disillusionment with (and scepticism of) large-scale belief systems such as religion. However, modern man is not autonomous in his self-creation of morality.

Ethics for Foucault was about the relationship one has to oneself and how an individual governs his/her own conduct. Foucault theorised that there were four main active aspects of that ethical relationship with oneself:

Ethical substance, that is, the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself [sic] as the prime material of his moral conduct ...

Mode of subjection is the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognises himself [sic] as obliged to put it into practice ...

Forms of elaboration is the ethical work that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior ...

Telos is an action that is not only moral in itself, in its singularity; it is also moral in its circumstantial integration and by virtue of the place it occupies in a pattern of conduct.

Foucault, 1992, 26—28

Foucault theorises that it is through this ethical fourfold, these practises of the self, that an individual actively creates his/her ethics and the ethical self. These practices are not, however, invented by the individual alone, but are done in reflection of the society and cultural context (Foucault, 2000b). Foucault suggests that ethics is:

A process in which the individual delimits that part of himself [sic] that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself.

Foucault, 1992: 28

In other words, an individual's ethical self is formed through a continual process of negotiation with others, a constantly evolving association an individual has between himself and society. Moreover, the four aspects are re-done and ongoing throughout an individual's life due to the changing social milieu in which an individual lives. It is not a multi-directional movement of power back and forth between an individual and society. Rather, it is assumed that society has a unidirectional effect on the individual, so as changes in society occur, they are reacted to and (re)negotiated by the individual-self. Why there would be no multi-directional effects of change is not explained by Foucault,

nor by the neo-Foucauldian theorists reviewed below. This limitation becomes even more apparent in relation to the contemporary ethical market.

2.2.2 Neo-Foucauldian Ethics

The critical review now brings its attention to overwhelming use of Foucauldian themes in available contemporary ethical literature. The following literature can be described as neo-Foucauldian due to the heavy influence, identification with, and utilisation of Foucault's ideas on ethics. Most notably used is Foucault's notion of ethics as comprising a fourfold relationship with the self, and the acceptance and development of ideas of power flowing in a unidirectional manner from the cultural context to be negotiated by the consumer.

The overwhelming use of Foucauldian themes in available ethical literature is outlined by Newholm and Shaw (2007). In their review of research, they detail the multiple disciplines contributing to current research and the methodological approaches that have been undertaken to address the topic. They numerate the preponderance of quantitative over qualitative style investigations, but they also note a further imbalance within qualitative research, leaning toward interpretivist-style work influenced by Foucault's theories. Moisander and Pesonen (2002) also point to the contemporary imbalance of quantitative over qualitative work. However, a false impression of the recent research landscape would be given if some of the counterbalancing approaches were not discussed. These will be reviewed in an appropriate weighting to the current knowledge landscape and covered in Section 2.2.3.

Overall, the neo-Foucauldian literature accepts too readily the main features of Foucault's arguments and again fails to account for the lack of multi-directional effects. It also suffers from an important deficiency while looking at specific types of ethical consumers, such as those they label as 'green' or 'Fair Trade'. There is no explanation or investigation of whether these types of consumers are or should be counted as synonymous to ethical consumers. Further, there is no exploration of consumers who identify themselves with multiple ethical conceptions. Also ignored is the foundational assumption that internalisation happens, neglecting to ask what causes (ethical) individuals to internalise certain terms and thus identify themselves as such. Foucault and his camp leave this assumption unchallenged. In addition, other authors, noted below, appear guilty of uncritically fitting their observations into prescribed Foucauldian categorisations. Both their ontological claims to an interpretivist stance and their conclusions based upon it seem questionable.

The four-part relationship with the self appears in many of the Foucauldian-styled ethical consumption articles. A broad spectrum of literature indicates that individuals construct their ethical identities through acts of consumption, relating to the relationship with the self (Moisander & Pesonen 2002; Livesey 2001; Phillips & Hardy 1997; Varul 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Caruana & Crane 2008). For example, Moisander and Pesonen (2002) focus on the 'green consumer', a term they use interchangeably with the 'ethical consumer'. Focusing on self-narratives and drawing on the Foucauldian ideas of personal ethics, they look into how these green consumers renegotiate mainstream ideas of consumers and how these consumers construct identities as ethically conscious subjects who fit their environmentalist ideology. In a different conceptualisation of

ethical consumption, 'Fair Trade consumers', Varul (2008) draws upon four aspects of the ethical self-relationship to frame his unifying findings of ethical identity across his geographically and culturally differing research sample — UK and German ethical shoppers.

The four-part system appears yet again when Moisander and Pesonen (2002) concluded that their so-called extreme ethical consumers, the 'eco-communards', avoid dominant discourses of green/ethical consumption through the practice of 'resistance by not resisting'. These consumers aim to change the world, but to do so primarily through changing themselves, and they exhibit the four major aspects of the Foucauldian ethical relationship with themselves. What is left, then, is a contradictory amalgamation of Foucauldian ideas. There is no 'self-policing' caused by the 'governmentality' effect of dominant discourse; the authors suggest this is resisted. However, they do conceptualise the presence of the ethical (self) relationship. Yet the assertion that the 'eco-communards' are marginalised is unsubstantiated by any of Moisander and Pesonen's examples. This raises the question of whether the characterised ethical relationship with the self also fits this unsubstantiated social identity positioning. The discourse of green/ethical consumption, which the authors conclude is rejected by these ethical consumers and serves to marginalise them, is 'data [that] consists of 84 written accounts of green consumerism, generated using the method of non-active role-playing, [during] an [undergraduate] course on consumer behavior. ... It was *presumed* that when describing green consumers, students would be using the dominant discourse ... associated with green consumerism' (Moisander & Pesonen 2002: 331, emphasis added). The authors fail to address why they assume that 84 students' imaginative

writing would express the dominant discourse. After all, this is an interpretation of what the students think is ethical consumers' interpretation of themselves.

Even Caruana and Crane (2008), who do not draw as heavily upon Foucauldian frameworks, affirm the Foucauldian assumption of unidirectional power from (assumed homogeneous) producers (the social context) to consumers (the individual). They examine the self-advocated ethical reality of a corporate socially responsible travel company called travel.com. Their paper seeks 'to identify how responsible consumption is constructed through the discursive positioning of objects, subjects' (ibid.: 1496). Using textual analysis of website material, they suggest that consumer responsibility is created by juxtaposing certain objects and subjects in a construction relating to ethical travel. Thus, the consumer is *led* to choose the ethical option. The main conclusions depend on the idea of power flowing from the producer website to the consumer traveller who makes the ethical choice and creates the identity. What is missing is an analysis of how the consumer reads the material on the website. There is no proof that consumers absorb the material in a way that leads them to construct ethical identities, nor is there an explanation of how that might happen. Nor is there any discussion of the self-advocated ethical company. The paper fails to address why the authors assume a homogeneous ethical identity across the travel agency or how the organisation goes about creating this homogeneous reality they hope is read into by their consumers.

Cherrier neatly summarises three problems with the presented ideas of the ethical market as solely focused on consumers and their consumption practices:

First ... [it] assumes that ethical consumers have the capacity to make consumption decisions through their understanding of ethical implications and thus emphasizes internal reflexivity and grounded knowledge ...

Second ... consumers have the freedom and autonomy to promote ethical aspects of their identity through personalized choices in the market place ... people coalesce their multiple identities into a united desired ethical identity by choosing when and how to participate in ethical practices ...

Third, emphasizing self-inquiry to explain the burgeoning ranks of ethical consumers stresses an idealistic, rational identity-construction process.

Cherrier 2007: 323

Cherrier also points to the obsolescence of overarching narratives and regimes-of-truth of overall moral climates that guide behaviour. 'Postmodernism has fragmented the ethical climate' so that 'ethics, rather than being fixed and predetermined, becomes plural and nonlinear' (ibid.: 321). Cherrier's suggestion that there is no essential grand narrative at the foundation of ethical direction supports my own surprise at the inadequacy of these assertions both in the philosophical and ethical literature. This sentiment is reflected in the works of Kornberger & Brown 2007 and Neyland & Simakova 2009, among others. Bartlett (2009) expresses a view that is also consistent with Cherrier's point that the 'conception of ethical consumers as rational choosers shows little resemblance to ethical individuals in the real world' (Cherrier 2007: 322).⁴

While Cherrier's insights are helpful, her proposed alternative, the 'new social movement' (also known as the 'voluntary simplicity' theory) is not without problems. Her core idea is that an ethical consumer's identity is fluid and interactional and based not only on individual choices but on:

⁴ Also interestingly, Cherrier suggests a plurality of ethics 'that range from environmentalism to solidarity to fair trade to health to community support' (ibid.: 321), which remains largely ignored in other literature that tends to use the term synonymously with a singular type of ethical consumption. See, for example, Fair Trade in Varul's work.

[the] interaction of various [external] audiences (participants, spectators, allies, opponents, news, media and public authorities) and is not forged on fixed categories ... rather diverse and evolving flux of interactions.

Cherrier 2007: 324

But voluntary simplicity is based on the assertion that consumers are no longer fulfilled by the generally accepted Western value of 'more stuff is better'. It is a grand and unsubstantiated claim that 'voluntary simplifiers intentionally *choose* to exclude material goals ...' (ibid.: 327, my emphasis). Cherrier frames her theories in an original way, but fails to avoid her own critiques of the 'internal creation' of ethical consumers' identities, based on consumption choice. The contradiction is illustrated by her argument that 'by reducing and controlling their consumption practises, voluntary simplifiers express their values, ideas, beliefs and overall *identities*' (ibid.: 328, my emphasis). It is also not clear why Cherrier assumes that we live in the postmodern era, or why it is accepted that ethics were so much simpler in the pre-postmodern era.

A key criticism that can be made of all the above literature is the unbalanced focus on consumers as the key actants in the ethical market and especially the basic assumptions of two underlying realities. The first is exemplified in works such as Slater (1997), who suggests that in our contemporary society, everyone must be a consumer. However, Slater fails to address what is meant by the 'consumer'. The authors reviewed so far in this section all unproblematically use the term 'consumer' as if it refers to a homogeneous group of people.⁵ Trentman et al. (2006) and Black (2009) reiterate the multiplicity of the so-called consumer and emphasise the elusiveness of the consumer. The second assumption common to the above literature is that it is the consumer's

⁵Those authors are: Moisander & Pesonen 2002; Varul 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Caruana & Crane 2008; Cherrier 2007.

choice to consume particular entities, and from this basis, a stagnant, completed ethical identity emerges, achieved and set by a purchase decision.

However, 'unlike producers who can *choose* to be "ethical", for the ethical consumer, "there is no choice..." ([quoted from] Consumer A) (Bartlett 2009: 32). The argument that identity is formed and set upon purchasing is also suspect, and this cementation is yet to be proved beyond doubt, leaving the possibility of fluidity and questioning the validity of the presented knowledge on ethical consumption. Bartlett (2009) concluded ethical identity is not so black and white nor does product choice lead directly to concrete identity. The foreword to *The Ethical Consumer* (2005) further highlights the lack of clarity surrounding notions of 'ethical':

In any text on ethical consumers the usual caveats apply. There is no one view of what is 'ethical'. Thus, like many ambiguous terms prominently used in both academic and public spheres, there is little agreement about the meaning of 'ethical consumer'.

Mayo 2005: xviii

Mayo offers no insight into why there could be multiple views presented, nor does he draw upon ethical consumers' own descriptions of what they perceive as ethical. Previous investigation on the topic has shown that narrow definitions and representations of the term 'ethical' poorly reflect on the many types of ethical discourses upon which consumers themselves reference in their representations of ethical realities (Bartlett, 2009).

Consumers' definitions of 'ethical' appeared to have a much broader dynamic quality [than those of producers]. To them, 'ethical' spanned many different qualities including: Fair Trade, organic, local, free range, and environmental, all of which were mentioned by all consumers.

Bartlett (2009: 31)

In addition to neglecting the variety of consumers' creation of ethical realities, the previous literature ignores the tension that consumers feel when torn between different conceptualisations (Szmigin et al. 2009).⁶

Many analysts have missed this point in their treatment of ethics. This not only highlights the multiple forms of perceived ethical labels that exist in the marketplace, specifically here 'local' (UK Farms) and 'Fair Trade', but also suggests that academics need to ask how one form of ethical is judged better than another. The above literature is ill-equipped in this realm, and neither does it address consumers who often feel ethically inadequate:

Consumers ... suggested they (themselves) were never doing enough. This notion of the 'ethical' being unbounded, almost never-ending, appears in the following excerpt(s): "Thinking in terms of 'ethical' products is not going far enough – there is a lot more I could do in general, and everyone could do."

Consumer A, Bartlett 2009: 32

These observations contradict the Foucauldian and neo-Foucauldian notion of an achieved, cemented identity. How can the subjective identity really be measured if, as others have noted, 'most studies of consumers ... have rested on the assumption that [ethical] responsibility is an objectively identifiable trait of sovereign consumers' (Caruana and Crane, 2008: 1496)? It seems that such an identity is never really achieved; rather, it is a tension-filled, dynamic construction, always in revision, so that deliberated decisions never become cemented for the individual. It eludes identification or snapshot capture by analysis. Thus it is not so much the consumption resulting in an ethical identity, but rather the consumers re-enactment of their own realities of what counts as

⁶ This point was epitomised and importance solidified when I spotted a public post shared on one of my own social networking websites that was part of a conversation about ethical consuming (19/6/2010): '[I] faced a dilemma in the supermarket. Two bags of sugar, both 98p. One "Fairtrade", the other "From UK farms". Hmmmmmm'.

ethical. Such an implication questions the framing of the ethical-consumer literature. Moreover, it undermines the utility of delimiting certain ethical users as consumers and others as producers. Nicholls illustrates the imprecision of such labelling as it operates in the ethical investment market:

There are sometimes blurred boundaries for the [ethical] investor between consumption and investment in terms of their own logics. ... It is not always clear at what point a grant, donation, loan or even equity investment builds capacity rather than directly buying services. ... It is sometimes unclear whether directly funding services itself is consumption or not.

2010: 72

Here we confront the dangers of oversimplifying the production process. As has been argued throughout this review and highlighted by the absence of other theorists' existing literature on the topic, the self-ascribed ethical producer has been largely unexplored. Yet importantly, the ethical producer is assumed to be present, different from, and influential on *the* consumer. The distinction between producers and consumers assumes homogeneity of the groups and transactions only across clearly marked spheres; ethical attribution travels from one to the next through the process of supply and demand. Woolgar (1991) questions such characterisation and argues that there is no singular producer, rather a number of users (and users within departments), all of whom are masked by homogenising rhetoric. Others have questioned this producer-consumer alignment and pointed to the difficulty of such simplification (Lang & Gabriel 2005; Rose & Miller 1997). Work so far has largely ignored the users *within* the homogeneous label of producer and those users who do not fit in the simplified market spheres. This leads us to ask what could be found if there was a move away from the present market rhetoric of dichotomous boundaries and a focus toward the largely

unexplored ethical 'users'⁷. This would provide a new analytical lens on ethical 'business' to reveal missing knowledge on how ethical enactments travel, if they travel, and how this occurs with individual users. Use of 'business' rather than market is a purposeful change in rubric in order to further to distance this work from assuming market dichotomies. As indicated, far more exploration is needed to address this knowledge gap.

Another observation that persists in the literature and has been hinted upon so far is the untidy definition of the label 'ethical'. Applying that term to an activity (often consumerism) or trend does not define or clarify what is happening. The complex, multiple, and heterogeneous formulations of ethical are generally not developed in the literature.

Related to this observation is another: the often-practised interchange of labels such as 'ethical', 'Fair Trade' (Shaw & Shui 2003; Varul 2008; Neyland & Simakova 2009 and 2010; Nicholls & Opal 2005; Pelozo et al. 2013), and 'green' (Moisander & Poesen 2002; Lewis 2008; Prothero et al. 2010). Across much of the literature we find that authors (a) fail to define at the outset what constitutes ethical and (b) allow their amorphous labels to bleed into and absorb other terms, implying they are synonyms. The literature does not explain or explore whether this is a grouping applied by the researchers or by the users investigated. For example, Shaw and Shui (2003) make a clear distinction between the Fair Trade and the green consumer. Neyland and Simakova (2009 and 2010) further define the differences. Both sets of authors use their various terms as synonyms for

⁷ The term 'user' is not unproblematic. It is not the panacea to the terms of 'producer' and 'consumer'. This point will be developed throughout the thesis. For the present, 'user' is employed critically, guided by work such as Shove and Rip (2000).

ethical, but any form of interchangeability often goes unaddressed. Similar grouping occurs in earlier papers, (Strong 1996; Barratt Brown 1993), where a distinction is made between 'caring' and 'green' consumers, but the terms 'Fair Trade' and 'ethical' are used interchangeably. What is not addressed is whether a green shopper is also an ethical shopper through their consumption behaviour. Interestingly, it is also unexplored whether the conceptualisation of the ethical shopper has evolved in the past few decades, or rather if the number of types of ethical users has increased.

This heterogeneity is also found in other media aimed at ethical business. For example, www.ethicalconsumer.org awards an 'ethical rating' to companies and products based on 19 determining factors, several of which are environmental. *The Good Shopping Guide* annually rates hundreds of companies, services, and products as 'ethical' or 'non-ethical', but fails to clarify its own terms. The guide also contains numerous unexplained contradictions. For example, even though Nestlé is the producer of the Fairtrade-certified Nestlé Partner Blend Coffee (a product that the guide deems to be 'ethical'), Nestlé itself is not considered ethical. The publication fails to elucidate several things: whether this form of limbo is actually the case for producers, whether the readers of this guide would feel that way as well, and if so, how they create and understand such multiple ethical judgments.

This lack of clear parameters forces us to ask whether omission of any particular definition of the label 'ethical' by so-called media judges introduces the same problem as assuming that readers have a homogeneous, shared understanding of that label. *The Good Shopping Guide* does not suggest a single way of being 'good' or even point to actions that define the term 'ethical'. Rather, it presents a plethora of products and

consumption behaviours that covers a wide spectrum of ethical concerns. In consequence, products and company actions are assigned measurable levels of 'ethical' indicated by an attributed score. In so doing, the guide emphasises the heterogeneity surrounding ethical products and consumer choice with myriad sub-labels presented under the domain of 'ethical'. What is not clear is whether the publication's approach matches the way that other ethical users conceive of what it means to be 'ethical' and whether they share the guide's criteria, inclusions, and exclusions.

2.2.3 Beyond Foucault: Other Contemporary Ideas on Ethical Business

Although prominent, Foucault and neo-Foucauldian authors are not alone in their discussion of a modern 'ethical' identity. The approaches reviewed in this section are in counter-balance to those in the previous section, as these examples cannot be strictly regarded as neo-Foucauldian. Yet their adjacent review helps us further reflect on and identify gaps in the present knowledge about ethical business. Their contemporary ideas aid in providing a look at the full knowledge landscape that this thesis wants to critically draw upon. Finally, their inclusion moves the critical review on to its second main section focusing on a very different style of research, that of STS studies, which developed and extended many of the concepts appropriated by the following ethical business theorists.

2.2.3.1 Subsequent Ideas of the Modern 'Ethical' Identity and Labelling

Taylor (1975, 1989) discusses the sources of the modern self and talks of 'communitarian, procedural ethics', rather than individuality. It is constitutive goods that become the moral norms of the modern self. Taylor also emphasises the role of

reflexivity, the act of self-reference due to a conscious awareness of one's actions and their effects. This idea is also picked up by the work of Ericson et al. (2003) in a discussion of 'governance beyond the state', which draws on Foucauldian ideas in relation to insurance policy-buying behaviour in North America. As in Taylor's work, the Ericson study shifts the focus away from the individual to the 'institutional communities of consuming populations'. Institutional communities create devices for governing 'liberal subjects' through 'technologies of the self'. Members of the communities are compelled to conduct themselves in certain ways based on their consumption habits and the prescriptions on individual behaviour this brings about. What is not made clear is to what extent consumers are compelled to act in the ways suggested, if even at all. Further, there is no exploration into what 'technologies of self' guide the consumers. An additional gap in the research relates to the individuals who are not consumers, but rather are members of the 'producer'. Rose (1999) suggests that 'the individual is perpetually monitored regarding her consumption behaviour to give evidence of her credentials' (ibid.:32). The pursuit of approbation enables a form of interrogation of the ethical properties of an individual's behaviour. However, Rose fails to address the ways consumption is actually monitored by others in order to cause a policing of behaviour.

Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) suggests that the modern ethical self-identity arises in contemporary 'risk society'. Giddens notes we inhabit this society with 'our inability to know' as we focus on the dynamic, unknown future (1991: 131). To minimise risk from the unknown, we turn to and depend on expert knowledge systems (a characteristic of the modern era). Thus, self-identity is reflexive and constantly re-evaluated. Giddens suggests that an individual's ongoing story becomes more important than the singular

action. What to do, how to act, and who to be are questions we ask and answer in our social behaviour.

Willis (1990) does not focus on ethical consumers specifically, but he does suggest that consumed material objects and the particular day-to-day practices are shaping modern consumers' identities. Consumed cultural commodities act as the 'raw materials' for constructing and sustaining an individual's social identity. Willis gives little attention to the possible social limitations that could inhibit consumption or the consequent restricted use of cultural commodities in constructing identities. Further, he does not address how consumers attribute meaning to those commodities that then make up their identity.

Contrasting Willis is Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). De Certeau discusses how the individualisation and re-use of all aspects of mass culture are the means by which individuals escape the dominant language of producers and find their own voice. 'Users' (consumers) cannot be qualified by their purchases alone. Although de Certeau does not discuss ethical consumers, his ideas suggest interesting questions that have failed to be addressed by other research: Do ethical users absorb the dominant ethical language, and if so, how much, and what do they do with it? Also, how do producers attempt to create that dominant ethical language? What, if anything, is the process of transfer and how is it attempted by producers?

Interestingly, the texts above generate several areas that need further investigation. Generally, they do not agree on what the ethical identity entails nor why it came into being. Thus, they offer little insight into how there could be a plurality of substance and creation processes of the modern ethical self. A common criticism of all the above

reviewed literature - something they share with the neo-Foucauldian cases - is a lack of clarity about what exactly 'ethical' is, as will be explored further later in this chapter. Further, they focus narrowly on the consumer of the market without considering the identity-building on the part of the producers, which represent a collective of unconsuming (in the sense of 'consumption' as these theorists use) individuals from where the products for consumption have originated. There is also no discussion on the self-identifying ethical (heterogeneous) producers. Lastly, the literature that describes identity does not address whether the mechanics of self-labelling processes could be applied to non-human actants, an important consideration later in this chapter.

Additionally, McNay (1994) and Eagleton (1990) propose that weaknesses lie in Foucault's work and the subsequent developments owing to the under-explanation of his use of the aesthetics of existence and the feminist critique of the 'implication of gender', whereby male 'heroization' becomes the epitome of the 'ethical self'. Peterson (1997) critiques Giddens, noting a lack of 'attention to the aesthetic-expressive dimension of the modern self' (ibid.: 190). Neither appears to question the described conception of the modern self; that is, the rational, autonomous subject who unquestionably uses expert systems. Although they differ on how individuals use these expert systems, neither scrutinises this form of reflexivity, which appears uncritically bound up in the modernization that generated the self-reflexive ethical citizen in the first place. This leads the individual to choose identity and lifestyle, but overall, this research is littered with assumptions that, when unpacked, only generate more unanswered research questions in need of addressing. For instance, it is not clear if active construction of one's own story through choice is possible or how the ethical

consumer 'chooses' such an identity. Do consumers really depend on expert ethical knowledge unproblematically to guide lifestyle decisions? What happens when scientists disagree about ethical evidence? And who are the experts who decide what creates an ethical position? What expertise do the experts apply? Or is the ethical position re-created and/or re-read by each 'user'?

Newholm proposes an alternative, based on his case study of ethical consumers, and he agrees with Giddens (1991) that experts have lost authority (2000: 154). Newholm suggests that ethical consumption behaviour alone 'fails to reflect the ethical nature' of consumers, which can be better understood through Hirschman's 1979 framework of exit, voice, and loyalty (ibid.: 153). Unfortunately, Newholm does not give clear evidence of whether vocalisation and exit from the consumption of products, modified by loyalty to brands and lifestyles, are the only factors involved in ethical identity creation.

2.2.3.2 Performative Approaches to Ethical Business

The neo-Foucauldian approach is not taken by, for want of a better grouping label, the discipline of human geography, as in Slater (2003), Whatmore and Clark (2008), Barry and Slater eds (2005) who bring a performative perspective to the market. This idea lies much in line with and in expansion of Callon's 1998 *The Laws of the Market*. The market here is not treated as a passive object, but is instead performed and 'made'. Therefore these objects of morality are more appropriately explored through a more ethnographic/anthropological approach (see Browne & Milgram eds 2009; Wilks 2001).

Goodman et al. examine ethical foodscapes, and they acknowledge the messy work of 'making' determinations of good and bad, as well as the overlapping and often contradictory ethical and unethical realities. They argue that 'the "ethics" of ethical

foodscapes can thus be ambiguous, slippery and consist of interwoven layers' (2010: 3). This heterogeneous conception contrasts with the homogeneous ethics of the philosophical world reviewed previously, where ethics is treated as a uniform and universal entity. The review by Goodman et al. (2010) does not, however, establish if or why the 'ethics' of the foods consumed is synonymous with 'good' and counter to 'bad', or what they mean by 'ethical' food. To their credit, Goodman et al. suggest that what should be asked in relation to the ethics of market goods is who decides on such ethical criteria and how both the decision makers and criteria are regulated. An interesting question could be asked, though, in light of their contradictory impression of 'slippery' ethics that also 'hint at the ordinary and inescapable ethical/moral character of *all* foods' (2010: 2, emphasis added): What determines the 'made' (enacted and differing) ethics of markets but at the same time qualifies as something inherent to all food?

Following in a similar vein of the performativity of ethical markets is the challenge of global warming and specifically, the new market created by the envisioned solution of carbon trading. Callon (2009) studies the idea through the example of 'civilizing markets' in reflection to the 'experimental object', the market of carbon trading. Callon does not fully delineate the notion of what a 'civilizing market' is, but it seems it can be proposed and conceptualised as a market whose purpose is different from other markets. In other words, its purpose is to bring about some form of change in society rather than to facilitate wealth. As Callon notes, it is being created through *in vivo* and *in vitro* experimentation — that enables to us to realise that markets 'sometimes have to be created from scratch, and they are in reality fragile and complicated socio-technical artefacts' (2009: 539). This in turn lets us ask: What are markets made of? Callon

investigates the nascent carbon market in this way. His main premise is that this ethical market's newness allows us to see how it was started, its contingencies, and what actants (human and non-human actors) take part in its creation. But this is not to suggest that it is the only market in this state. Quite the contrary. As Callon suggests, when we acknowledge the messy and fragile reality of markets, then we 'obtain a richer and more realistic picture' (ibid.: 540). This has interesting potential for a study of ethical business. *The* mainstream ethical market is still relatively young, as indicated by the previously reviewed pieces of literature on the history of ethical consumers, which all suggested the boom in conscious consuming has only reached popular status in the previous couple of decades. Therefore, can we find and explore instances of genesis of this nascent market and obtain a richer picture of the ethical phenomenon? This particular line of questioning will be returned to later in the review.

Likewise, if we start by acknowledging markets could be multiform in their contingent reality, this would bring about a new set of knowledge and understanding regarding the market. This piece of Callon's work is an extension of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and leads the literature review cleanly into its next section that explores STS ideas on ethics and businesses. ANT is one of the cornerstones of this style of research, and its framework is reviewed shortly for its utility. This piece also offers an ideal example of the application of challenging accepted parameters and boundaries — a characteristic of STS-style research.

2.3 STS Ideas on Ethics and Businesses

2.3.1 Introduction

As presented in reflection to just a few of the previously reviewed works, for example Goodman et al. 2010 and Callon 2009, there is great utility in taking a more provocative STS-style approach to the idea of the ethical market. Breaking down assumed inherent qualities of prior notions about the ethical market's contemporary place in society opens a huge, yet unexplored, avenue of research. To this end, in the rest of the chapter there is a purposeful change from consumer / customer to the STS terminology of 'user'. The terminology is sometimes used interchangeably, however, based on the context of the statement and whether it is my own line of thought or a reflection on another theorist's ideas.

Not only does this STS style of research bring a vast unused toolbox of theories, research methods, and ideas to the table of ethical research, but also its unaccepting position of previous assumption-laden theories gives STS the real possibility of creating new knowledge. Additionally, the origins of the STS field itself and its aims to question the seemingly universally accepted homogeneous science truth neatly mirror the contemporary ethical situation.

STS is a multifaceted, multiple-theory discipline, though it has been suggested that the mix of theories shares a set of sensibilities (Woolgar et al. 2009).⁸ In the broadest terms,

⁸ 'These sensibilities can be itemised as so: (1) a propensity to cause trouble, provoke, be awkward; (2) a tendency to work through difficult conceptual issues in relation to specific empirical cases, deflating grandiose theoretical concepts and claims (and even some ordinary ones); (3) an emphasis on the local, specific, and contingent in relation to the genesis and use ... (4) caution about the reflexive adoption and deployment of standard social science lexicons (e.g. power, culture, meaning, value); (5) reflexive attention to the (frequently unexplicated) notions of audiences, value, and utility. It is characteristic of this

STS covers those theorists which have ‘the ability to provoke, highlight and challenge our taken-for-granted assumptions, and to unsettle and disturb our inclination to depend on safe formulae and on comfortable analytic perspectives’ (Woolgar 2004: 347).

The origins of this multidisciplinary field can be found in the work of theorists such as Kuhn (1962) and Bloor (1976), who both challenged received ideas on the construction of scientific knowledge. Previously, philosophers such as Hume (1740), Kant (1785), and Popper (1959) theorised about the demarcation of scientific knowledge from other knowledge. Kuhn and Bloor claimed that science was not so different from other knowledge and could be treated as other social phenomena were — as social constructs. Ethics and science have had similar academic traditions, both being the focus of the philosophical debate as to their demarcated nature and an apparent ‘lack of nerve’ (Bloor 1976) to construe the ‘special’, ‘universal’ knowledge of science as a sociological construction applicable for analysis (Woolgar 1988b). This ‘age of scepticism’ that has caused the formulation of the identity of the ethical self-parallels the impetus for the questioning of science’s authority (Beck 1992, Giddens 1991). Nowotny et al. (2001) suggest that in modern societies, science is no longer the external fact that it once was. Starthorn (2005) goes further to propose that there is a global phenomenon of scientific internalising, leading to an ‘institutionalised uncertainty’ (ibid.: 466). Similarly, Rose (1999) suggested that ‘one could say that science today is the mode by which “ethical” statements come to place themselves’ (ibid.: 260). This apparent interconnection

approach to take revered and standardised ideas and concepts—science, technology, the law, the market—and convert them into objects of study. This can be done by recasting ideas and concepts so as to stress the processual, situated and contingent bases for the terms’ (Woolgar et al. 2009: 21-22).

between proposed decreased certainty, increased risk, new ways of managing lifestyle decisions, and the burgeoning of ethical business is a matter for research.

Mindful of this connection, it seems appropriate to ask if STS can be used in a fruitful way to unpack, explore, and explain the ethical phenomena. STS has moved beyond the antiquated narrow definition of science and technology into areas as disparate as food, neurobiology, governance, medicine, environment, identity, crime, disasters, and risk (a list of topics just from the 4S/EASST 2012 conference, among many other discussion areas). What can be discovered when it is similarly applied to ethical business? This type of exploration would help further the debate of how, or even if, STS sensibilities have the capability of travelling beyond their namesake research area to provide useful insight into the broader world. Also yet to be explored is what a novel application of STS theories will bring to light about STS itself. If we 'push sceptical reflexivity' (Neyland & Simakova 2009) into a stance akin to Ashmore's 'reflexive thesis' (1989) and Woolgar's (1988a) 'constituent reflexivity', we can use this approach as a guiding method and technique to *doing* my investigation (research and write up). This application remains largely unused in contemporary (ethical) studies, and it will bring to light undiscovered knowledge about STS.

2.3.2 Applying STS to Business

The inspiration for this section comes from a variety of sources where a question has been posed regarding the future of STS studies: Does STS mean business? As noted, a key characteristic of STS is its provocative approach to subjects of research and its ability to question the deepest assumptions. But a move away from its origins into new areas 'amount[s] to suicide for STS: *by definition* Science and Technology Studies need to be

about, well, science and technology’ (Guggenheim, in Woolgar et al. 2009: 12). Others suggest that the movement of STS into these new areas is not such a radical departure: ‘Michael Lynch argued that conceptions of science play an important part in (and are integral to) contemporary legal and business practices, and Nigel Thrift suggested that science these days is often — and cannot be neatly separated from — “big business”’ (ibid.: 12-13). Other critics such as Evans (ibid.) suggest that it is not the discipline itself, but rather the expertise and style of investigation that characterises research as STS.

The debate remains unresolved for those within STS, but viewing the situation externally, the field has already grown into newly approached areas of study indicated by the above list taken from the 4s/EASST conference (Copenhagen, 2012). Predominantly, there has been a market and business focus with the singular term ‘market’ itself being problematised (much as this literature review has also done). The focus provides a very useful and interesting body of literature to critique in order to determine which ideas might be most fruitfully applied to this research’s specific focus on the ethical market. Conceptualisation of the universal market of rational agents engaged in a purely supply-and-demand economy has given way to ideas of ‘social embeddedness’ (Granovetter 1985). However, in such debates, the market remains as a given. The theory merely describes the social and cultural effects that are presented as occurring over and above the basic, assumed notion of the underlying market and the business transactions that take place within it. As Knorr-Cetina and Preda note in their reflection of STS works on the financial market, social scientists’ theories are still full of a range of unjustified assumptions (2005). Callon et al. (2007) in their ‘pragmatic turn’ suggest that the STS approach deals more with the ‘material and discourse assemblages’

of those 'market devices' that create the markets (similarly reported in Callon's 2009 paper on carbon trading markets, previously reviewed, see Section 2.2.3.2). It is not that the human factors are simply modifying the underlying markets. Rather, these interactions are what create the markets and so remain to be analysed in order to grasp the phenomena of markets.

There has been a pronounced financial market focus of the literature. Mackenzie (2008) and Mackenzie and Millo (2003) investigate the development of financial markets in historical perspective. Both focus on different financial models and their 'performative' effects throughout the history of the financial market. Mackenzie found that many models are created and contingent upon taken-for-granted financial models (such as the Chicago Board Options Exchange) rather than mapped to real market prices; in other words, they are 'performed'.

Knorr-Cetina and Preda (2005) justify the financial market emphasis because other markets are created from the 'ordinary economics of production and consumption' (ibid.: 4). They too readily assume the simplicity of other types of markets, and they do not address, explain, or prove their claim that services economics are simple, ordinary, and homogeneous. There is, then, a gap in research that could investigate and unpack the assumptions of production and consumption of other markets.

The STS work most relevant to this thesis' proposed research is that of Toennesen (2009). He draws on the methodological tool of ethnography, focusing his research on ethical discourse in three organisations. He concentrates on the largely ignored users of ethical business (producers) and, rather than suggesting who is ethical, he explores self-avowed ethical organisations and does not appear to assume other terminologies, such

as Fair Trade, equally enact the organisations' ethical realities. Toennesen's argument is in accord with my general thesis that the discussion and definition of ethicality reported in the literature thus far fails to address ethical users' own reflections and the ways in which they align themselves with their ethical position. However, a more thorough review of Toennesen's work reveals some major disparities and untouched issues.

Toennesen suggests that 'ethicising', the doing of ethics, is a continuous practice involving three intertwined moments: standardising, materialising, and un-ethicising. However, missing from Toennesen's research is an external view of ethicising. The moments discussed only apply to internal ethicising. Missing from the research is to what extent ethicising happens outside of these organisations and any investigation of how ethicising is translated to others externally. The way ethical travels between users may reveal more about the creation and sustainability of ethical enactments than has yet been revealed. Toennesen's work, however, provides a good example in the suggestion that there is more to non-financial markets than the uniform production and consumption ideal that Knorr-Cetina and Preda (2005) describe, as noted above.

Two other pieces, which focus on another ethical market (labelled as ethical by the authors), lead the critical review into the STS-style of thinking. Neyland and Simakova (2010 and 2009) analyse the practices of the marketing of Fair Trade products. Similar to the above approaches and in contrast to the mainstream Foucauldian approaches reviewed above, the ethics here are again largely seen in the doing. In both works, the authors propose that rather than launching ethical products into the world, a (ethical) version of the world is launched in the products. They focus on 'discourses and practices' (2010) to explore how the market achieves for its users a '... fair ... world out

there through consumption'. In the 2010 paper, they specifically focus on the notions of 'good' and 'bad' between three groupings of Fair Traders and how fluid identities can be located in 'hybrid forums'. Whereas in the 2009 paper focusing on the same research material, they use their claim of world being launched into products to further question how far sceptical reflexivity can be pushed in regard to ethics. Interestingly, both works suggest that participants find themselves 'acting in multiple worlds ... underpinned at times by different notions of what counts as "Fair" and of what counts as "Trade"' (2010: 206). This potential of ontological multiplicity is a recurrent theme in various strands of STS research. In their 2009 discussion on reflexivity, Neyland and Simakova argue for the utility in this approach (as do Fourcade & Healy 2007 in their moral market approach). However, as they acknowledge, their paper only skims the tip of the iceberg as far as the use of sceptical reflexivity. This suggests it might be useful to further this line of inquiry by attempting a comprehensive injection of sceptical reflexivity onto/into ethical market research. Using it more as a method than a theory to guide a study would bring about a novel research approach. This approach would both elicit new knowledge about the ethical market and bring further insights into sceptical reflexive knowledge and its performativity effect on the realities of markets.

Similar to the ethical literature reviewed, the financial and other market analysis lack reflection on the effects of the users and how they 'read' the markets (bar Neyland & Simakova 2010 and 2009, above). For example, the notion of the consumer is a crucial part of the 'consumer test' market device Mallard (2007) investigates, but Mallard fails to mention the effect of the consumers' own interpretation and readings of the market. Similar limitations are found by Grandclément and Gaglio (2011) in their focus group

investigations and Muniesa and Trébuchet-Breitwiler (2010) in their explorations of perfume testing. Knorr-Cetina and Preda (2005) go one step further and suggest that consumers are non-existent in financial markets (a point they use to indicate the salient nature of this market versus other types). However, this point is not proven, and drawing on classic economic ideas of the market, there is no supply without demand, suggesting some sort of user must exist. As Nicholls (2010) suggests, investors are the consumers of the ethical finance market. It would appear Knorr-Cetina and Preda also overlooked actors like shareholders, whose interpretations and readings of the market play an important role in making it.

The argument that market users are active parts of the market is not new. For example, Stern (1989), Scott (1994), and Smith (2005) all discuss the increasingly sophisticated and savvy consumer who does not accept the market and marketing in a passive manner, but instead reads many meanings into it. O'Donohue (2001) suggests that the consumer is ambivalent towards the market overall, having both loving and hostile feeling for different aspects of market. She sides with Otnes et al. (1997) who found that consumers have mixed emotions when dealing with the marketplace. This matches with Elliot's (1997) finding that conflicting emotions can lead to an act of consumption becoming a site of contradiction. The main point of interest highlighted by these studies is that even if they were not focusing directly on the effects of the consumer, they collectively indicate that consumers do indeed read multiple meanings in the markets.

Woolgar's (1991) investigation suggests that the user of a newly produced, personal computer is not only conceptualised throughout the production process but has considerable effects on all stages of the creation of new technology and its products.

This extends beyond the initial research and design stages into the real-world release and use by the consumer (even if the conceptualisation of the user varies between the departments of the computer company). Consumers are not only important in the research and design stages of creating markets, but throughout the 'never-closing' market creations. In his market device study, Lezaun (2007) acknowledges the importance of consumers in the knowledge creation formed from focus groups. However, Lezaun's emphasis is on how opinions are created and differentiated from mere utterances and then are used as a valuable source of knowledge in the market. Not explored is the effect consumers have in the latter stages of (re)creation of the market.

Cochoy (2007) discusses the consumer's interaction in a supermarket, but the investigation falls short of identifying the user's effects on this market. In Cochoy's supermarket 'garden' metaphor, staff are implicated as the gardeners, but consumers' roles are undefined. The argument points to a unidirectional creation flow and implies that the consumers are passive entities of the market who grow as determined by the market. This does not fit well with the notion of the savvy consumer. Further, the garden metaphor indicates that the market (specifically the supermarket) is a natural, organically occurring thing. This notion contradicts the market devices study's overall claims that materiality and discourse assemblages create the markets found, rather than the markets occurring through their own inherent properties.

This is not the only point where it seems 'ironic' (see usage of ironic in Woolgar 1983 and Woolgar & Pawluch 1985) that authors challenge other authors in their assumed 'real' entities, such as being 'econometrists' in their views of the market, and yet the

accusers do not analyse their own 'real' claims. This situation is neatly expressed by Woolgar's term, 'ontological gerrymandering' (1983). Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) label this phenomenon as 'instrumental irony', viewing the theorist as taking a relativist-constructionist stance. They describe it as instrumental due to the way in which it allows a social scientist's theory to seem as if it is superior to another's theoretical explanations of markets. Unlike previous explanations of socio-cultural practices and their impact on markets, these STS theories indicate that theirs is the correct description of the *real* creation events of markets.

It is not a turn to business and markets that remains uninvestigated by STS, but attention to the relatively unexplored ethical market and the proposed reflexive approach, which is unique. The next section considers some of the more promising STS approaches and assesses their potential for understanding ethical business.

2.3.3 Applying STS to Ethical Business

As observed, the contemporary ethical-related literature does little to question existing definitions and discourses of the idea of ethical. In the work of the prominent authors reviewed, there is scant discussion of how discourses of 'ethical' come to be drawn upon, enacted, and used over other potential ethical terminology. STS approaches have shown an ability to fill this hole in ethical literature, and some of the potential STS frameworks are reviewed below.

2.3.3.1 STS Frameworks

Woolgar and Grint's (1997) metaphor of technology as a text, seems like it could be particularly useful in thinking through the ethical object. This metaphor is fruitful in unpacking the idea of homogeneous ethics because the metaphor acts as a provocative

heuristic tool that escapes the charge of sneaking essentialism in through the back door (which, as we shall suggest, is characteristic of ANT, see later in this section). At first glance, this metaphor suggests that any reading of a text is possible, but the relationship between the writer and reader of the text is mediated by the object to promote the reading that the writer implied. It would appear useful in this investigation's desire to move from consumer and producer parameters to instead explore the multiple writers, designers, and readers of a text. We can extend the metaphor to consider whether drafts of the texts are written before any sort of investigation or interaction with readers occurs. Finally, we can probe and decipher if mediation of the text is successful or not — in other words, if configuration occurs and readers read the text as the writers wanted.⁹

The applicability of this framework relies heavily on ideas of textual analysis of the discourse data in the style of Smith (1978) rather than the approach of searching for social and political power relations concealed in the texts akin to Fairclough (1995). Smith (1978) suggests that certain readings of the texts are more likely owing to various organisational features within them: For example, presenting the answer to a question as part of the question so the reader already knows the answer. This is shown in Schneider and Woolgar's development and use of this approach in their 2012 paper

⁹ The idea of internal-configuration is mostly absent from the current configuration literature, but looking beyond STS literature, there is a thread of thought in a small marketing research area that focuses on ideas of 'Internal Marketing' (terminology first used by Berry et al. 1976). This field has been around for 40 years, yet it remains underutilised in empirical research. The literature supports the notion that technologies of configuration may be instrumental within organisations (Lings & Greenley 2005) in order to market to the 'internal consumer' (Berry 1981). Koh and Boo (2001) and Valentine and Barnett (2003) focus within this field specifically on organisational ethics (discussed in Shabnam & Sarker 2012: 27). The internal marketing literature is not sufficiently developed to frame my own discussions, but it does add support to the idea that it will be fruitful to bring greater accuracy and understanding to contemporary commercial settings of ethical. See more in Chapter 6 where it drawn upon and referred to where relevant.

exploring neuro-marketing. The text metaphor is not without critics (see Hutchby 2001; Latour 1992), but it provides a provocative way to parse the potentially conflicting multiple enactments of 'ethical'. And this new area of investigation, building upon what has gone before, allows unexplored questions and their answers to be gleaned: Could multiple realities occur due to multiple 'writings' and 'readings' by unconfigured users? Or are ethical realities achieved, even temporarily, by the writers who successfully mediate the text through the use of textual devices, the possible labelling of products, and the use of certain discourse structure? If this is the case, are the ethical users a configured (labelled body) of users determined before any readings, and hence the attributes of ethical reality are 'written into' ethical products? This idea fits with Woolgar's proclamation that user needs 'rarely pre-exist the efforts and activities of producers to engage with them' (2000: 169).

The next framework proposed, particularly relevant, is that of actor-network theory (ANT), discussed earlier in the chapter in relation to Callon's 2009 work. It is an oversimplification to describe ANT as a singular entity, as many authors have drawn upon ANT in many ways. However, much like the umbrella term STS, it is possible to identify some common themes. Primarily, ANT is a 'ruthless appliance of semiotics' (Law 1999: 3) in the sense that all objects are what they are in relation to other objects. All objects and subjects are treated equally in ANT, for nothing has any inherent or predetermined qualities. Rather, objects and subjects 'are the effect of stable arrays of networks or relations ... objects hold together as long as relationships do' (Law 2002: 91), so that 'things are what they are because they are done' (Gad & Jensen 2010: 58). The key mechanism by which networks are done is 'translation', or how actors relate to

one another. In this way, ANT attempts to dissolve common boundaries such as human/non-human and instead employ an approach of 'generalized symmetry' (Callon 1986a). Thus, objects, technology, and subjects may all be actants of the networks that achieve stability. The un-problematisation of boundaries in ethical literature has already been discussed, but even in the STS framework as applied by Toennesen (2009), the issue of these boundaries is prevalent. Using ANT appears to move away from dichotomies and the problem of barriers because 'its point of departure [lies] precisely in a view of the world as multiple and complex, one in which all entities ... are displaced from practise to practise' (Gad & Jensen 2010: 57).

The plurality suggested by this description does not mean that objects are different everywhere. Latour (1987) first proposed the concept of the 'immutable mobile'. In other words, there are immutable and combinable mobiles which manage such stability in their networks that they can travel and yet remain a static object. They 'sit at the beginning and at the end of a long network' (ibid.: 227). Latour suggests inscription devices such as maps and books are epitomes of immutable mobiles, as they can be used for calculation to 'act at a distance' (ibid.: 229).

Like any theory, ANT is not without criticism, and Latour (1999) himself suggests there are deficiencies in ANT. He suggests that each of the words and even the hyphen between 'actor-network' are questionable. It also remains unclear how or where a network would stop. It may be possible that in the explanation of why and how networks are formed, essentialism creeps in, and the analysis is a re-description rather than new-knowledge formation. However, an idea such as multiplicity and the notion of non-human actants could be significantly applicable in a study of ethical business and its

abundance of certification-, institutions-, actions- and things-labelling. It also seems there is little discovery of non-human actants and the work they do to create and stabilise ethical enactments. Taking this line of thought one step further, there are additional avenues of exploration missing, including investigating whether non-human actants enable ethical realities to act as centres of ethical calculation at a distance (like immutable mobiles), or if indeed more multiplicity would be found. The use of ANT in this new context would also bring additional knowledge to answer the 'after' of the *Actor Network Theory and After* (Law & Hassard 1999). Namely, is the future for ANT in its correct application business? That would further bolster the question, 'does STS mean business?'

Gad and Jensen (2010) and Law (2002) all discuss the future for ANT. Both these studies go beyond the notion of static immutable mobiles to develop ideas of what constitutes an object and specifically to consider the possibility of fluid or multiple objects and their ability to be read as the same object but not be enacted identically. Both studies focus on work by Mol: Law on her work on the Zimbabwe push pump (with de Laet 2000) and Gad and Jensen on her work on the enactment of atherosclerosis in an outpatient clinic (Mol 2002). The overriding suggestions are the potential for ANT sensibilities to describe fluidity and multiplicity of object(s) in new ways. Law argues that the push pump fluidity comes from a network where minor changes occur (so as to not break it) but still allow it be done differently. Gad and Jensen similarly argue that the 'multiplicity in practise' and 'ANT as post-plural attitude' are both conceptually and materially involved in doing atherosclerosis. Although atherosclerosis is a disease, Mol (2002) treats this intangible, complicated disease as an object. Law and Singleton (2005) noted that a disease may

not be as easily pointed to as, say, a ship, but they nevertheless framed alcoholic liver disease into an object for study. It then seems entirely possible to think of 'ethics' as an object and investigate this avenue further. It appears from the review that ethics would not be found to be a homogeneous object but would rather be a messy, complex thing. This leads the review into a new subsection where ideas on 'messy objects' are deliberated further to parse out potential utilities found in the literature and identify gaps in our contemporary knowledge that this thesis could then address.

2.3.3.2 Messy Objects

Focusing on those theorists that offer messy-object frameworks and reviewing the potential utility of each can help grasp how these objects can be addressed. Further, by identifying the explanatory uses alongside the discernible shortfalls of the present ideas, we can develop new potential framing. These new explanatory ideas can be empirically explored to help shed light on this ethical business investigation and fill in missing knowledge about both the potential understanding of objects and, more specifically, how this relates to the ethical object presently under review.

This style of approach may be best described as not focusing on the inward, not tangibly clear status of the object. Rather the approach looks to the outward considerations, such as issues with 'epistemology, problem delimitation, classification and typology' (Jensen 2010: 21). This will, in turn, shed light on the present lack of understanding about the status of the multivalent ethical object and expose the inadequacy of some present social science methodologies that deal with complexity (Law 2004).

By moving beyond the assumption that an object's differences are solely explained in terms of perspectives, we can move away from only discussing the multiple viewers of

the object. Instead, we turn our attention to the yet-unexplored multiple object, a stance that relies heavily on critiquing the notion of subjective observers who look and leave untouched some inherently homogeneous object at the centre of viewing and focuses instead on the object.

This is not a new starting point. Other STS theorists have explored the multiplicity of objects. Mol, noted above, suggested in her research of atherosclerosis that her ‘object ... tends to differ from one [enactment] to another’ (2002: 5). Thereby, she argues that her object of study is not ‘a single passive object in the middle, waiting to be seen from the point of view of seemingly endless perspectives. Instead, [the] object[s] come into being — and disappear — with the [enactments] in which they are manipulated ... reality multiplies ...’ (ibid.: 5). And just as for Mol, attending to this found multiplicity of reality opens up the new potential of study and enables us to develop understandings of ethical object(s) and the contemporary conception of objects. Furthermore, already noted is that the ethical object seems to be a thing of weighty conviction yet of contemporary ubiquitous and ambiguous use (see Chapter 1), too meaningful to be treated by mere differing perspectives of the same thing (Mol 2002). Adding conviction to that sentiment the focus should remain on the object itself and not on subjective differing perspectives. Jensen (2010) points out that in taking the perspective route, one is encouraged to suggest which subjective views are better or worse characterisations of *the object* in sight. This means the others offered are assumed to be ‘deviant, benighted and, perhaps, to be corrected’ (ibid.: 24).

Given that Latour’s (1983, 1986) and Law’s (1986) conceptions of ‘immutable mobiles’ are limited, we can turn to other STS empirical frameworks that also found the rigid

structure unsatisfactory to explain their object. The case of de Laet and Mol's (2000) study on the Zimbabwe bush pump, noted earlier, seems a promising alternative. They concluded that the object-pump had 'a number of possible boundaries' that were able to be 'descriptively and practically framed in a range of different ways' (2000: 237). However, this does not mean that it is 'vague or random; that it is *everywhere* or *anything* ... the bush pump's various boundaries define a limited set of configurations' (ibid.). This framework seems to offer utility in understanding the ethical object.

However, the assumption of the fluid object is that it always flows undisturbed between its various shapes with no sudden changes. As Law and Singleton note, 'if [changes] were abrupt then the object would disappear — or would end up with a different object, not one that is "the same"' (2005: 338). But what frameworks are available to explain sudden changes that do not break the object? Law and Singleton (2005) found that their 'messy' object of study, alcoholic liver disease, was not fully explained by the framework of the 'fluid object'. The realities they found were not smooth flows, but distinct, sharp, contrasting realities that for some cases were so contradictory they were unable to align. They were multiple, yet still the same object. They agree with Mol (2002) and also explore the idea that the realities of accounts and the realities that they describe are produced together. As Mol recommends, the differences of the object found can be more fully explored in terms of ontology. Consequently, Law and Singleton develop their argument to suggest their object is a fire object 'made in disjunction ... [Such objects are] energetic, transformative, and depend on difference ... [they] depend on otherness' (2005: 340).

However attractive, this framework is also theoretically lacking. Although it could be employed to explain how realities are abruptly distinct, it is not useful in explaining objects that can both flow *as well as* abruptly jump. If there is something inherent in all the realities of alcoholic liver diseases, they fail to address that in their work. What also seems assumed in their framework is that the realities are so distinct that they do not overlap, but they do not suggest how that would occur. How could non-overlapping objects remain the same object? Could they be temporal enactments of the same object? These questions need addressing to further understand how such multiple objects can exist.

Law and Singleton (2005) also suggest in their framework that for the presence of the object to be enacted, the absence is also enacted.¹⁰ But, what if actants were both present and absent in the different realities? In that case they would not be so much the other, but rather the different sides of the same ontological coin.

Another assumption in all the multiple object frameworks cited is that different realities are enacted between the different contexts/social worlds. For example, in Mol's exploration of atherosclerosis, it is in the different places — the pathology lab and the outpatient clinic — that the different realities were enacted (2002). This same idea appears to be assumed for the objects in Law and Singleton (2005) and in de Laet and Mol (2000). In each of these and other discussions of complex/messy objects, the object is the same in different social settings: The same fluid/ontological reality within that

¹⁰ Citing the work of others (see Law 2002, Law & Mol 2001, and Law & Singleton 2005), they draw on the example of aerodynamicists working in the British aircraft company to 'prove' the point that multiple realities are realised through the present, and thus are 'necessarily absent' actors that bring about the distinct abrupt realities.

context forms some sort of consensus about what the reality *was* in that setting. But as Law (2004) suggested, 'consensus is rare'. The theories, then, leave open to further investigation whether it would have to be the same object for certain groups and whether it could only become different in different contexts. What if, however, the reality(s) of the object(s) was a temporal achievement and enacted at the time of use. Then the reality could exist as multiples within social worlds as between them.¹¹ This thinking aligns with Woolgar and Lezaun's suggestion that enacted objects do not 'acquire a particular meaning in, or because of, a *given* context: They cannot be accounted for by reference to the external circumstances of their existence' (2013: 323).

Star and Griesemer (1989), while not directly stating their beyond-ANT position, provide another challenging concept of the possibility of the multiplicity of ethical object(s) found: Perhaps ethical enactments act or hold together as 'boundary objects'. The authors suggested that several objects acted as boundary objects in the construction of the Berkeley Museum and its collections. The idea built upon the previous work of Callon (1986) and Latour (1987), in particular the idea of '*intérressement*', to suggest that certain objects allow cooperation and common understandings to occur across otherwise divergent viewpoints. This is possible due to these objects being adaptable, in the sense that they provided enough detailed information in the different social contexts, yet were sufficiently vague in overlap situations (Star & Griesemer 1989). Rather than causing conflict, these objects enabled cooperation where tensions may have otherwise formed.

¹¹Although it is hard to state the boundaries of social worlds, the frameworks above appear to assume a context is a positioning of a reality, and it is between them, not within, that more realities and knowledge can be gleaned (Schlecker & Hirsch 2001).

More recently, boundary objects have been described as ‘devices that are able to mediate different actor worlds’ (Briers & Chua 2001: 238) and ‘artefacts of practice that are agreed and shared by communities, yet satisfy the informational requirements of each of them’ (Sapsed & Slater 2004: 1518). With these definitions in mind, it seems that the framework of a boundary object is of particular relevance to the ethical object of my thesis. Overall use of ethical reality is sufficiently broad that in its general application, it fits all users’ readings, who then define it in their own specific ways for particular use. Can it be investigated if each enactment of ethical reality is different to each user?

2.4 A New Ethical Object

The shortcomings of each of the reviewed frameworks leave all of them unsatisfactory in exploring the ethical object under investigation in this thesis. This leaves an opening for a new framing that is yet to be analytically explored or explained and offers new conceptual organisations of what constitutes *an* object. This new framing could address the highlighted gaps of an object that could both be absent and present, mobile, flowing, and able to change abruptly. The metaphor I propose to address these knowledge gaps is that of a ‘chimera object’. The review now turns to explore the idea of *the* chimera and parse why this is a good potential framework for studying the ethical object of this investigation. Then the review will explore a potential way to study the creation of the ethical object — a term I introduce called ‘ethical bricolage’.

2.4.1 Chimera

A chimera is 'a fire-breathing monster with a lion's head, goat's body, and serpent's tail' or 'a thing of hybrid character', according to *The Oxford Reference Dictionary* (1987 edition).

Beyond the definition of a monster, a term of classification or a sort of species label, what is a chimera? Is it what it is — bits of the animals mixed together that make it a chimera? Or is it what it is not — the missing lion's body, the missing goat's head, the missing serpent's head, which make it the chimera and not a lion with additions? This is further complicated by the suggestion that it is female, both in classical literature¹² and also in the gendered languages. For instance, *la chimère* (French) and *la Chimera* (Italian). Images of the mythical creature often feature a lion's head with a mane, a gender-specific male trait. So is it what it is, or is it what it is not? Or is it neither of these? Or both? As the second attempt appears to suggest, a chimera is a thing of hybrid character, but that means that there is *a* reified thing at its origin that moulds and bends but in essence remains the same. When trying to elucidate what the essence of a chimera is, the origin seems to be more difficult than the assumed homogeneous nature of a chimera defined above. What if then it is more than hybrid in its character and rather a thing of *hybrid ontology*?

This is not the first time the idea of a chimera has been drawn upon in literature exploring the idea of multiplicity and realities. Previously, it was used to help explain a similarly found multiplicity in the negotiations of what represented 'true' replications of

¹² Including Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* (Book 1), Homer's *Iliad* (Book 6), Hyginus' *Fabulae* (Books 57 and 151) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Books VI 339; IX 648).

scientific experiments (Collins 1975, 1981; Travis 1981; Star 1983). More recently, the term has become prolifically used in bio-technology research, for instance, by Hinterberger (2011) to label cell mixtures which are both, and not, the cellular makeup of another two animals. The resulting chimeras she focused on in her work can be a multitude of cellular realities, yet each performs a new bio-engineered chimera reality. The chimera's cells remain distinct, visible in deconstruction, yet hold together within a new body to form a whole which is both and neither of the cells of its creation. For example, the geep, as Hinterberger describes in detail, is made of separate sheep and goat cells, but the creature is neither a goat nor a sheep in its enacted reality. This contemporary enactment of chimera 'does not necessarily refer to one specific entity or process' and it 'def[ies] any simple categorization and confounds previous practises' (2011: 5).

The utility of the chimera as a heuristic tool (in line with the earlier discussion of technology as text, Woolgar & Grint 1997) to expand our knowledge and address present knowledge gaps lies in exploring the ethical object of this study like the mythical multiple chimera, as both *and* neither what it is *and* what it is not.¹³ As Law notes, '...reality is ephemeral and elusive, we cannot expect a single answer', especially since 'simple clear descriptions don't work if what they are describing is not itself very coherent' (2004: 2). The idea of a chimera provides a conceptual organisation not yet explored in contemporary frameworks. It also encompasses the 'working' ideas of the previous frameworks discussed and enables the messiness to remain. It is more dynamic

¹³ This is very reminiscent to Barad's (2007) arguments of things being both, and not, at the same time, and the implications for social science as detailed in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*.

— it can jump from or flow into different realities, as visually expressed in the British Museum's vast collection of historically and culturally different enactments of *the* chimera (Hinterberger 2011). This framework's object is not restrained to one reality in a context,¹⁴ and unlike the familiar animals that make it, the chimera object remains unclear in definition and hard to characterise. This is *an* emergent heterogeneous ontology (Garfinkel 1967). If correct, it would indicate that the ethical object is what it is enacted for a 'user': a reality for a transient moment of its 'use', conscious or not. The chimera heuristic evokes the idea of ethical being as much as it is as it is not, it being reified through continuous, debatable negotiations and temporal settlements. This is similar to Elsbach and Bhattacharya's (2001) exploration of organisational 'defining who you are by what you are not', an idea also discussed by Dukerich et al. (1998), Elsbach (1999), and regarding individuals, by Brewer (1991) and Steele and Aronson (1995). None of these works, however, sought to consider if this was ontologically possible, a sizable gap in need of research.

The concept of the chimerical ethical object also provides a 'trouble causing' proposition (Woolgar et al. 2009), one of the characteristics offered by STS, to present academic ideas of research objects and ontology/ies that, as actants, enact. Further exploring these actants in the context of this thesis' findings would provide a final missing strand of the present object literature. If we claim an object has multiple realities, we need then to address how these multiple realities hold together. As noted, a question of this nature and a convincing answer are missing from the present object literature reviewed, bar the notable exception of Mol (2002).

¹⁴ See Hinterberger (2011) or I can suggest a trip to the British Museum in London.

Mol suggests the object(s) hold together in virtue of coordination work (2002: 84) but she also suggests this is possible because the objects are rarely in contact. It is assumed that enactments of realities be context-specific, but this would cut off many research possibilities, especially given the opening thesis remarks that the ethical object has become ambiguous. It appears to be utilised in differing enactments, yet remains robust enough to hold together, leading us back to Star and Griesemer's idea of boundary objects (1989).

A common criticism of the above work relating to objects is that all the authors assume the reality of the object because they would need to study it. However, akin to Callon's 2009 discussion about the nascent carbon market reviewed earlier, is there a potential with new ethical business to investigate a form of genesis of the ethical object?

2.4.2 Ethical Bricolage

A noted missing concept from the literature (with the exception of Lezaun 2006, who discusses the creation of a new bio-legal object of governance) is the idea of creation and beginning of 'the object', ethical and otherwise. What about the work needed to enact an object? In other words, if, as suggested, there is utility in exploring frameworks of enactment, where and how is the enactment done? Rather than just describe the effects and take for granted that it *was* done, a framework exists that is reviewed next because it provides a potential theory to empirically investigate with *in situ* research sites.

The framework is that of 'bricolage' and looking at the doer/constructor as that of a 'bricoleur'. The term bricolage, as agreed by Longo (2009) and Loudrais (1999), has no

exact equivalent in English. In art, the term has been used to describe a sort of collage effect. Interpretations of the actions and doing of a bricoleur range from 'to break or rupture' (Gillone 2009), 'Jack of all trades (and master of none)' or even a 'small time crook' (Hammersley 1999, citing Herail & Lovatt 1984). However, the first use of the term within academia is attributed to Lévi-Strauss in his 1962 *La Pensée Sauvage*, translated in 1967 as *The Savage Mind*. In reference to that, the most frequent articulation of the bricoleur label is someone who 'makes do with whatever is at hand'. Lévi-Strauss introduced the term to explain the equal-but-different rational logic of how knowledge is acquired and enacted by primitives as opposed to scientists:

The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, but, in contrast to the engineer, he does not subordinate each one of them to the acquisition of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the project: his universe of tools is closed, and the rule of his game is to always make do with 'what's available', that is, a set, finite at each instance, of tools and materials, heterogeneous to the extreme ... but is the contingent result of all the occasions that have occurred to renew or enrich the stock, or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions.

Lévi-Strauss 1967: 17

The bricoleur makes do with what is there, unlike the portrayed scientist, whose theoretical frame is to find universal truths through reflecting, extending already stated scientific knowledge, and inventing the means and new techniques to complete his work. Hammersley notes this can lead to inferring that Lévi-Strauss holds the approach of bricolage not only as different, but 'inferior to science in its capacity to understand and deal with the [real] world' (1999: 576). Yet, as already discussed, this demarcation and universality of science is no longer unproblematically accepted. 'The facts of science have been localized ... the practise of science requires an enormous amount of

laborious, meticulous, and routine manipulation of the artefacts' (Law & Mol 2001:1). In other words scientists also make do with what is at hand.

Lincoln and Denzin inform us that a bricoleur improvises new knowledge by being 'a flexible and responsive agent ... deploy[ing] [artefacts] at hand, to get the job done' (1994: 2). The job being explored here is the work done to enact the ethical object. Di Domenico et al. further suggest that a bricoleur *does* 'by improvising, borrowing, and experimenting with new and existing elements' (2010: 685). Lanzara and Patriotta (2001) suggest that the work of bricolage is a dynamic assembly of never-ending transformation and reconfigurations. Expressed in Lévi-Strauss' depiction of bricoleur at the work, the enactor works as follows:

[The bricoleur's] first practical step is retrospective: he must turn to an already constituted set, formed by tools and materials; take, or re-take, an inventory of it; finally, and above all, engage in a kind of dialogue with it, to index, before choosing among them, the possible answers that the set can offer to his problem. He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects that constitute his treasury, he asks them to understand what each one of them could 'signify', thus contributing to the definition of a set to be realised, which in the end will, however, differ from the instrumental set only in the internal arrangement of its parts.

Lévi-Strauss 1967: 32-33

Lévi-Strauss continues:

But the possibilities remain always limited by the particular history of each piece, and by what is predetermined in it due to the original usage for which it was conceived, or to the adaptations that it has undergone for other purposes. ... The elements that the bricoleur collects and uses are 'preconstrained'.

Lévi-Strauss 1967: 33

But, as discussed, if artefacts (actants) can be active, it seems the possibilities are not preconstrained, and instead, an outcome is framed and determined throughout (Smith

1978). There is a large gap in the knowledge of both the work of creating novel objects and whether the range of (ethical) possibilities and process are not then limited by the elements (Cornelissen 2005; Heracleous & Jacobs 2011). Rather, the artefacts at hand act as actant-enablers to enact emergent and novel meanings in the artefact combinations (Weick 1993).

The term 'bricolage' has danced around the periphery of STS literature, but has not been widely drawn upon as a framework. A substitution of the 'novel real object(s)' for 'novel combinations' allows us to propose and investigate further the work done to enact a new ethical object and see if it could fit as what I would call 'ethical bricolage'. I believe this to be the first use of the term 'ethical bricolage'. The most similar other use exists in the di Domenico et al. (2010) study and their suggestion of social bricolage. Those authors proposed they were the first to invoke the framework in the area of social entrepreneurship. In my theoretical framing, different from Lévi-Strauss, a bricoleur is not a knowledge creator different from a scientist, but rather a scientist is as much a bricoleur as the designer (Loudrais 1999), the social entrepreneur (di Domenico et al. 2010), the 5th-moment researcher (Lincoln & Denzin 1994), and the new organisational theory creators (Boxenbaum & Rouleau 2011).

2.5 Conclusion

The use of the STS intellectual frameworks for the investigation of ethical business not only highlights gaps in understanding about how ethical business is to be addressed, but also enables exploration of whether the STS sensibilities have transferability beyond the science and technology parameters and into business. Such an exploration of STS

beyond its remit is 'where the "core identity" of STS comes up for discussion itself' (Woolgar et al. 2009).

This presents a warning for any researcher who seeks to expand the application of STS sensibilities beyond their origins. Thus, it is helpful here to highlight once more the proposed use of sceptical/radical reflexivity, as it is a link that connects the critique of existing literature to my proposed methodology. It would be academic pretence not to acknowledge the risk of my injecting a form of Woolgar's 'ontological gerrymandering' into this extra-scientific-and-technologic application of STS. That would mean making space for my research by pointing to the flaws of others' scholarship only to fill the space with similarly flawed scholarship of my own. This irony, thus identified, may be addressed in an effort to avoid the oversight of previous authors who have applied similar methodology and ignored discussion of core identity.

It follows from the critical review outlined in this chapter that my research cannot begin from a definitive theoretical framework, with the attendant risk of fitting data to pre-conceived ideas. My research will instead begin with an open lens, guided by the findings from the review, and allow the data captured (more discussion in the following chapter) to guide the development of theory that follows in the empirical chapters. Likewise, though my questions are presented here with their roots in the present literature, it should also be acknowledged that these questions, especially question 3, co-evolved with my time in the field. The questions were then emergent and developed throughout my research rather than cemented at the onset. The use of STS frameworks in this novel area of ethical business has additional benefit. By not merely applying and

fitting my data into existing theories, I aim to answer another highly debated question from the STS discipline: 'Does STS means (ethical) business?'

In sum, the argument of this chapter suggests we need to address the following main research questions, which inform my investigation:

1. What is *the object* of this study? The ethical object as illuminated in the literature review remains elusive. Can it be investigated by allowing it to be a messy, complex thing and then exploring how it is used? The answer to what the object of study is will be found by exploring what is enacted as 'ethical' within ethical business. This will then develop ideas about 'objects': How can such an object be? What sort of object is it? Can we extend the analysis beyond the top level of the object and explore the processes (actants) that enable it to come into reality?
2. How can the ethical object be transferred between users, if at all? Can we investigate how configuration is attempted? Can we establish whether configuration has occurred? What technologies and tools are employed by ethical organisations in such attempts? Is configuration unidirectional, as previously portrayed, or can ideas about the multiple directions be developed?
3. Is a genesis of the ethical object identifiable?¹⁵ How does it happen? And can we explore the work that goes into the making of a new ethical object?

¹⁵ As will be explained in Chapter 3 and Chapter 7, the question of genesis fits as the 3rd empirical question asked for particular reasons.

4. Does STS mean ethical business? Importantly, this question not only relates to taking STS into new ground but also serves (a) as a means for critical reflection (sceptical reflexivity) on the use of STS methods; (b) as my theorising to produce this piece of STS work; (c) as my own ethical enacted object (and reality), this ethical—thesis. Can a form of reflexive narrative be used to provide an adequate answer for all these aspects of the question?

The questions are not so clear-cut and bounded as the above discussion would suggest, for they are all intertwined. The investigation will aim to answer the first three questions by deploying STS sensibilities, frameworks, provocative style, and methods, all discussed in the following chapters. In the process, some answers to the fourth question will be suggested. However, this last question is not a separate one: This research will study its own data, observing my own practices and enactments of an STS reality. The proposition is that such a reflexive approach will enable this investigation to further shed light on the 'ethical tribes' (my research sites) and their ethical object/reality(s) enactment processes that shall be observed and participated in, while also observing this thesis' own theoretical guiding 'STS tribe'. At the same time, it will observe the ethical object, the thesis, through participatory use of STS sensibilities of radical reflexivity.

Chapter 3. My Methods

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I suggested that a less prescriptive approach is needed to address questions concerning how the contemporary commercial timeframe relates to the seemingly ubiquitous yet ambiguous use of 'ethical'. I argued that to address my research questions, I needed a much more 'explanatory' approach (Marshall & Rossman 1998). The method crafted should not be prescriptive, merely allowing me to pass on my own informed objective ethical judgements. Rather, the method selected must enable me to investigate the contemporary ethical object in the multitude of institutions, labelling, products, and services where it is found. As Law notes, methods that enable exploration and description rather than simply prescribing lend themselves much better to understanding what, as discussed in the literature review, seemed to be a messy and complex object (2004).

The following chapter will outline what methodological approaches are best suited to answer my research questions without contravening my own expressed epistemological and ontological understandings. I will also address the intertwined process of data collection and data creation. I conclude with a discussion of what research sites were identified as suitable for such an exploration and how data generated from such sites was legitimately and (aptly) ethically utilised.

To address these points, the chapter starts by first discussing what style of methodology, quantitative or qualitative, is most fruitful for this explanatory investigation, reflecting the critiques made of contemporary research into ethical business (Chapter 2). This is

adjacent to full disclosure of the ontological and epistemological underpinning that guided my research and helped lead to the selection of ethnography as the principal methodology of this thesis. My first discussion is on ethnography: participant observation, its nuances, and why it was the most suitable tool. I included a brief historical reflection and what key factors (such as length of time in the field and language) helped the subject become accepted as a robust and legitimate research method and a useful tool within social sciences. The chapter proceeds to describe the additional data collection of interviews and documents and why these were also utilised. Expanding on these first discussions, the chapter analyses the notion of data collection or 'capta', as I suggest it might be more aptly labelled in agreement with Laing (1967), before outlining the selected research sites where capta was obtained. The chapter concludes by detailing the capta, the processes of analysis used, and my own (ironically) pre-imposed ethical considerations.

3.2 The Style of Method

As discussed in the literature review, the contemporary ethical situation appears to be complex, even messy, without much literature addressing this reality or even how such a variously defined object could come about. Although there is a strong compulsion in the literature described in Chapter 2 to bind what we can and cannot call 'ethical', I seek to engage the research questions at closer proximity in order to explain and understand this object in its contemporary uses and enactments. This involved approach to understanding how users decide and enact ethical reality(s) rules out research methodologies based on the researcher's own preconceived ideas of the situation and classifications (see Chapter 2 for critique of this approach). This particularly excludes

tools such as graphs or charts of predetermined variables and similar tools and approaches of the 'neutral', 'disinterested', 'objective' quantitative researcher (Toennesen 2009; Brennen 2012:15). Accordingly, the research needs to utilise the explanatory capabilities of qualitative methods that enable the researcher to 'study things in their *natural* settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings [and doings] people bring to them' (emphasis added, Denzin & Lincoln 2005:3).

There is not one specific method associated with explanatory research. Nor is there a particular epistemological position associated with qualitative research, even if there appears to be a shared acceptance that the world cannot be simplified adequately using the more realist tools of numbers and graphs. It is reasonable to assume that in choosing which methodology I employ, my own epistemological and ontological underpinnings will have significant effects. Therefore, It seems only appropriate to lay these assumptions out at the initial stage of the research.

3.3 Epistemological and Ontological Underpinnings

My position can be described as being located within the constructive paradigm that Denzin and Lincoln succinctly suggest 'assumes a relativist ontology(s) (there are multiple realities), [and] a subjective epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings)' (2005: 24). Thus *the world out there* cannot just be reported on. A provocative research stance follows this heuristic, that there is not just a reality out there external to our actions that can be absolutely represented through experiments and write-ups. My representations give rise not only to the objects under study but also to the worlds within which the researcher and objects are situated (Woolgar 1993). This

is a central challenge of this thesis, and I will return to this point later (see Section 3.7 on *capta*). In terms of methodology, this means that a constructivist reporter should be aware of their own effects on the data. They are an intertwined part of the data generation and gathering process. The final representations of this work are not then perfect reports of *the real* but rather enacting-interpretations of the second- and third-order (Geertz 1973: 15). The irony of taking such a stance — clarifying and labelling my own *definite bounded* position — does not pass me by, so I reasonably disclose my epistemological considerations.

Denzin and Lincoln conclude their explanation of the constructivist approach by suggesting that this position also assumes ‘a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures’ (2005: 24). I would refine this and suggest a set of methodological procedures not in, but rather within and part of the creation of the *natural* worlds of study. However, what are the appropriate methods that enable the researcher to explore within the worlds of the seemingly complex and messy ‘ethical’ object rather than stand at a realist distance?

Law appears to have the answer:

Ethnographic field studies allow investigation into the continued enactment and multiplicity of the uncertain and complex lives of worlds lacking closure and singularity.

Law 2004: 59

3.4 Ethnography

3.4.1 The Right Tool

My questions relate to the enactment, use, and transfer of the messy ethical object by its users within their worlds of use. Ethnographic field studies (ethnography) provide the 'right tool for the right job' (Yamanne 2000). Ethnography is particularly useful for this thesis because it allows us to understand the ethical object and simultaneously provides a means to answer the question 'does STS mean ethical business?' (see Section 2.3). The use of ethnography is prominent within STS studies. By extension, its use in this study not only aids the discussion of whether 'STS means business' (Woolgar et al. 2009), but also contributes to the debate on the appropriation of anthropological techniques in business studies (or rather in the study of business, see Chapman 2001).

This qualitative method of research hinges on the researcher fulfilling a participant-observer role and, in doing so, enables the involved, close method indicated as appropriate for this explanatory investigation. Recording first-hand observations of *natural* occurrences does not completely avoid 'the crisis of representation and legitimisation' (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 576), but does minimise the risk that the data collected and analysed will not reflect the *done* enactments of the ethical object(s) under investigation. In addition, wherever possible, that which is presented does not use terms the researcher ascribes to the groups and phenomena observed, but the description of the 'terms they themselves speak of' (Boddy 1989: 8). The ethnographer's approach is emic, focusing on the enactments and understandings of the organisations and phenomena of research (Bate 1997).

As with all methodologies, there is no one all-encompassing definition that can be appropriated for use in the field, nor a single method definition dense enough to explain all the intricacies of an approach. Hammersley and Atkinson offer a practical, if somewhat simplistic, explanation of this approach:

[Ethnography] involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions.

Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 1

The ethnographer is immersed and involved within the worlds of the research rather than just observing phenomena from a distance (Haber 2009). However, even though ethnography provides the most appropriate tool for my research, as Marshall and Rossman comment, 'there is no such thing as a perfectly designed study' (1998: 544). There are also no hard and fast rules to doing ethnography (Atkinson 1990: 34; Atkinson et al. 2001). Even the 'truths' of what constitutes the label of 'ethnography' are disputed, whether the competing epistemological approach, a method of investigation, or even the text finally produced (Neyland 2008). All methodology books offer are guidelines for the ethnographer to craft their own study (Atkinson 1999). It is a craft that develops as much out of what goes right as navigating the unforeseen difficulties unique to each ethnographic study (Daft 1983: 544; see Section 3.8 for more on my own experiences). Not all difficulties can be circumvented, even with the best planning, but the more obvious shortcomings can be managed.

A strategy that embraces rather than fears the potential flaws of an ethnographic approach is better prepared for those imperfections. With this in mind, I approached my research with an ethnography strategy that is purposely fluid in its approach and reflects

the complexity and contingencies in my 'known unknown' research. In other words, I am prepared for the difficulty of knowing I am unable to know all that will arise. I arm my strategy with an 'arsenal of methods that have nonoverlapping [sic] weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths' (Brewer & Hunter, cited in Patton 2002: 248), in order to achieve an ethnographer's main aim to collect and produce a 'thick description' of the phenomena of study (Geertz 1973, discussed more in Sections 3.5, 3.6, 3.10). This is possible in less exotic situations by keeping the familiar strange, maintaining doubt, and avoiding 'ethnographic dazzle' (Van Maanen 1995: 20; Fox 2004, respectively). I also intend to draw on other resources in the methodology tool kit to add depth to the findings, including interviews and document textual analysis. Both approaches are discussed in Sections 3.5 and 3.6.

First, however, the chapter provides a brief historical reflection on how the tool of ethnography developed into its contemporary state and became an accepted research method within social sciences, specifically here for understanding organisations. Like the warning noted in the literature review from Dumont (cited in Evans-Pritchard 1962: 182), it is a mistake to not look back at history. This section is followed by a short discussion on the length of time spent in the field, informed by the historical findings.

3.4.2 Historical Reflections

Ethnography's history plays an important part in understanding how ethnography became a tool of use within organisational research. In reviewing this history, I also unearthed the background to some of the key aspects of crafting a rich ethnography, such as deciding the length of stay in the field and understanding the native language.

Understanding of language was such an important aspect of fulfilling the participant-observer role that it is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Ethnography in the sense of a field exploration of a group was pioneered by the anthropologist Malinowski, the forefather of this research, with his 1922 investigation of the Trobriand Islanders of the western Pacific Ocean. This could not be termed the first instances of 'anthropology', which already had a more colonialist armchair history (see Denzin 1997). But Malowniski, followed by other notable forefathers of modern anthropology such as Evans-Pritchard, laid down the characteristics of the ethnographic approach within the discipline, an approach based on time spent in the field and participating in the tribe of exploration — usually by living with them — and understanding them through daily mundane occurrences, their language, and social events and their meanings.

The application of ethnography really started to diverge from just visiting exotic tribes in the 1960s, with the Chicago School. Studies focused on groups nearer home, including street corner immigrants (Whyte 1943), deviant groups (Becker 1973), asylum inmates (Goffman 1961), and medical students (Becker et al. 1961). The move away from the exotic other was furthered by the critical turn in social science, generally including ethnography (Weick 1979; Law 1994; Orlikowski 2000). It was based on debates about constructed meanings that go into enacting an account to be read as 'real' and 'factual'. Further questioning prompted the reading of plausibility, criticality, authenticity, and the use of specific literary devices to manipulate messy uncertainties into expressed coherent certainties (Golden-Biddle & Locke 1993; Marcus & Cushman 1982; Wolcott 1995; Adler & Adler 2008). As methods were no longer 'innocent' (Law & Urry 2004:

402), the realist reports of the field became additional field sites of research for ethnographers (Clifford & Marcus eds. 1986). Drawing on ideas of 'author-ity' (Woolgar 1988a), some of these approaches used experimental writing styles to emphasise that writing up the outcome of an ethnographic study was just as important as the traditional significance of length of time in the field and becoming fluent in language and cultural nuances (Denzin, 1997; Ellis & Bochner 2000; Marcus 2007).

The effects that the writing-up have on my ethnography are discussed later. First, I reflect on how I dealt with the classic ethnographic question about how much time to spend in the field. The importance of language is one of the key topics that informs Chapter 4, Becoming and Being 'Ethical'. It forms an integral bridge between the prescriptive analyses of Chapters 2 and 3 and the subsequent empirically based discussions of Chapters 5 through 8.

3.4.3 Length of Time in Field

All of the historical ethnographies discussed so far focused on the issue of time spent in the field. It was suggested that the researcher should stay long enough to become sufficiently absorbed in a culture in order to understand it in a deep way. For a long time, this was a key aspect of research design. With the current move away from focusing on the exotic other, the thinking is that getting your hands dirty in foreign lands doesn't necessarily make someone a good ethnographer (Fox 2004). Rather, now the ability to make mundane events 'exotic' is important so that the irrelevant always becomes relevant to the in-field researcher (Neyland 2008).

For this present study, there were constraints on time due to the doctoral process and limits in funds for research site visits. Evans-Pritchard (1951) claimed that it was

necessary to spend a whole year in the field and experience each season, but I had only six to nine months with each of my organisations, starting in September 2010 and ending in December 2011. I originally planned to have the research sites (what I call ‘tribes’) overlap so I could split time within each week at various field sites. Due to negotiations about access with the second site, Lux Choc, my stays became discrete, chronologically separated visits.

The amount of time spent with each tribe was not based solely on my doctoral limitations. I followed the advice of Marcus (1995) that the best way to scope out the object of study is to follow it. I was mindful of Hine’s warning that ‘where to start and stop studying [the object of research] cannot be decided in advance’ (2007: 633). Thus, with all my organisations, the point of exit was not pre-imposed. Rather, my exit was determined by when I felt I understood what I needed to understand and when I realised I should ‘stop taking notes ... when [I was] merely duplicating what [I’d] already got’ (Goffman 1989: 130). However, my exits were more partial and more messy (discussed in further in Chapter 4). The extended interaction with the tribes — including access to my field site email account and purposeful exchanges of my ideas and writings for my site’s input and feedback — ensured that I was always connected. Such ongoing communication helped to reduce the risk of author-ity in my work (see Section 3.7 for more).

It has already been noted that in order to avoid the shortcomings of the ethnographic approach, I drew upon additional tools, interviews, and document analysis to produce my results. How these approaches were used and how they helped add depth and richness to my descriptions is explored below.

3.5 Interviews

As Atkinson et al. note, it is often necessary to supplement participant observation with conversations with the members of your study (2001: 5). This was the case for my own research where timing, confidentiality, and access problems, especially with senior members of the tribes, meant that conducting interviews was the most suitable tool for additional data gathering. As with ethnography, there is no one set form of interview style. It is flexible, ranging from structured, standardised modes to informal, open-ended, *in situ* conversations. Although there is no set approach to which style a researcher should utilise, Patton (1990) suggests that a more formal style lends itself to situations where comparability is needed, whereas an informal approach is more appropriate for explanatory investigations such as my own. As with participant observation, I am aware of my own and the interviewees' (co)constructive effect on the data source (Silverman 1993, Holstein & Gubrium 2004). Thus, I treated my informal interviews very much as two-way enactments with developing plots based on open-ended 'how' questions (Silverman 1993; Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Becker 1998).

In my time in the field, all interviews conducted (see Section 3.9) were informal in their style. However, just under half of these were pre-booked interview time slots with members, and the other half were non-booked *in situ* conversations. All interviews were recorded in order to retain all information expressed and to avoid the risk of missing any key insights between my notes and spontaneous questions. As with all my research, it is acknowledged that 'it could be otherwise' with regard to both the questions asked and the answers given. A telling reminder came when interviewing Nicola from Lux Choc, the day before her surprise redundancy from the organisation. The interview had been

moved several days earlier due to restructuring meetings at Lux Choc. Had the interview taken place as originally planned, the questions and answers gathered would most likely have been very different.

All interviews were subsequently transcribed by me before analysis (see more in Section 3.10).

3.6 Documents

In addition to participant observation and interviews, I utilised the tool of document (textual) analysis for my research. Within STS, the importance of texts' construction and circulation is well established (for example, see Latour & Woolgar 1986; Star & Griesmar 1989). As Hammersley and Atkinson argue:

The presence and significance of documentary products provides the ethnographer with a rich vein of analytic topics, as well as a valuable source of information. Such topics include: How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? ... What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?

1983: 142-143

Both formal and informal paper documents were collected to answer these questions and, under the influence of Mol's (2002) guide discussed in Chapter 2, to investigate how the 'same' object is enacted differently throughout ethnographic locations. Documents ranged from internal memos to external publications such as marketing materials. Virtual documents were also collected and saved electronically. The documents were used to explore how tribes treated the different sorts of documents and, more specifically (see Chapter 6), how the different users/audiences of the

documents were assumed and enacted. At the same time, analysis of the intertwined enactments of the organisations' ethical reality(s) was conducted. These included items such as the plans for websites/social media tools, the UX (user experience) journeys of the *final* Web pages, and email correspondence in the lead up to, during, and after exiting the field. For example, in the case of Good Business, my own Good Business email account was left live at my request after my official exit from the field so I could access all past emails and attachments. Leaving the email open also meant that I was aware of developments within the organisation post partial-exit, as my email address was still included in the organisational mailing list. This enabled me to explore any further topics arising if they appeared to be significant to my research. This email access was cut off without notice about nine months after I left. Although no explanation was given, it appeared to reflect the organisation's new direction and changes in the organisation's membership, specifically a relocation of the founders. However, the act in itself was interesting, emphasising how much of the organisation's *life* was enacted through documents (informal, formal, paper, virtual). The closure of my email marked a more definitive exit from the tribe because I was no longer privy to the tribe's daily life. I also noted around this time I was no longer invited to team events that had previously been jointly emailed to my in-tribe and Oxford University email addresses.

Overall from all ethnographies, I collected more than 850 paper and virtual documents. The majority of the virtual documents were emails, 75% of which were from my Good Business account. However, during that time a few emails had been deleted and others had been binned. These were reinstated later to the Inbox. The amount of paper material was equal from all organisations and further emphasised the importance of

paperwork (and analysis) to the tribes, which supports the idea of the ‘paperless office’ being a myth (Sellen & Harper 2003, cited in Neyland 2008). The textual analysis utilised for the documents was based predominantly on Smith (1978, 1987) as further developed by Schneider and Woolgar (2012). This involved searching for emerging patterns of object and user enactments in the pieces by identifying which *realities* were encouraged to be read from the text and how and why different actants’ viewpoints and voices were brought into the text to encourage certain readings of truth. A search for social and political power relations concealed in the texts (more akin to Fairclough 1995 style) was not undertaken. To see the Smith-style of method in practise, please see Chapter 6.

3.7 Capta

Now that the methods through which I collected or, more aptly, captured my data have been explored, I return to the idea of ‘data’ and the processes of *finding* it. I find Laing’s (1967) term ‘capta’, a more suitable description for the materials (observations, interviews, documents) I draw upon in this thesis. The materials did not sit around passively awaiting my discovery (ibid.: 52-53) but rather played a part in the enactments of the realities I recorded (see Section 8.3.3 for my radically reflexive discussion on data, where I critique the assumptions still involved with the label of capta in reflection of my ethnography and I suggest the term of ‘enacta’ is even more suitable). In addition to the active role of the materials, I noted above in my discussion of participant observation that I am also part of the data created and collected. This is the same for the other tools in my methodology tool kit. Researchers ‘do not master [and collect] realities enacted out there, but we are involved in them’ (Mol 2002: 179). We ‘participate in the

enactments of the reality[s] [we] set out to observe' (Law 2004: 45). This does not mean that what is found is less real but that it is one of many possible realities I could have found, participated in the construction of, and presented as *the final* real of the report. This does not and should not suggest that realities are in some ways arbitrary. 'The real is produced in non-arbitrary ways ... It is produced with considerable effort, and it is much easier to produce some realities than others' (Law & Urry 2004: 395-396). In contrast, I take the awareness of my own presence in the field as a point of further exploration (see analysis in Chapter 8) and a useful point of critique of my own research. By acknowledging my co-creational presence, I am able to reflect on how my accounts of reality(s) will in some way always be a partial-reality of the ethical object(s) of my research (Rosen 1991, Neyland 2008). There could always be others (including capta) beyond my reach, unseen, and filtered out (Boddy 1989). What is found will be affected by my conscious and unconscious choices, my 'ontological politics' within the field (Mol 2002). However, to keep my capta as close to the *truths* I found, I utilise reflexivity throughout the whole process. For many ethnographers, the two-page discussion of their potential failures and filters acts as a sort of apology to repel criticism by admitting their faults, as if this is as good as not having them (Fox 2004). To avoid this, I keep the validity of my own research by utilising my knowledge of my own research to enact 'constitutive reflexivity' (Woolgar 1988a). Building on Clifford and Marcus's 1986 argument for reflexivity, my research not only analyses what is observed but also analyses the observer observing, finding strangeness in my own interpretation and methods of data creation as much as in the tribes I follow (see Chapter 8 for this analysis). This exploration in constitutive reflexivity then allows for questioning the applicability of STS sensibilities and frameworks in this novel area, aiding the discussions

of my central question: 'Does STS mean [ethical] business?' (Woolgar et al. 2009). In addition, I contribute to discussions such as Chapman's (2001) on the validity of the appropriation of anthropological style techniques in business studies.

I do not, however, take sole responsibility for my reflexivity but encouraged my research sites to act as my guides and allowed their voices to be heard through the research process and writing-up. In each field site, I shared my findings and ideas for how they would be used in my thesis and urged tribes to give feedback on my findings. In addition, I negotiated with each tribe to send them a copy of the final thesis and give them a week to respond to any misrepresentations they deem can be modified to lessen the risk of author-ity in my own work.¹⁶ As noted in the exploration of participant observation, I give precedence to the tribe's own language and explanation rather than trying to fit my findings into my own predetermined, etymologically bounded frameworks. To produce further *truths* of my research rather than truths of my own construction, I started this research with one rule: not to set in place any etymologically bounded analytical lenses but rather to let the analysis come to me after I had seen what there was to see and captured all the data I could. Thus, I did not set out to look for examples, materialities that enacted 'ethical', or just the practices, but instead I unbracketed my knowledge practices (Mol 2002) in order to understand enactment across all its different forms. These could be spoken, acted, practised, materialised, or even, as found, absent. This is a grouping of terms in line with the Foucauldian label of 'discourse' (see Foucault 1972; Burchell et al. 1991). I judged this to be more in keeping

¹⁶ This was done for the first final draft of my thesis. Lux Choc requested an additional written report and presentation for the director about their ethics as I found them throughout my stay. I agreed in the hope that this would provide additional feedback on my work. However, the agreement was never fulfilled due to the redundancy of my original gatekeeper.

with how the term 'discourse' is used in this thesis rather than referring only to words and conversation, as often found in anthropological-style discussions.

Even with these steps as previously stated, what I found 'could have been otherwise' and is not only partial but also in part enacted by me. It seems then even more pressing to choose suitable sites for my ethical investigation. Specifically, sites where 'involved' description allows investigation self-ascribed ethical enactments by users rather than 'distant' labelling by myself. Those sites are reviewed now, including the often undiscussed difficulties of finding and gaining access to appropriate sites. As noted earlier, ethnographies are as much crafted from what went right as from what went wrong. Following this are discussions of the amount of capta obtained, the processes of analysis, and how I kept my own ethical investigation *ethical*.

3.8 Research Sites

As Silverman (1997) warns, finding suitable research sites can be based more on luck than planning, but I suggest it is more a case of 'planned serendipity' (Muller & Becker 2012) and a great deal of persistence in order to locate and join the appropriate field sites. My final research sites were as much chosen as persuaded, and they resulted from much luck in the face of many let downs.

I had been accepted to spend time within a start-up ethical tomato farm and was in talks with an ethical finance organisation. However, neither of these sites was ever observed. The start-up ethical tomato farm project never developed past the incubation stage of funding. Access issues with the ethical finance company meant that it would not have allowed sufficient observation and participation time. This news all came two days

before my 'transfer of thesis', the oral defence of my thesis outline and weeks after submitting my report to Oxford defending my choice of them. The tension of this timing proved to be somewhat of a blessing as the desire to have secured access in time for my defence spurred an email chain to target people I viewed as being involved in ethical business. This led first to Good Business and second to an invitation to the media launch of Lux Choc's Christmas 2010 season. Persistence and the 'luck' that results from it meant that I finally spoke to the co-founder and director in charge of ethics who gave the top-level go-ahead for my research. The other research site I visited, Ethicentre, the 'ethical consultancy' that appears in my work (Chapter 7), was a more serendipitous finding and less planned. However, it provided such a rich source of data for answering the question of ethical genesis that it became a very important addition to my research sites, even if it was not given consideration in the more traditional rationales for such a selection. The research sites did all fit the basic needs for my research: They shared the common characteristic of being self-avowed ethical organisations, and most importantly, were sites where ethics were enacted frequently as part of everyday life.

Access to the individual sites is discussed below, including how access was achieved very differently in each case.

3.8.1 Good Business

During the time I spent in the field, nine and a half months from September 2010 to June 2011, Good Business classified itself as a start-up business. When I first joined the company, the two co-founders had just received official business tax status. The Good Business 'tribe' (as the co-founders described it) was fluid in composition during my time in-field, but after a few months, it comprised five or six employees, a number that was

maintained throughout my ethnographic stay. The company was, as the co-founders described, a 'good agency', a service company whose presence was more online and virtual than face-to-face. Work done by the company would often be organised through email with a client and then completed at Good Business HQ. My time in the field ended with a 'Good Week'. Although this was very much a face-to-face event trying to engage people with and celebrate all that was good, it was achieved by encouraging good deeds, ideas, and activities (not through tangible products).

The rationale of observing a start-up remained the same as previously mentioned: A new organisation provided the perfect site to understand how ethical reality and the attribution of 'ethical' to the organisation is enacted, (re)enacted, transferred (marketed), and *finalised*. This was not to suggest I thought the ethical *nature* of the Good Business would be created and then made concrete. Rather, as Toennesen (2009) noted, ethical reality is redone again and again. Thus, researching a *new* organisation allows analysis and observation of when the story is decided; when the following inscription of the story and plans of the business are (re)decided; what these decisions are contingent upon; and how stable they seem at the outset.

I was allowed to be the first intern (participating) at Good Business whilst I also observed due to a connection through a former classmate I happened to run into. The former classmate ran an internship website and had been the one to list the position. The first interactions with a company can be very telling and useful sources of data, other researchers have noted (Schwartzman 1993, Fineman & Gabriel 1996). This was certainly what I found. Access to Good Business was easy, in line with the company's relaxed ethos. The co-founders were open to me from the first email exchange, and

after a meeting in their 'new home', they were happy for me to become an insider who would observe and participate in everything throughout my research. This was highlighted in a field note written at lunchtime on my first full day with the comment: 'I felt really part of the company when supplying ideas for next [company] steps' (6/10/2010). On the way home I also wrote: 'Note to self — already think of myself as part of the team — adding to conversations etc. I'm already thinking about how the "good" of the company is characterised' (6/10/2010).

From this first day I was *part* of the tribe. The image below is my name badge, organised on my behalf by the co-founders for our first full day together, which started at an Ethical Fashion Fair.

Figure 1: Photograph of my badge from the Ethical Fashion Fair



This was a situation that the two co-founders (Holly and Tessa) were also aware of, as Holly asked me at the end of the day: ‘How should I refer to you? Me and Tessa understand what you will do, but to the external people what should we say?’ I responded: ‘Just say I am one of your workers ... your team’.

Equally, the fluidity of the organisation, as I observed throughout, was spelt out to me on this first day, as I recorded:

The company developed throughout the day and with interaction with others [stall holders and participants]. Tessa had a **Blue sky moment** at 11-ish where she proclaimed over coffee [that] Good Business is [should be] a good department store — online and offline ... [to] facilitate and showcase other ‘good’ businesses, who would have an online profile. [This was] based upon Tessa’s interpretation, from looking at the stalls, of the problems these ‘users’ have.

Original emphasis. Field notes 6/10/2010

Good Business, like all the sites selected, was a self-avowed ethical organisation. They had posted themselves under the title of ‘ethical organisation’ on the internship site and (claimed to have) based all decisions of the company on their good principles. The move to ‘good language’ (for more, see Chapter 4) was discussed and seemingly *cemented* during my first day with the company at the Ethical Fashion Fair when it was decided (taken from my field notes 6/10/2010) that ‘moving to “good” was a deeper sounding approach but it would all be undercut by ethical sourcing [approaches]’.

3.8.2 Lux Choc

My research at Lux Choc was another outcome of persistence and planned serendipity. After I realised that the selection of an ethical finance company would be unsuitable due to access issues, I reconsidered my selection criteria in some accordance with the newly arranged Good Business field site. I wanted a site that was as different as possible with

the only common denominator being a self-avowed ethical status. Thus, ideally, the next site would be a large, long-standing, product-based company.

After several discussions with an ex-colleague and her contact in the confectionary industry, it was proposed that Lux Choc could fit my site specifications. Lux Choc is a nationwide confectionary shop with head offices in the South of England (close enough to Oxford), and, very unusually for a confectionary company, their own UK-based factory, supplied by their cocoa plantations in Lombala and Island of Romona.¹⁷ After further research and subsequent clarification, I confirmed the company was indeed a self-avowed ethical organisation, in the sense that they had an 'Engaged Ethics Programme' and also listed 'ethics' as one of the organisation's three company values.

I took a cold call approach to Lux Choc. With online research I found the name of the person I believed would be the key contact person for me (who later became my gatekeeper) and started a long process of trying to reach her using both email and phone outreach before I was finally connected to her. After pitching my project and suggesting the ways in which I thought it would be collaboratively beneficial, I was invited to a media-focused product launch party at the flagship store in London. On further research, I was certain the two co-founders would also be present at this event and my gatekeeper had mentioned that if they were fine with it, then it would be fine by everyone. My plan was to speak to them directly. Serendipitously, I recognised the co-founders on the tube heading to the launch party, and 'sold' my project before they arrived at the busy launch. The two founders were open, but trying to speak to them again during the evening was impossible.

¹⁷ Lombala and Island of Romona are pseudo-names for the actual countries that cocoa came from. This is in order to keep the anonymity of the organisation.

This first encounter was very revealing of the organisation as I observed it. After the verbal agreement to my ethnographic stay, it took a lot of back-and-forth emails to set up an official time to start, partly due to the seasonal busy periods of the organisation, my gatekeeper's temporary leave due to illness, and preparations for a planned organisation 'reshuffle'. I had my induction meeting with my gatekeeper in May, eight months from the first call. She explained some details of the organisation and how I would help her in my stay. It was agreed I would join her back in the office to start my ethnography the following work week. Two days later I received her message:

It has been a strange week since I saw you. It turned out that the reason for my meeting on Tuesday was for [founder] to let me know that he was making me redundant. In fact, I will be leaving the business today.

I am really sorry that I won't be there to see the outcome of your work. ... I am afraid, though, that I can't confirm anything.

Nicola, Lux Choc, 20/5/2011

I had lost my gatekeeper and potentially my access. I emailed the co-founders hoping they would remember our verbal agreement. With luck, they did:

Lucy

Yes I remember meeting and Nicola discussed with me.

Steve, Lux Choc, 23/5/2011

Without my gatekeeper, my access into all the departments, several shops, and the factory took further persistence in each case to find and check access. But as soon as I was in-field at the various sites, all participants were very open. I was re-told on several occasions during my research that this was part of the ethical ethos of the company, to be open and honest.

3.8.3 Ethicentre

The ethical consultancy, Ethicentre, was in some ways my greatest example of planned serendipity even if it was a somewhat 'known unknown' plan in its initial stages. During my first year as an unsponsored DPhil student I, like many other students, funded my studies by taking on part-time roles. I was particularly keen to work somewhere focusing on social entrepreneurship as it was relevant to my studies. By chance, I met with the owner of Ethicentre. She later emailed me and asked if I wanted to help on a paid two-week project culminating in a workshop. I agreed out of interest and the payment it offered. I did some pre-research type work and arrived at the workshop to begin my role as workshop facilitator. My jobs included helping facilitate discussions, but primarily recording the events of the day through sound files, photos, and typed notes (that became my own capta). As the objectives of the workshop were explained to the group, I realised the potential of the field site to the question of ethical genesis (see Chapter 7 for further discussion and analyses of the event and question 3 from the literature review in Chapter 2 for why it provided such a rich source of data given the question posed). I was already a participant and my role was to observe. The opportunity was perfect.

3.8.4 Ethnography of my Ethnography

The last 'field site', my own ethnography of my ethnography, was the most different for many reasons. The 'site' was chosen as it provided the perfect way for my ongoing constituent reflexive-approach, deep capta collection, and analysis. Namely, it was the perfect site to analyse and answer the question(s) of 'whether STS means ethical business' (see Section 2.3). In using this approach, I could look at my own research as a

site of contingent reality and exploration rather than assuming the *real reality* and committing ‘ontological gerrymandering’ (Woolgar 1983) and ‘instrumental irony’ (Woolgar & Pawluch 1985) that I critiqued previous authors of doing (see Section 2.3.2). Unlike the other field sites, there were no problems with access, confidentiality, recording notes when I wanted, internal language, or limitations to time in field. In some ways, my own work presented the perfect field that had not been found by chance as other sites had been, but through my own planning. However, the most taxing issues arose from observing, as opposed to participating, and in keeping my own ethnography strange and exotic enough to question. The mundane was nearly lost in the overall pressures and deadlines of the doctoral process. Additional hindrances occurred from limitations of reflection on data and struggling to keep open the possibility of alternative interpretations in a self-reflective critique. These worries did not arise in hindsight, but rather were issues I considered when I first proposed the utility of reflexivity in this piece of work. I had identified an ongoing self-ethnography to be the perfect field site for, as noted above, deep capta for addressing the thesis’ underlying question of ‘does STS does mean ethical business?’ (see Section 2.3 on how the question arose and Sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.2 for analysis). Evident from the start, the potential shortcomings my ethnographic strategy within this field revolved around documentation collection. I tried not to throw away documents or save over past versions of documents and instead save each new version independently. I kept scribbled notes or sticky notes written in the middle of the night, during bus journeys, or from an in-department discussion group series. Just as in the field, the main source of capta of this work came from my field diary — or in its everyday guise, my day-to-day notebook — where I captured notes from supervisor meetings, doodled patterns of ideas, and noted examples from the field that

suddenly occurred to me as being epitome examples of what I was seeing. The field-site itself, similar to the companies I visited, was multiple and spread across many desks, coffee shop tables, and train journeys. I followed my ethical knowledge production wherever it took me and did so throughout the whole process to produce my proposed real-time radical reflexivity.

3.9 Capta Obtained

As noted, the primary source of data I captured was through my field notes on my laptop and my paper field diaries that I later typed up into Word documents for use in analysis. In Good Business, the ethical consultancy, and my own ethnography of an ethnography, I was fortunate enough to often be seated at my computer and free to type. However, in Lux Choc, I was more mobile within the organisation, and I had to rely mostly on my notebook for capture. In all settings where the opportunity arose, I took notes and additionally audio recordings so I did not miss details and could gather accurate quotes I could be confident in using in the empirical chapters. The data amounted to 321 paper/card documents and 533 saved virtual documents. This was in addition to 112 hours of interviews and recordings (not all of which were transcribed), three hours of film, and 152 photos.

3.10 Analysis

After reflecting on how and what material was collected, some final explanations are needed before proceeding to detail the outcomes of all these processes in my empirical chapters. This discussion is on 'doing' analysis and my own ethical considerations. The grammatically correct expression, 'I did analysis' appears to suggest it was a single,

bounded, post hoc process. However, it was a much more complex messy process conducted throughout my research that evolved as new patterns emerged and my own ideas developed. Analysis was often based on what seemed at the time to be the most prominent pattern arising but was also influenced by the books and theories I read and thought most useful. I employed this fluid style of analysis as I recognised that 'cultural analysis is [or should be] guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the best guesses' (Geertz 1973: 20). The aim then of my analysis and intertwined theory-building was 'not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them' (ibid.: 26).

In my effort to produce a thick description, I employed an interpretivist strategy for capta analysis. Coding labels were attributed to my typed field notes, transcriptions, and Word documents and were drawn from the respondents' own discourses. Thus, the revealed patterns were identified using an inductive process and not pre-imposed or pre-decided. This process was not singular but rather started early in my field studies at a quite diffuse level and was gradually narrowed down or modified upon reflections on later findings. In all coding, particular care was used to employ 'indigenous terms' wherever possible to make sense of my own data (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 200). To help deal with the large amounts of data that I had collected, as well as my hand coding of data, I used the computer package NVivo. This enabled easy access to the corpus of data and streamlined my approach to identify patterns and deviations. Although NVivo was an efficient tool, at times I also found it productive to use printed-out sheets on which I could code by hand and scribble developing ideas as I proceeded.

Even though there are no exact repetitions in examples in this thesis, it is notable that many passages were coded several times under different labels. Some of these issues and points arising were discussed several times under different guises. This speaks to the ‘it could have been otherwise’ sensibility of this investigation and is telling of the messy complex *nature* of the ethical enactments and organisations as re-told in the empirical chapters. First however, I offer one final discussion of, ironically, my own pre-imposed ethical considerations of my methods and data capture.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

As with all Oxford University research involving human participants, my own was subjected to and passed an ‘ethical’ review via the use of University’s CUREC form. This enactment of University-determined ethics was achieved by filling in a checklist form which ‘ensure[d] that all research is subject to *appropriate* ethical scrutiny’ (emphasis as found on the CUREC form). I was duly told that I had passed because my research accordingly fell within the CUREC remit of posing low risk to participants. The form itself provides an interesting site of ethical investigation as there was no definition of ethical given. However, it appeared that certain groups of actants (human and geographical) were inexplicably ‘less ethical’. Had I filled in the form in exactly the same way, with one tick changed to either research involving the NHS, under 16s, or research conducted outside the EU, the form would have been beyond CUREC’s remit and would have required further ethical consideration. I noted this with some irony as even my own investigation had to accept the unexplained term ‘ethical’ at some points. Even after ‘trouble making’ on my side —questioning the administration department of Oxford University on the definition of the ‘ethics’ in the CUREC form and thus submitting the

form late — I was not given any details. I was simply informed that the project was 'judged as having been conducted in accordance with ethical standards'. In addition to the CUREC form, I drew upon the British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (2006) as a guideline for appropriate (undefined) 'ethical' considerations when starting in the field.

Although my sites were open to my participation, and I remained overt within the organisations, it was not clear that my identity was fully understood in all the organisations' audiences, even when I tried to explain it. This concern was highlighted when the photograph and caption referring to 'our hard-working team' appeared on the Good Business website. (The photograph, Figure 2, has been modified to ensure anonymity of the other members.) It prompted a colleague from my own business school to say that he had not known I was working for them. He, like others external to the organisation, had not realised my role was one of research and rather assumed it was one of supplementary income.

Figure 2: Photograph of the team that appeared on the Good Business website



I was also privy to an amount of sensitive information regarding actors and actions at all sites. Sometimes information would be given with a caveat along the lines of 'this is confidential and for your ears only'. In such cases I sought to minimise making this information public. I would check whether appropriate steps had been taken to keep the origins of the comments/actions hidden so that these snippets could be used, or whether they were for my ears only and not to be used in my field notes. In this last situation, the comments or actions were either not recorded or removed from my records.

Inevitably, within this form of investigation, certain things said and done in casual or non-official documentary enactments of ethics were recorded and have been used in this thesis. Although in these instances there were no requests for confidentiality, I respected my informants and felt that their considerable amount of sharing came from a trust in me and my promise not to judge but rather to collect data on their ethical enactments and respect the world as they enacted it. With this in mind, and in order maintain trust, I used pseudonyms for all actors, key locations, events, and processes. In the first instance, it was to maintain the anonymity of my research sites. In the second instance, where it was possible that many people might recognise or be familiar with the organisations involved, it was to make the individual participants and job roles unfamiliar and unrecognisable. The processes of pseudo-naming differed where names were formulated for the overall sites compared to individual actors. For example, the pseudonyms for two main sites, Lux Choc and Good Business, and then additionally Ethicentre, reflect the *nature* of the businesses; some of the nuances that I picked up subsequently went into my 'naming' of their businesses. For individuals, I developed a

standardised process for creating pseudonyms: I removed any traces of their original names from any sources of collected data.

The vast quantities of data in all their various forms have been handled with great care. For example, all paper documents were stored in my home in safe storage boxes. The virtual, audio, and video/image files saved on my laptop have password access, as does my organisation-linked email. I reset the password throughout the process and did not reveal it to anyone.

For my own safety, I have a backup of all the materials on an external hard drive, again password-secured, as well as photocopies of any of the confidential agreements that were made reciprocally between myself and the organisations. In any instance of recording, unless blanket approval had been given before (as was the case with Good Business within the headquarters if no external guests were present), I checked that each interviewee/participant would allow me to record and understood why I was with the organisation.

Shaffir advocates that every ethnographic account should be ‘undertaken openly and honestly without sanitizing the messier, more odious, and ethically challenging aspects’ (1999: 685). My attempt at such honesty starts next with my chapter on ‘Becoming and Being Ethical’ and flows into the empirical chapters (5, 6, 7, 8) and the final Chapter 9, where the mess is not hidden but actively brought back into the reader experience. Bringing back the mess of research and making it forefront in my the text particularly applies to Chapter 8, where I critically analyse the less idyllic aspects of truth (partial accounts, Rosen 1991, Neyland 2008; ontological politics, Mol 2002; fractured data, Miller & Glassner 2004) that were utilised in my own research.

Chapter 4. Being and Becoming ‘Ethical’

4.1 Introduction

The last three chapters focused on ethics in business as a research topic. This chapter turns to the empirical research sites to start addressing the research questions. It explores the question of ‘being and becoming ethical’ and what it took to (appear to) enact and maintain legitimate ethical-membership in order to adequately collect my capta. This chapter acts as a useful bridge between the previous theoretical chapters and the empirical chapters that follow.

As discussed in the review of literature in Chapter 2, academic studies have so far concentrated mostly on the homogeneous grouping of consumers of ethical business, with a few exceptions that have focused somewhat narrowly on the homogeneous organisation and the seemingly assumption that consumed ethical objects just appear from (ethical) organisations. Although all these studies are fruitful in their own way, they lack a focus on the users of ethical business, especially the multiple users within heterogeneous organisations. More striking, I noted an unanticipated dearth of exploration of what the term ‘ethical’ even is or what it is applied to. ‘Ethical’ as a label tended to be provided by the observers (authors) rather than by the actants under exploration. Following some of the sensibilities of STS, it was concluded that taking for granted the reality of the assumed and unexplained ethics in regard to business was inadequate. Rather, we could address some of the knowledge gaps previously unexplored by framing this phenomenon (or these phenomena) differently as an object and by exploring ethnographic investigation with self-avowed (not researcher-ascribed) ethical heterogeneous organisations. The following chapter starts to address these gaps,

and it contextualises the remaining empirical chapters. Here, I will explore the enactments of ethical legitimacy and rituals of membership, both for myself and for the tribes.

The self-avowed ethical status of my field site organisations and their users has been merely accepted and not explored so far in this thesis. On a related note, this mirrors my accepted capta-explorative role of participant-observer, where it has been presumed that a balance between the two roles is possible instead of interrogating whether such a homogeneous term is a suitable reflection of the complicated tool. To have been a participant with the ethical tribes, I too must have become part of the self-avowed (accepted) ethical reality that I was present to observe. This chapter aims to interrogate my acceptance and shows its legitimacy before the empirical chapters answer the questions that arose in the literature review from the capta collected at the ethical field sites. I discuss how the ethical reality of the tribes was legitimised and enacted and how I became a part of this, thereby becoming 'ethical'. In so doing, I legitimised my membership both to myself and to my tribes (this statement of course is my opinion). I found it difficult to know how and where I was located in the ambiguous participant-observer-ethnographic role, though the most pertinent signals of this position to myself were that of language and emotions. Through this dynamic process of observing and participating, I in turn legitimised my fourth field site, the ethnography of my own ethnography, as ethical.

My first discussion here is of ethical membership legitimacy. Membership has been of upmost importance to ethnographic studies since the time of Malinowski (1922) and the foundations of 'best practice' participant observation, be it as a member of a boxing gym

(Wacquant 2003), the !Kung tribe of Africa (Lee 1973), or the mundane job of a fast food server (Leidner 1993). Consistently across all these accounts is a legitimisation of the research conducted with concern (to a greater and lesser extent for different studies) for the understanding of shared vocabulary, shared rules, and inclusion/exclusion criteria of the group. The literature review showed that there is a notable gap in appropriating these concerns for ethical groupings, with the exception of Toennesen (2009). How did the members of the ethical groups achieve legitimacy as members? Did I? How?

What follows from the discussion of legitimacy is a further 'scene setting' by looking at what it meant to 'become ethical'. I reflect on my journey from being a participant-Observer to Participant-observer — as the capitalisation suggests more observer than participant versus the other way around — and on the most pertinent community-enacting factors that arose in my research from both the organisation side (language and learning the native tongue) and my own insider journey (emotion and exiting the tribes). The discussion is based mostly on my field notes.

It strikes me that a word of caution on using the terminology of organisation is needed here. I have tried to emphasise that my use of the term 'organisation', the name given to each organisation, is used as a useful label to bundle together the heterogeneous actants of the various field sites. But I also use the term organisation across the different three groups of actants: Good Business, Lux Choc, and Ethicentre. This is not to suggest that there is some sort of inherent conceptual or structural similarity between the groupings. Rather, where similarities occur, these are noted with as much interest as when disparities occur. The field sites were chosen to be different and, barring the

common link of ethical self-avowed status, it would be difficult otherwise to suggest what links the organisations under this rubric. The separation of this chapter into the various sections is then somewhat superficial. There is a plurality of voices and multiple viewpoints, and the question of membership depends crucially on whose viewpoint is being discussed, the effects of this upon my own feelings, and the reciprocal effect I have on member classification (Hacking 2004). It cannot be simply parsed into my perspective, the organisation's, or even an outsider's — it is instead all of these things. Thus, to treat *the* organisation as a homogeneous entity, as implied, is far too simplistic, but it is used here to bring clarity to the text.

4.2 Legitimation or Playing the Ex-Fam Game

As was discussed in the previous chapter, there was an element of serendipity in gaining access to my field sites. However, I did not address the nuances of how I ethically legitimised myself for access once the point of contact had been made.

My self-legitimation speaks well to the disparity that I encountered between the organisations (and my assumptions about them). For each organisation, in order to gain access in some form or another, I “sold” my ethical-utility. For all the organisations, in the back and forth between initial contact and access, I sent emails outlining versions of my research, the point of my research, and highlights of my (different) expertise and values that I assumed would be most desirable to my field sites. I call these “versions” because it struck me that even though all the organisations were ethical, in order to legitimise my entry, I enacted different versions of myself (not so dissimilar from Haraway's 1991 privilege of partial perspectives). I came to describe this as the CV version of the ‘ex-fam game’ that continued throughout my research.

In very simple terms, the ex-fam game was a conversation about someone you both knew or had worked with that helped legitimise your ethical credentials. It became known as the ex-fam game in my notes for two reasons. One, most of the connections came in the form of working for or with someone who had at some point worked in Oxfam (a large and well-known worldwide NGO). Two, I would, like other participants, often claim ex-fam status long before a particular person-connection had been made. It was a common terminology I found among ethical users I encountered. It enacted both one's legitimising ethical status and sped up the game. It was rare not to find an ex-fam connection, and in such cases, the ex-fam-less actor would resort to listing the numerous other ethical organisations with which they had been involved. For example, when I met Nina at Good Business (8/8/2011) and after establishing that she had no direct connection with Oxfam, she told me extensively about her time in the European commission as a Trainee Stagiaire at the directorate of General EuropeAid, her volunteer time as a public affairs Intern at Unicef UK, and her advocacy coordinator role at the European Council on Foreign relations.

In terms of "selling" my own ethical-utility, the ex-fam game was played in a slightly different way. Rather than verbally finding the ex-fam member we had in common, I instead quite notably changed elements of my CV, including the order of what I ranked as most relevant, and thus higher on the page, and by highlighting different aspects. I knew Good Business through a connection at my business school. The company was very new at the time of introduction, so I was unable to do online research to become familiar with their terminology and backstory. All I knew was that they were an ethical 'for purpose' organisation that I had wrongly assumed was a not-for-profit. With this

incorrect assumption in mind, I had reconfigured my CV to downplay my previous paid work. I only listed my degrees in bullet points so I could dedicate most of the single A4 page to my volunteer experience, particularly my overseas and Oxfam volunteer work. This was quite different from how I sold my utility to Lux Choc and Ethicentre. For both of these, I was able to search the Internet and review their websites. In both cases, I found they were for-profit and viewed them as more business-like. I included my previous paid work as relevant and strongly emphasised my formal education, especially my business school degree and their focus on ethical business. The differences in these conversations was in my use of their sense-making terminology. For example, with Lux Choc I emphasised my desire to research the 'hands-on approach' of doing ethics, whereas for the consultancy I emphasised the importance of 'innovation and collaboration' within the 'ethical space' (the terminology in both cases lifted from their websites).

This backstory enactment of my legitimacy, authenticity, and appropriateness for becoming a member was not just limited to me. As the ex-fam game suggests, it was a game of two halves, so that tribe members would authenticate their ethical legitimacy to me; indeed, they often initiated the ex-fam game. It soon became apparent that the backgrounds of the group members, however various, were important across the sites (similar to Toennesen's 2009 findings).

Although my assumption of not-for-profit was incorrect for Good Business, I was proved correct that backgrounds and ongoing involvement in other 'good' groups were key to initial acceptance within the group. In addition, these attributes enacted the group's (ongoing) own ethical avowed status. For example, the two co-founders had come from

a successful CSR (corporate social responsibility) arm of a bigger media company, and both stayed involved heavily in other ethical outlets. Holly was part of the Ethical Fashion Forum board, and Tessa was, among other things, actively involved in Trustee of UnLtd, The Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs, V: The Youth Volunteering Agency, The Consortium for Street Children, and The British Youth Council.

As one of the first members of the tribe there, I had the opportunity to be part of the some of the selection processes for new members and was privy to the internal conversations about whether or not a candidate would make a suitable member of the team. Legitimacy for wanting to work in the for-purpose sector was based on their previous experience. For example, when Eve came on board, it was suggested not only that she would make a member, but a 'new director', after the founders' first meeting with her (18/1/2011). A little surprised by such a reaction, I asked why and was informed 'she has a brilliant background — she is just involved in everything' (Holly, taken from a field note 18/1/2011). That was further authenticated to me by Tessa, telling me to 'look' as she excitedly opened up a new Internet browser on my computer and typed in Eve's Web page URL.

Even when I had been unable to be part of the selection process, it seemed that backgrounds remained important to the members and a way of legitimising their membership. After a three-week gap away from the site, two new members had been brought on. When I met them, I asked both why they had wanted to join. Instead of the forward-facing answer I had expected, I was given a retrospective legitimisation of their past experiences. From my field notes at the time:

Holly has just introduced me to the new interns as 'the longest standing member of the team' and 'our Oxford PhD'. I laughed a little and said 'Hi, nice to meet you' as I shook both of them by the hand. I sat down in *my seat* and turn my chair towards their new seats. I mentioned my research and checked they are OK for me to jot down notes and discussions we have. Nina laughed and said she had already been warned by Tessa I would. I laugh and then say 'great — so why don't you tell me a little bit about why you two have both joined.' Immediately we started the ex-fam game. As Nina starts by telling me her background in various NGOs and volunteer work abroad, stopping only to ask me 'do you know them?' I didn't but politely nodded and suggested 'I think that name rings a bell.' Katherine, the other intern, is much quieter, but when Nina finished she explains she will only be here 2 days a week as she still works for 'food cycle' but hopes to reduce that down to just a weekend commitment to spend more time with Good Business.

Field note 26/5/2011

Both of the new employees highlighted their past ethical experience to legitimise why they had joined. In short, the legitimacy of the Good Business' membership was built out of people's ability to enact past and ongoing links to other ethical organisations. This was not a formally written rule, but playing the ex-fam game and legitimising your inclusion became a clear rite of passage into membership.

The situation was very different at Lux Choc. Here it was a matter of demonstrating a different set of repertoires and practices to be enacted as a legitimate member of the organisation. The members did not emphasise their prior or present active engagements with other ethical organisations, but focused more on being a part of Lux Choc and their personal reasons and sacrifices for joining. Although the ex-fam game was played on first meeting with members of Lux Choc, it was about people they knew from their new role rather than previously held positions. Although I cautiously generalise this for the whole of the larger company, for the 14 people where I was able to ask directly why they had joined Lux Choc, I was always given a similar answer: 'I wanted to work for an ethical company and feel like I was doing some good' (Jen 19/10/2011). Jen also went on

to explain the legitimising sacrifice she, like the other members, had made: 'Yeah, it means I get a reduced salary compared to my old job but ...'. The sacrifice for a reduced salary was a significant legitimisation of membership of this community. Of the 14 with whom I discussed why they had chosen Lux Choc, 12 mentioned the reduced salary. Moreover, Sarah, head of HR, also mentioned it in one of the first conversations we had, when she introduced the idea of a 'Lux Choc person' (more discussion in Chapter 6). Later in the conversation, she also mentioned, 'I guess we might get a slightly lower salary but I mean ...' (11/7/2011).

Ethicentre provided the most striking example of the 'ex-fam game'. My membership was directly based on my ex-fam status and the same held true for other members of the team. The team was made up of four associates, all ex-fam people. My invitation to the group was due to my prior experience with Oxfam, as that is where the consultancy founder has sourced my details from to ask me to join her group. I had, by chance, also met the founder of Ethicentre at my business school, where we had immediately played the ex-fam game. There, I found out not only how well she knew my ex-fam connections, but that she also had been the person who had set up the team I had been part of in my time at Oxfam. When I was with the consultancy, two further associates joined. They, like the other members, were all ex-fam.

My realisation that legitimisation seemed too often to come from the ethical others we had in common made me question the standard idea of participant observation and of the risks of going native, as recorded in one field note reflecting on a particularly telling ex-fam game:

The risk and idea of going native isn't appropriate here. I am already native to the group (even if the realisation of how much has only just become clear!) I have similar 'networks', I know the people they know, and they know people I know of. Am I legitimising my membership by showing I am a member of their ethical groupings? ... Or are they legitimising their ethical membership by proving to me they are just as ethical as they assume I am? ... Or I am just a member?

Field note 10/6/2011

I wasn't clear if I was the one participating, observing, or both. And if the tribes were doing the same as well. This musing on the community-performing aspect of the ex-fam game was not the first instance when I questioned the ideas of the standard ethnographic approach to research. The chapter now turns to discuss the idea of participant observation and how it played into my journey of becoming ethical.

4.3 The Ongoing Challenge of Participating and Observing

As was argued in the last chapter, participant observation is the right tool, though it is not without flaws. Before entry into my first field, I was struck by a major tension — how do you observe and participate at the same time? I found the familiar feel of the groups just as worrying as the prospect of travelling to an exotic land with its own language. Did I risk suffering an opposite, a counter — 'ethnographic dazzle' because of my familiarity with the groups? (Fox 2004)

Like Fox, I found the role of participant-observer very much the same as trying to rub my tummy and pat my head at the same time (paraphrased 2004). I often felt torn between taking part and trying to question all that I was seeing and noting it down appropriately. In staff meetings, I found that my voice recorder was one of the most valuable things in my ethnographic tool kit. It was part of my membership to participate in these meetings,

to input ideas and contribute, but how could I take notes of myself “being a member” whilst actually trying to be a member? I often struggled with the idea of ‘participant-observer’ and found that in both sites I felt more like an observer at first. Then as I “became ethical”, I not only participated more, but it also seemed less and less acceptable for me to be a mere observer. This point of questioning my participant-versus-observer role was particularly highlighted in January, after about three months with Good Business. The teams were back in office on the 4th of January, and they had been assumed I would rejoin the HQ group then. This date did not align with my student holidays, and I had stayed at an even greater geographical distance from the field than my normal in-term residency. I had suggested to Tessa that I would observe at a distance and look over the emails and notes that came my way. The blur of my role in the organisation was quite evident. I was a member in the eyes of the team, as Tessa’s reaction to this was initially one of surprise that I had not stuck to the official vacation timing. Next, seemingly to confirm my participant status, she sent on a 12-page pdf detailing the plans for their summer event ‘Good Week’ and asked me to review it. I responded noting, ‘I’ll have a look at this later on in the day. And send on my comments’ (5/1/2011).

I did read the document; I felt compelled to, as a participant. Hours later I revisited the occurrence and in a field note, beneath, described my lack of clarity as to my role in that event. I wasn’t clear if I had fallen ill of going native or if this was valid research and part of what I needed to do in order to maintain membership:

[I] ... wondered if I had observed or just participated? Did I observe the document or just act as a participant with legitimate membership requests on my time? I did observe the document. But, I didn’t observe the creation of the

document, only the ‘finalised’ version and didn’t question this process, just the content.

Field note 5/1/2011

Just as the field note questioning indicates, throughout my first two research sites (Good Business and Lux Choc), I found the distinction between observer and participant became increasingly vague. I became familiar with the answers that would be given, and that not everything seemed as important to jot down (again). I noted when new members joined and as they too learned the rules. In one example, the newcomers pointed out a rule I had not yet noted until the moment Katherine, the new intern, (8/8/2011) bought a new tea towel for ‘Good HQ’. I laughed when she mentioned it was to ‘help out the bizarre washing ritual’ — it had become an unspoken rule, a ritual, that the last person to drink tea on each day would collect all the cups and disappear to the bathroom upstairs with a small plastic washing up bowl. I was certainly part of this rule, but I had not spotted it. I was writing notes, and I was observing, but I was participating beyond my own observation. Again I worried, had I gone native? But how then was I still finding things to observe? One factor remained pertinent to my notes throughout my research: language and its use. As I became a deeper participant, I observed more and more when others didn’t have the correct parlance. The language of ‘ethical’ was all about nuances particular to each group. The more I participated, the more I observed linguistic deviations made by non-members.

4.3.1 Language

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two important aspects of good ethnographic research are the time spent in the field and learning the language. Although I was fortunate that in all my sites the language was English, I remained sensitive to the verbal

community-enacting aspects that I met at the different sites. We were speaking the same language but, I found that speaking in the 'right tongue' was an important criterion of membership of an ethical community (Williams 1975). As mentioned above, to legitimise my joining of the tribes, I had tried to replicate their language in my CV that I thought would show my familiarity and would indicate my relevant ethical utilities to each organisation. However, becoming a member meant I needed a deeper understanding of the ethical tongue in which the tribes spoke. For Good Business, as noted in Section 3.8.1, I was present on the day the decision was made to move from the use of the word 'ethical' to 'good' (6/10/10). They remained an ethical organisation, self-avowed and publicly labelled (for example, on an internship website discussed in Section 3.8.1 and in Chapter 5). But the tribe wanted to differentiate themselves from others by reorienting their language to narratives about 'good'. All aspects of the company called 'ethical' became 'good'. We now had 'Good' product ranges, 'Good' values, and 'Good' tribe members. It was expected that new members would adopt the language of 'good' and those new members were obvious by their naive use of other seemingly suitable words.

The change to 'good' language started early on in my research and highlighted a point that was particularly pertinent to my various ethical memberships and the word 'ethical' itself. The latter was one of a family of expressions including (to name a few): green, fair trade, Fairtrade, organic, CSR (corporate social responsibility), corporate responsibility, and fair wages. All of these other terms had their own flavour within the different organisations. Plus, the use of some of the terms and their interchangeability with ethical was very specific to the different communities. The use of the terms correctly

expressed more than a knowledge of ethical business — it indicated an additional understanding of the community's idiosyncrasies and nuances. For Good Business, the appropriate terminology that could be used was more obvious, but for Lux Choc, appropriate language was much more specific. 'Good' was used, but not in such a broad manner as in Good Business. The terminology of fair trade held particular telling qualities about membership for Lux Choc. Lux Choc's ethical reality was enacted by fair trade, but not Fairtrade (a particular third-party certification) that had been rejected by Lux Choc and was deemed inferior to their ethical doings (see Section 5.3). A member of the team highlighted his newness to me by such a slip-up when he showed me some text for proofing that he had created for the new 'engaged ethics' section on the website:

As I scanned over the text, I spotted 'Fairtrade' [written with a capital letter]. I placed my finger on the text and asked 'Don't you mean 'fair trade'?' He looked baffled and I pointed again to the text. He stared at the page and, in a moment of feeling like a real insider, I said 'You have written 'Fairtrade', one word, when I think you mean here 'fair trade', two words.' He stared back, blankly, and said 'Oh, yes.'

Field note 8/8/2011

As shown in my field note recounting the event, I had felt more a member of the tribe than Jack (member discussed) due to his confusion over the use of 'Fairtrade' and 'fair trade'. I am not sure he understood my question, but later in the discussion he revealed he was still very new to the company. I noted in my field diary, 'I didn't have the heart to tell him' that I had already realised he was new (8/8/2011). The poignancy of this language use was so great that it formed part of the company's internal training as one of the focuses of the 'ethics' section of the 'Chocolate Diploma'. This was an online

course in which all members were encouraged to take part (and since I was asked to help write the course, this is discussed further in Chapter 8).

For Ethicentre, the use of language to enact membership was even more subtle and nuanced. All the terms listed above were used interchangeably by the members. All the terms offered a slightly different ethical narrative, and what became the key to membership was showing off that you understood the differences and could compare and contrast the nuances of each of the narratives. This is not to suggest that other terms were less messy. None of the other terms of ethical-expression were without problems and were differently enacted between the organisations. For Good Business, ethical had become too overused for singling out their ethical reality. For Lux Choc, Fairtrade, specifically meaning the third-party certification, was not in their ethical rhetoric. For Ethicentre, it was understanding the problems (as understood by the group) that enacted the tongue of the group. It was knowing the problems and challenges with the 'scaling of Fair Trade'. It was the cost to the producers of organic certification, and it was knowing the issues of how membership was given out with the ETI (Ethical Trading Initiative) that acted as a demonstration of insider knowledge of the group.

4.3.2 Emotion

A poignant moment in my research came thanks to a colleague, Tanja, in an STS discussion group in which I took part at the Said Business School. The topic of the week's discussion was 'Emotions in Fieldwork', and the preparatory work was to submit a one-page summary of our ideas. Unlike the other weekly exercises, the whole group appeared to struggle with this one, and on the night before, no one had submitted their

ideas. Tanja's one-pager finally arrived in my inbox, and it struck me that she had expressed the trouble that perhaps we all experienced:

One thing I find particularly difficult in writing about emotions, that I have encountered in my doctoral and postdoctoral research so far, is the fact that until now I have rarely written down any of the emotions my research work has triggered. That doesn't mean that there haven't been many emotions — quite to the contrary — but my format of communicating feelings, hunches, reactions and uncertainties has nearly always been to talk about these with people I trust.

Talking through those instances of research that caused, for instance, frustration allowed me to use my whole body to communicate my emotions. Often unknowingly, I would use certain gestures, raise my eyebrows, sigh, shake with anger or sometimes cry — something that is impossible or at least very difficult for me to capture when I write sitting in front of a computer screen or jot field notes into a journal.

Tanja's one-pager 23/2/2011

Tanja had summarised a lot of what I felt. It is difficult to write emotions. They are embodied things — not something typed, and a difficult thing to have while typing. With this in mind, I became very conscious that emotions were mostly absent from the participant observation texts I had read. I was aware of the textual limitations of writing about experiencing. It would always have to be a somewhat retrospective, reflective of the experience and shot through with some interpretation (Yamane 2000; Ronai 1992; Katz 1983). I looked back through my field notes and found references to others' emotions I had witnessed, but rarely my own. From our discussion group onwards, I tried not only to embody but to capture my feelings, as well as my expressions of them in front of the communities as part of my ethnography. One particular instance of this occurred while I was at a distance from the field and working in my department. In reflecting on my emotions, I found that I had finally felt I was part of the tribe. It was more than understanding the language or being able to express the rules. Instead, I

thought it was the moment when the distant observer is no longer an achievable situation. I titled the field note 'The myth of the distant ethnographer'.

This moment came close to the end of my time with Good Business. While with this tribe, I had gone through several challenging life events, such as finding out a friend's parent had passed away suddenly — news I had been told over the phone while I sat in Good HQ. In these life instances, I had shown the human behind the researcher and they had seen me in all my emotional "seasons". I felt at the moment close to tears and a little overwhelmed thinking about my research and the tribe, and I tried to write while I felt.

I am sitting in my "distant" site of write-up in the Said Business School common room on a black comfy sofa with my headphones on, aware but ignoring the buzz around me mostly caused by MBAs with the Friday feeling (I assume this as discussions occur behind me about what people are doing tonight) and others having meetings around me. I wave and smile politely as people walk by but don't remove the headphones for fear of getting engaged in a distracting discussion ...

I have a quote in the back of my mind about length in the field from Evans-Pritchard (I am sure), about how you need to be there at least a year for a tribe to show itself in all seasons. I feel as if you too have to show how you weather the storm. The notion of the problem of the participant-observer role is discussed again and again and that it is the best we have. But, we don't need to fear becoming a native, instead we need to be just a critical native to get the thick description, like the understanding of a sigh. Nina, the new intern, yesterday threw me and Holly [Good Business Founder] when she sighed as we don't know yet what to make of it. She is not yet really part of the tribe or us part of hers.

To the past point it is not we who have to see a tribe for a year to understand them; maybe it is more they who needs to see us through a year — see us under all our emotions so that we can really travel through the journey with them and build the trust needed to write notes as we want and access the company's documents. Do we need to become configured to read the tribe as they wish to write it?

Field note 10/6/2011

Even trying to write my feelings, they were hard to portray, but the text does at least convey the feeling of not achieving the distant researcher position viewing and understanding the tribe. Rather, the counter, suggesting we shouldn't and can't, and to be fully immersed we need to let the tribe into our world and privy to our emotion and "human" self. This was a note laden with my emotions from the field. But I had always been aware of these Evans-Pritchard (1973) words, that membership was achieved when, on leaving, sadness was felt on both sides. For Lux Choc, my ongoing mobility within the bigger company and less emotive life events reduced such strongly emotional notes. But on my final visit, I was very sad when Sarah gave me hug on my way out and said, 'We will miss you scribbling away in the corner and asking us all those questions.' I responded a little choked, but genuinely, with 'So will I' (6/11/2011). When I drove away, I stopped to make a brief final field note on the bottom of the last page 'tears' (ibid.). Similarly, with Ethicentre, my leaving was an emotional one with farewell drinks and many tears shed from both myself and the founder.

4.4 Reflection

The chapter has shown how the tribes legitimised membership in their own self-avowed ethical reality and how I equally but differently found the same ethical legitimacy through emotion, understanding the language of the tribes, and a changing participant-observer reality. For all tribes, I had not only legitimised my joining and thus adequacy of my participant-observer findings across the sites, but also achieved ethical-membership (an ethical reality) from where I did an ethnography of my own ethnography. Those findings are now presented in the following empirical chapters to address the questions which arose from the critical literature review.

It should be noted that each of the empirical chapters has quite short conclusions including reflections at the end because extended discussion of reflexivity (though hinted at where appropriate) is covered in Chapter 8. Such reflections will be drawn upon to add to the overall discussion of the final chapter.

Chapter 5. Chimera Reality – the Object of my Investigation

5.1 Introduction

In the last few chapters I have reviewed the literature, set out the frameworks that inform my research and outlined the methods and challenges involved in fieldwork. I also reflected on the process of becoming a legitimate part of the organisations being studied and therefore of the conversations and actions that took place and the analysis presented.

This chapter is an overview of the whole corpus of data found during my stays at the initial sites of self-avowed ethical organisations: Lux Choc and Good Business (see Chapter 3). Throughout this chapter, like all of the following chapters, I re-insert the mess of the research and analysis back into the writing so that the complexity of research and findings is not lost, as it so easily can be, in the medium of the text. I also let the organisations and actants speak for themselves drawing on their terminology and using recorded quotes in addition to images and field notes in a bid to reduce my ‘author-ity’ (Woolgar 1988a).

As noted in Chapter 3, the aim of this research was not to pass judgment on what should or should not count as ethical, but rather to find and understand what enacts ethical reality for the self-avowed ethical organisations, even if it is only temporal. By allowing their ethical reality to reveal itself through its use rather than being pre-defined, it allowed me to answer the first question that arose from my critical literature review:

‘What is *the object* of this study?’ The elusive ethical reality is the object and it has not yet been satisfactorily explained in contemporary scholarship.

In this chapter, I show that this ethical reality is best described as a messy enacted chimera object with multiple ontologies. Although this makes it difficult to discuss ‘the’ object, *the object(s)* discovered in this exploration provide a new critical lens on ‘the’ prescribed and homogeneous ethical understandings presented in other academic literature. Due to the object’s complexity, I do not offer an absolute answer to the questions asked of what is *the object*, but rather a “discussing” of the object’s enactments. As explored in the chapter, the object was not static and clearly defined, but rather emergent, and revealed in its use. The research further comments on the process of learning what enacts and does not enact the object. It is, therefore, much more precise to talk of the object in verb form because to imply a finished discussion of the object would be inappropriate and inadequate. Indeed, the inability to provide an absolute answer to the notion of ‘ethical’ is not a hindrance but rather, as discovered, *the ethical object’s greatest ‘success’*.¹⁸

Additionally, the chapter starts to address the thesis’ underlying question of ‘Does STS mean ethical business?’ by critiquing the adequacy of other object frameworks presently available. In particular, it recounts the analytical process of sifting through data, as well as notable STS metaphors of conceptions of objects (Law & Singleton 2005, de Laet & Mol 2000, Latour 1983, 1986 and Law 1986). The research ultimately finds no framework is suitable in fully explaining the ethical object of my research. Thus I present

¹⁸ After writing this, I came across a *Wired* article that shared the same sentiment of celebrating ‘vagueness’ rather than fearing it. I particularly felt this quote was an apt reflection ‘... vagueness is a useful delusion, a nifty means of remaining committed... Reality is a deterrence.’ <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2011/07/in-praise-of-vagueness/>

the object as a messy multiple chimera in order to develop our contemporary knowledge. The research also takes new theoretical steps by pulling apart the notion of actants that make up the ethical object, and shows how actants are as multiple and messy in their ontology as the objects they enact.

Before I launch into my in-depth analysis of the object, it has to be successfully “located” and sufficiently described. The chapter therefore starts with the experience of “finding” the messy object of my study.

5.2 Locating the Object of my Study

Current social science methods and the channels of expressing findings available allow only a limited knowledge to be explored and expressed (Law 2004, 2003, 2007). Rather than acknowledge the mess in a retrospective benign introspection i.e., in a passive reflexive note at the end of the chapter, I present instead my messy exploration of ethical-reality at the beginning of my empirical discussions for it to lay the groundwork of the analytic chapters and frame the empirical discussions. This approach is underutilised so far in literature, at least in part because of the postulate that social science methods are inadequate to research messy objects (Law 2004 and Law & Urry 2004).¹⁹ My work stands in refute of this notion, which can limit the scope of research unnecessarily.

¹⁹ These same theorists also note that methods ‘are not innocent’ and help create the realities, which they discover. Although I agree it is not easy to convey the mess of what was found in the linear text of a DPhil thesis, it seems by starting with the mess and being unconstrained by a singular empirical lens the mess is much less likely to be lost in the coherent text.

The overall objective of this study is to understand how the ethical reality for the self-avowed ethical tribes is enacted. This was a reality that was studied when it was revealed, not a type of ethical reality that was prescribed *a priori* by my methodologically approach or chosen framework. Although the ethical reality of a group is not a tangible object as easily pointed to as a 'ship', such intangible objects are still objects and it is fruitful to analyse them as such (Law & Singleton 2005).

The object of study was hard to locate and specify. I was participating in organisations that had informed me of their ethical *nature*, but when I first arrived at the sites, I was confronted with a multitude of additional offerings. The object would appear to slip into a multitude of ostensible synonyms including: 'good', 'fair trade', 'green', 'recycling', and 'sustainable', to name a few (see Section 4.3.1 for more on organisation specific 'slippage').²⁰ Yet in reflecting on my first week of ethnography with Good Business, I wrote in a field note:

It seems [Good Business is] trying to move away from the word ethical but doesn't seem able to.

Field note 10/10/2010

What I was noting was the conscious and unconscious use of "other" terms, especially the tribe's frequent use of the term 'good'. However, when trying to discuss what these terms meant, what they were doing, and their goals, the term 'ethical' kept coming back into use. The use of the word 'ethical' enabled coherency and some sort of clarity to be

²⁰ You will find use of the terms 'Fair Trade', 'Fairtrade' and 'fair trade' throughout the paper. 'Fair Trade' (two words, with capital 'F' and capital 'T') refers to the certification of goods as following certain ethical principles set forth by whatever organisation has issued the certification. 'Fairtrade' (one word, with capital 'F') refers to certification by a specific third party. I have used the term 'fair trade' (two words, no capitalization) generically where no official certification is involved. Neyland & Simakova (2009) provide a clear explanation of the difference between 'Fairtrade' and other variations of that term. 'The term "Fairtrade" is protected by FLO and use of the term Fairtrade refers exclusively to FLO-certified goods. Fairtrade thus stands distinct from other goods labelled Fair Trade' (2009: 785).

understood across all parties (within and beyond the organisation), whereas the other terms failed to illicit the same.

As a result of this heavy use of “other” terminology, I was unable at first to attend to the object of my research — at least in an obviously unproblematic sense. Although I had not previously set the boundaries of what could be conceptualised as the ethical object (see Chapter 3), the object still seemed fuzzy, messy, and almost un-locatable. This appeared to be the case for both tribes, first as illustrated by the responses from members of Lux Choc when asked, ‘What makes your organisation ethical and how do you achieve it?’

... lots of different things, the fact we try and recycle in store, the fact we have our appraisals, the fact we are supportive to everyone ... it is my team ...

Yvette, Lux Choc, 21/10/2011

... what we are doing in [the] island of Romona, what we are doing in Lombala. Then there is the way we operate between each other, making sure it’s done in a nice way. There [are also] the suppliers we work with to make sure we audit them and, you know, the paper is FSC paper and lots of things like that.

Anna, Lux Choc, 19/10/2011

There is no standard terminology in the answers provided and instead a plethora of “doings” are listed. By answering in this way, the speakers indicate that it is Lux Choc’s actions that make it ethical. In much the same way that the terminology they use varies, there is no standardisation for describing what those specific ethical actions are. For Yvette, the doings included recycling, appraisals, and the interaction of the team itself. Whereas for Anna, another member, she equated being ethical with the doings on the cocoa plantations, operations and personal relations.

The fuzziness of finding the object was increased as these employees were placed in different areas of the business, Yvette in a store and Anna in the graphics team. Although they were answering the same question about the same company and the same ethics and had been through the same onboarding and immersion course (to be discussed later), maybe location and job type added additional mess that had to be sifted through to find the object. They both mentioned paper, but they each gave a different context for how the paper factored into their view of Lux Choc as ethical, with Anna citing the actual type of paper used and Yvette talking about how the paper is not thrown into the trash but recycled. The one area where they showed some common ground had to do with interactions, but even there the references were different. Whereas Yvette called internal interactions among the members of her team 'supportive,' Anna referred instead to the 'nice' external interactions between Lux Choc and other organisations. Given the lack of overlap in their descriptions of what makes Lux Choc ethical, it was clear that the ethical object didn't have a single or clear enactment.

Good Business respondents also gave similar complicated answers when asked 'What makes your organisation ethical and how do you achieve it?' Here are just two answers to the question that are typical of the messy answers given by all members:

One [part] is CSR, so that is working with business to improve how they do good things and how they communicate it externally. We are also working in terms of trying to get people to buy better. Whether that is in terms of ethical products, you know, organic, fair trade. We want to make it easier for people to find and access those products especially in the long term and help them to reconnect with what they are paying in a deeper sense.

Holly, Good Business, 12/10/2010

[Regarding our Made By Good products] it is positive shopping as it makes you feel good and look good. 'Feel good' because the product is created in harmony with the natural environment and the human race, because they are made of natural fibres and new breeds of biodegradable synthetics without any nasty pesticides or fertilisers. The products are sustainable and consider the total lifecycle of the product and ... they were made by happy workers."

Jo, Good Business, 3/11/2011

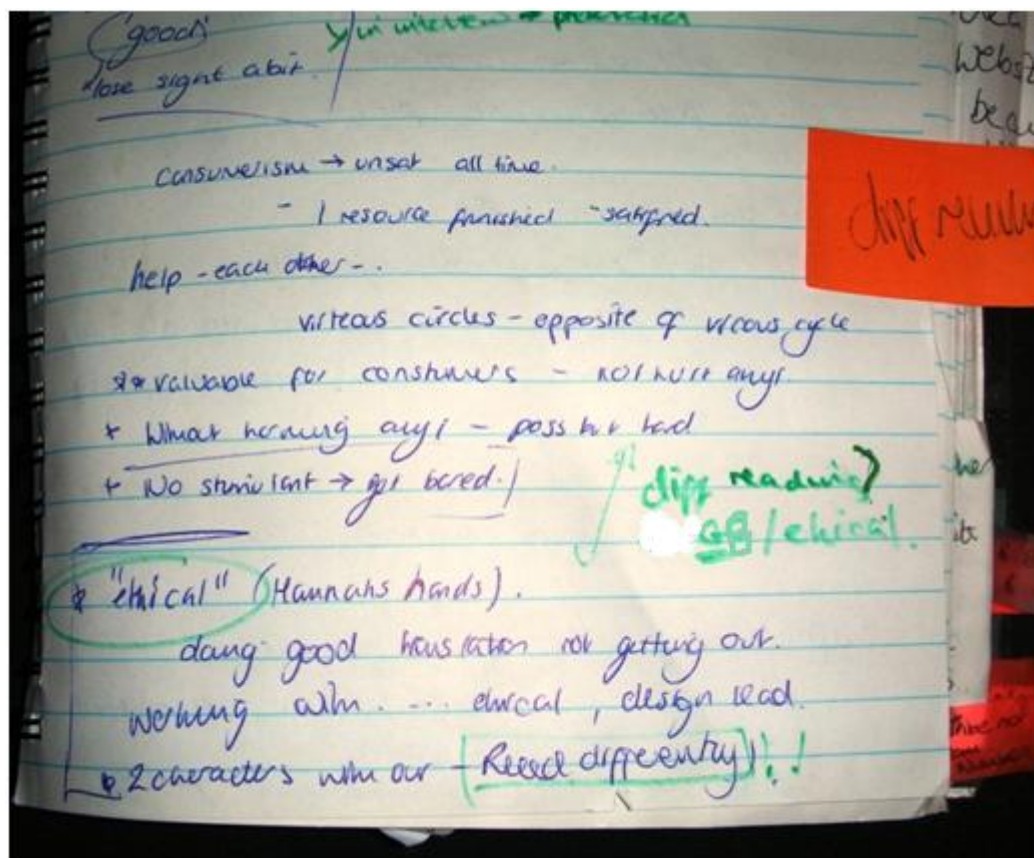
Holly used the term 'ethical' in her answer, in reference to 'ethical products.' So one might surmise that the ethical object has been identified. But then she describes ethical products as being 'organic' and 'fair trade,' which introduces an element of messiness. As part of the same answer about what makes Good Business ethical, Holly also pointed to the fact that Good Business helps others 'do good things' and helps those others more effectively communicate about those good things, and that Good Business facilitates the sourcing of ethical products for consumers. In addition, she mentions CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). All of this is distinctly different from Jo's answer, which focuses on tangible products, the specific materials used to create the products, sustainability, and the total lifecycle of those products, including the happy workers who make them.

At first, the multiplicity of what enacted an ethical reality both between and within the organisations led to concerns regarding my research methodology. Perhaps I was observing the wrong things. In her interview, Jo had said Good Business has ethics, but 'sort of under a different guise.' So was I observing 'different guises', as described by Jo, or were these entirely different realities and objects? Could I have picked the wrong sites? A pertinent example of this searching was recorded in a field note I had written on December 23, 2010. It was a note scribbled alongside recordings from a month earlier and came about as I sat at my desk in my department critically reviewing and

questioning my first few months, in order to start exploring what I was finding. In this instance, I noted the use of 'good' by my first research organisation, Good Business, which I had circled with a highlighter. I had also drawn a star to stress the question in the margin: 'Is this ethical?' In addition, I had attached a small sticky note to the page, indicating this was a serious point to return to. Two pages later the same sort of note was scribbled, as shown in the photo below.

As noted, it is very challenging to adequately and coherently "write up" the mess of research. The addition of this photo is intended to help illustrate it.

Figure 3: Photograph of Field Diary



As shown, a two-ended arrow points to two conversations and has the note 'diff reading? GB/ ethical' written next to it, and in the text immediately after that both the words 'ethical' and 'Read Differently!!' are circled in green pen. As I contemplated my initial concern at not finding my object of study and reviewed notes like this, I considered whether this could be due to a technical failing on my behalf. Could I have been employing the wrong research methods for my task? Or could it be a managerial issue related to the sites I had picked and the way I was handling the data that was causing my messy findings. But my proposed methods of exploration had passed close inspection by scholars far more experienced and wise than myself. It also struck me that the sites had been chosen precisely because they were fertile ground for the research being conducted — all the members of the tribes told me about their ethics and allowed me to come and observe their ethical doings.

Another episode further served to allay my concerns of personal failing and refine my understanding of what I was observing. I acted as the second interviewer for the recruitment of Good Business' first full-time intern and the first team member beyond the two founders and myself.

During the interview, the interviewee, another observer of the company, sought a clarification of Good Business' ethical nature as it was this element of the company that had most interested the candidate.

Interviewee: I am curious about the [Good Business] company actually because ... I went to the Web page and there wasn't much there. I wasn't clear on what you are doing in this [ethical entrepreneur] space?

Recording 8/10/2010

Holly (one of the founders) offered a complex and messy response that incorporated a multitude of the doings that had caused me so much concern including ‘good’, ‘organic’, ‘fair trade’ and ‘recycling’.

Holly: So myself and Tessa [the other founder] set this [organisation] up about a month ago formally, although this is something we have been thinking about for a while. ... [Our intent is] to make it easier for people to do good whether that’s through products you buy, services you use, how you feel about yourself. ... We want to essentially make the world a better place. So at the moment we are focusing on three different areas, one of which is products. We are calling that ‘Made by Good.’ ... that is something very much marketing around *ethical* fashion and product line. So what we want to do is work with small independent retailers who are also in this [ethical] sphere — whether they are producing organic products, using fair trade, whether there is an interesting story around the products they are using, recycling, that sort of thing. We want to work with them to give them a platform to get their products out more broadly, as I think particularly for smaller companies they are so busy doing good, I think the translation externally is something that takes a lot of time.

ibid.

However, Holly eventually circled back to describing Good Businesses’ underlying position and products as ‘ethical’.

Interviewee (who, as the field notes indicate, at this point seemed a bit confused): So you are focusing on sustainable production?

Holly: Yeah, that is something we are really interested in and I think it’s quite *a complicated area*. ... There can be a tension between environmental and social benefits, but essentially we want to celebrate all things which are good. ... We want to shine a light on those products and get them out there. So we will be working with designers producing *ethical* products and ... sell them online and through our pop-up shops.

Emphases added. ibid.

This tautological answer achieved the consensus of both interviewer and interviewee, as made apparent by the conversation. No further questions of clarification arose.

As illustrated, myriad “other” terms had come up in this conversation especially in Holly’s responses, and this joint understanding had been achieved only by reverting to

an assertion about the overall ethical nature of Good Business. At this point, I was confident that any difficulties in clearly identifying the object were due to neither methodological or site issues, but the object itself. My object was just not a neat one, though this is not to suggest the object has any intrinsic properties that cause it to generate more or less mess than any other.

Two additional observations further reinforced for me that neither methodology nor site issues were the root cause of my struggle in identifying the object. First, throughout my research, I constantly reflected upon and engaged with the work of other theorists. I specifically focused on the few who had explored similar ethical issues, followed a similar set of sensibilities, had encountered similar myriad of “other” terms, and found equal instability and unclear findings (Toennesen 2009, and Neyland & Simakova 2009). Second, I now had a proclamation from Holly, the founder of Good Business, that its ethical reality is ‘*a complicated area*,’ a messy, changing, hard-to-pinpoint thing. Consensus about that ethical reality had seemingly been achieved only through use of the term ‘ethical’ itself.

After gaining confidence in my research and embracing my initial difficulty as an interesting empirical find, I found it very useful to refrain from turning the “problem” of the unclear status of my object inwards on itself. This would have required dwelling on considerations such as ‘epistemology, problem delimitation, classification and typology.’ Instead I turned the ‘problem’ ‘outward’ (Jensen 2010). This allowed me to focus on the intriguing aspects of the object that had not yet been adequately explained in the literature, including its multivalent states and the notion that social science methodologies were unable to deal with such complexity.

The object itself is 'multiple' (Mol 2002). As encountered empirically so far, the ethical object *is* at least sometimes: doing good, feeling good, looking good, engaging in fair trade practises, getting Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, recycling, creating a product line with particular and yet various characteristics, buying these particular products, and even establishing a programme for working in Lombala and on the Island of Romona.

These were not different perspectives of the same object. The object itself was not a homogeneous entity. The idea of perspectives implies the notion of the differing subjective observers who look and leave the untouched inherently homogeneous object at the centre of viewing alone. However, it is rare to empirically come across 'free-floating, stand-alone things' that could be viewed from afar (Jensen 2010: 21). This object *is* not, based on my empirical findings, an un-touched (unused) inherent object, but rather a multiple one revealed in its multiple uses. Furthermore, I argue that the ethical object is a thing of weighty conviction yet of contemporary ubiquitous and ambiguous use (see Chapter 1); it is too meaningful to be treated as mere differing perspectives of the same thing. So I will leave the perspectives alone and rather focus on the object and the reality(s) found since it is not the multiple observers who are of interest to this research, but rather the object and its multiples.

In my methodological approach, I am exploring and not judging the ethical object encountered. If I had focused on subjective perspectives, I would have been lead into making judgments because perspectives cause us to select some characteristics as better or worse explanations of *the* object in sight. However, it is worth noting that *the* ethical object is 'variably understood in local[ised] terms', i.e. described and enacted in

terms and aspects of the local setting and understood as such (Jensen 2010). By attending to this found multiplicity of reality, this remarkable achievement enables both development in the understandings about ethical objects and also that of our conception of objects, to be studied.

Two points to address before going further in this chapter are the use of 'enactment' and 'actants.' I've made the claim I am not looking at perspective and instead realities of an object. I aim to take a symmetrical approach and do not look at practices as props, but rather let all actants (human, non-human, tangible, non-tangible, action, non-action) have the potential to reveal themselves as part of the reality(s) of the ethical object. For this, the most appropriate descriptor then seemed to be enactment, as I could not find any form of 'backstage', script, or props cupboard in my researching. And I needed a word without 'much academic history' and able to indicate actions but not determine actors (just as Mol 2002: 32-33 – where I took inspiration for the use of the term).

This terminology leaves the actants vague and open for me to symmetrically and empirically explore. I acknowledge other terms may have been used to move beyond perspectives (Woolgar & Lezaun 2013: 324). However, I argue these other terms could be arranged in a rough continuum in order of strength of scepticism with the term 'enacting' offering the strongest and most 'provocative' rhetoric available (paraphrasing Woolgar & Lezaun 2013: 324).

Second, in my observations and analyses, no superiority was given to the type of thing found to be part of any relations, and no assumptions were made as to the *character necessary* for something to be part of an enactment. As noted, due to the symmetry required for my approach toward the 'things' under discussion and examination, they

are more appropriately described as 'actants' because of my assumption of both humans and non-humans being 'equally able to act upon one another' (Law 1999: 3; see also Jensen & Gad 2010, Law & Urry 2004).

To address my research questions that arose in my literature review, how can this multiple ethical object then be explained? Also set out in the literature review, running through this thesis is the question of 'Does STS mean ethical business?' Specifically, do available STS frameworks of object(s) help explore the seemingly complicated, ambiguous and messy enactments that were realised in multiple ways and in multiple sites by multiple actants in my research?

One of the first STS object offerings that helped in my investigations was the idea of an immutable mobile (Latour [1983, 1986] and Law [1987]). This is an object that is able to move while holding its shape (physically and geographically), and has the potential to act at a distance. My enacted ethical object, though clearly mobile, has been shown to be mutable in its varied found forms. In other words, the stable network does not appear to be present within or between the organisations, but there still appears to be a constructing of the reality(s) of ethical.²¹

Since the concept of 'immutable mobiles' did not fit my object of study, I looked for other STS empirical frameworks that had also found the rigid structure unsatisfactory to explain their object to my data.

The de Laet & Mol (2000) study on the 'Zimbabwe bush pump' seemed promising. They concluded that the fluid-object-pump had 'a number of possible boundaries' that were

²¹ Woolgar & Lezaun also suggest that findings of multiplicity (not pluralism) are 'not reducible to a logic of "translation"' (2013: 321).

able to be ‘descriptively and practically — framed in a range of different ways’ (2000: 237). This framework seemed to offer utility in understanding the found ethical object.

For example, at Good Business, one enactment was achieved by the ‘tribe’ and was apparent in the founder’s remark on the 11th of October 2010, where Holly discussed the future of the company and what needed to be done and remarked that ‘building a good tribe will make this a good business.’ This sentiment of tribe-enacted ethical reality was similarly found at Lux Choc, where I was repeatedly told that ‘we recruit heavily based on ethics, and everyone is appraised on ethics’ (Sarah, Lux Choc, 12/7/2011). I was also told that ‘ethics [was] just natural’ to all members of the Lux Choc team (Jen, Lux Choc, 19/10/2011).

Indeed, ‘building the good tribe’ was apparently so important to the Good Business founders that it was featured as one of the ‘must do’ jobs on the first action plan for Good Business, which was created in one of the first proper meetings that I took part in with the founders (10/10/ 2011). The meeting consisted of each of us putting forward the things we thought the company needed to do and then agreeing on which of those things were the ‘must do’, ‘like to do’, and ‘should do’ and by what date these things were to be achieved. These were then recorded on to A3 paper and placed on the walls around our allocated desks. Once it was established as a ‘must do’ job, the tribe and growing it then seemingly enacted Good Business’ ethical reality, as expressed in the quote below from one of the founders at the first Good Business group meeting that took place after the first interns were accepted:

[It’s about having] an amazing team at the core, so obviously it is all about people. If you look at Virgin, it’s the people you never see who built the company

from scratch, from day one, and so the key is to create a team of people who can make that happen. Who want the same and can make the *good* happen.

Tessa, Good Business, 18/10/2010

It was these specifically chosen interns, who would be our 'key' people, who wanted the same things and were going to make the good (another term used by them to describe and enact their ethical object) of Good Business.

Importantly, however, the tribe actant 'flowed' into different forms, including different members, different numbers of members, and the varying presence, as some members worked remotely from time to time. When I first started my ethnography, the tribe included just the two founders. By November 2010, three additional full-time members of the tribe had joined (Nick, Jo, and Ben). By December 2010, *the* tribe had grown to include two more additional full-time employees, Tom and Angela, with one of the earlier full-time employees, Ben, slipping into a part-time position.

Angela was a particularly interesting member of the tribe. She was a 'Future Jobs Fund' intern, and she had been placed with us via the government-sponsored program that helps young people who have been out of work for over six months and are struggling to find employment. A Good Business had agreed to take on one such intern; as Holly commented, 'We are an open, good-hearted company.' The flow of *the* 'good tribe' continued, and at the time of my exit, consisted of Tessa (founder) full-time, Louis and Yvonne part-time, and Holly (the other founder, fully part of the tribe but on maternity leave).

However, the assumption of the fluid object is that it always flows undisturbed between its changing shapes with no abrupt changes. *The* ethical object, I observed, did not always flow gently as I saw in a sudden change at Lux Choc.

My original gatekeeper at Lux Choc was Nicola. Nicola had been with the organisation since its beginning in 2001 and was one of the six directors. When I first met her, her job title was People and Ethics Director, which changed to People and Communication Director by the planned start of my field work. I had a pre-meeting with Nicola at her home the week prior to my original start date with Lux Choc, and she reviewed with me all the material she felt I needed to understand before I could begin my work properly (17/5/2011). Most of this material consisted of the company's 'onboarding' documents given to new employees to help them understand the business. One out-of-date onboarding document described the company's structure — it listed departments and detailed who reported to who, for example — and Nicola was listed there in her previous role as the 'Lux Choc Tasting Club' General Manager. On a page detailing the purpose and make-up of the Lux Choc Tasting Club, Nicola stopped and pointed to a section of the document that described the start of the Lombala programme, saying 'here is ethical for the first time'. She went on to explain that 'it was the Lux Choc Tasting Club where ethics started, because of the Lombala programmes and so on' (17/5/2011).

At the same meeting, she provided me with the 'Draft Ethics Communication Strategy', a confidential document detailing the company's up and coming new messaging frameworks. The document also included plans for sharing the new stories both inside and outside the organisation. Nicola informed me she had created this document, along

with the 'Chocolate Diploma' course, which involved a module in learning about the ethics of Lux Choc (focusing on the Tasting Club initiatives). I had asked her about her quite recent job title change at the beginning of our meeting; yet it wasn't till this point in our discussion that she offered an explanation. She discussed the change relation to the documents she had now presented to me:

[My title] used to be 'People and Ethics director' because I set up and owned the Lombala programmes ... and the Lombala programme was originally *the* ethics programme. So I suppose I did own ethics.²²

Emphases added. Nicola, Lux Choc, 17/5/2011

This assertion that Nicola owned the ethics of Lux Choc was found throughout my research with Lux Choc. Nicola, was often mentioned with regards to ethics, including by the shop manager of the Reading store who told me 'I guess it was Nicola who made me think more about how we were getting it through in store. How we are ethical in lots of ways ... not just what we are doing in the Island of Romona' (21/10/2011).

However, as discussed in Chapter 3, three days later, that is, three days before my ethnography with Lux Choc was officially meant to start, I was informed by Nicola that she had been made redundant. This caused a very abrupt and sudden change in the enactments thus far witnessed of the ethical object, but this sudden change in actant did not "break" the object. It happened at the beginning of my Lux Choc field work, but the ethical reality(s) of the organisation did not disappear, as evidenced by the ongoing and later detailed enactments. Lux Choc's ethical reality remained to be enacted: different for the change in personnel, but still present. In a contradictory reality to

²² This assertion that she owned the ethics of Lux Choc was found throughout my research with Lux Choc. Lynn was often mentioned with regards to ethics, including by the shop manager of the Reading store who told me 'I guess it was Lynn who made me think more about how we were getting it through in store. How we are ethical in lots of ways is not just what we are doing in the Island of Romona.'

Nicola, the following quote expresses how Lux Choc's ethics were not 'owned' by any one member, but were enacted as a 'given', a taken-for-granted, very practical, not-product of the whole organisation.²³

I mean, ethics isn't owned by one person or one department here. I suppose you want to go and see how it is done differently [in the other departments] and it is certainly not a product. ... It is just the way we do things. It is a given. It is obviously one of our core values. ... It's very practical.

Sarah, Lux Choc, 12/7/2011

Sarah became my stand-in gatekeeper at Lux Choc. On our first meeting she discussed what I was there to study. She was very adamant of the given, but differing reality of Lux Choc's ethics — *an* ethics that was unaffected by the departure of her boss, Nicola, less than two months prior.

The fluid object framework was not then a satisfactory explainer of my messy object that had smooth and sharp and even contrasting reality(s). The Lux Choc ethical reality that Nicola had enacted did not smoothly flow into the reality(s) found after she had suddenly left. She was fired before I even entered the field site. Her swift, dramatic departure created a sharp contrast between reality(s). Multiples with her. And distinctly different multiples without her. Yet these reality(s) were still the same object.

Law and Singleton (2005) had found a similar inadequacy in contemporary object frameworks in explaining that objects they found also did not flow smoothly. They instead offer up the fire object framework to explain objects like this. These fire objects are ontologically multiple and are 'made in disjunction ... energetic, transformative ...'

²³ A reality which brings with it a whole set of questions of locations, where, who, how, that are discussed in this chapter.

(2005: 340). But they also suggest these fire objects 'depend on difference ... [and] depend on otherness' (ibid.).

This fire framework, though helpful, does not fully explain my object. Although it could be employed to explain how the realities were abruptly distinct like the case above, I have already shown that the separate reality(s) could flow smoothly (e.g., of the tribe, above) and didn't necessarily have to be made of the 'other'. Nor was there anything apparently inherent to my observed ethical object that could act as the (unexplored in the literature but seemingly assumed) fuel at the base of the fire object.

Law & Singleton also suggest in their framework that for the presence of the object to be enacted, the absence is also enacted. But, what about the cases I encountered where the present and absent were not so clearly separated and were rather like the different sides of the same ontological coin?

To add to the shortcomings of the individual frameworks empirically sifted through to explain my object was one more general assumption that didn't align with my finding. In all the multiple object frameworks cited it is assumed that the reality(s) were enacted within different contexts/social worlds.

In each of these different social contexts the object was the same: the same reality within that context, forming some sort of consensus about what the reality *was* in that setting. But 'consensus is rare' (Law 2004). All the theories, then, seem to have stopped short of the 'radical thinking' of objects they claim. If however, the reality(s) of object's

was, as I have concurred, a temporal achievement and enacted at the time of 'use', then the reality could be multiple within 'social worlds' as well as between them.^{24 25}

This was clearly shown to be the case for my object of research. For example, in the majority of the field work done within Good Business' second headquarters (HQ) (as discussed more in Section 5.5), the realities enacted differed yet were multiples of the same object — their 'good' ethical reality. This is expressed in the quotes, recorded at differing times but all within the HQ, that outline what actions, ideas, doings at the time, in their own words, enacted their ethical reality.

The first quote, below, was recorded very early on in my research with Good Business. It was in one of the first company weekly meetings, where I was the only attendee beyond the founders. Holly, a co-founder, was laying out what we were, what we were doing, and why that made us an ethical organisation.

So what do we do ... in a nutshell we make good happen. We design campaigns and social movements. So that really focuses on a Good Week and sort of what we are going to do with that. Workshop and training, so you know TED talks and things like that, well we are looking at creating models and engaging people on ideas around good changing their lives and careers and doing things differently and starting a business. And CSR consultancy, and research, so that is the serious side of what we do. It is about having a voice and having an opinion and engaging with corporates and the way they do things.

Holly, Good Business, 18/10/2010

²⁴ Although it is hard to state the boundaries of social worlds, as noted the frameworks above appear to assume a context is a positioning of a reality, and it is between them, not within, that more realities and knowledge can be gleaned (Schlecker & Hirsch 2001).

²⁵ This radical thinking aligns with Woolgar & Lezaun's suggestion that enacted objects do not 'acquire a particular meaning in, or because of, a *given* context: they cannot be accounted for by reference to the external circumstances of their existence' (2013: 323).

The emphases for Holly at this temporal stage were all about the fun campaigns and social movement events, alongside the counter serious side of a CSR consultancy that enacted its ethical reality. This is different from the enactment expressed by Tessa, who spoke at the same meeting at a different time. Tessa, the other co-founder, detailed the good of the company as a very tangible retail experience:

I think we [founders] have racked our brains for a long time to think 'what do we do' when someone says to you 'what do you do?' We do good. If you need a label we are a good agency, a social good agency, but it is more than that, we are essentially good. So what we currently have cooking in the good kitchen, erm, is 'Made By Good', which obviously you know is a retail experience that makes it easier to buy design-led products which are good. ... Good Thoughts and Good Space are a spin out of Good Week, and Good Works is more of a reactive thing.

Tessa, Good Business, 3/11/2011

The next day in the same setting, a re-meeting was called where Tessa elaborated on what specific activities the organisation would do as part of its effort to do good:

I think so far we have only done projects which go toward helping people feel good, or doing some good, or live better essentially ... so services. ... We [also] do multimedia content production so film content writing ... and communications strategies and programme management ... feasibility studies and venturing, for the most part we have done that for ourselves ... and then CSR so obviously if a corporate partner wants to do some good, we will help make it happen.

Tessa, Good Business, 4/11/2011

The enactments of Good Business' ethical reality(s) now included the new enactment of multimedia content production, specifically film content writing as described by Tessa. This was a brand new activity to the team that was added to our rota of services after a conversation with a new partner that happened between the meetings. It also had a re-enactment of the serious CSR that had been absent the day before in both the founders talk and our workload docket. The geographical context or actants then present were not the dictator of what could enact the ethical object. On the contrary, it was found

that in comparison to the previous object theories the difference found (and not) were more about the temporal context.

As discussed, these examples were taken from different temporal contexts, but the same geographical context. However, the reality(s) of Good Business' ethical object was also able to change with context because locations were more flexible than suggested in previous object frameworks.

This was perfectly expressed in a conversation captured at a focus group that Amy, Tessa, and I held at the central London offices of one Good Business' clients. This was the explanation offered as to what Good Business *does*:

Tessa: Just say we are an independent research company.

Male participant: What is it that you actually do?

Amy: Good Business is a social innovation company. So we will work on a project with a partner and evaluate that programme or those projects and work with them to do it better, more effectively, make it more sustainable, generate a revenue stream or income. ... And we are launching a Good Business magazine this year.

Recording 8/8/2011

Again the enactments of Good Business' ethics were different and similar. There is an indication of the serious consultancy side, but with the addition of a new enactment of the printed magazine. The ethical object reality(s) were neither contextually nor temporally dictated.

In another example, this time from Lux Choc, different reality(s) were again recorded in the *same* geographical spot at two different times: behind the till of their Reading shop, but this time in a much quicker, almost immediate temporal context, not yet explored in any literature. The enactments happened within 30 minutes of each other, in action,

conversation, and formal text. The shop manager told me and showed me that the ethical was enacted through their recycling, which I had taken part in all morning under her direction. The shop manager also informed me that 'not all types of shops do' recycling practices. This enactment, recycling, was then discussed, once again in a 'behind the till' conversation about the ethical reality of the business:

I am really proud that I work for an ethical business. ... I know people are used to people shouting about their ethics, but I know from our induction and training we are keen not to be seen like that. ... I think we could easily come across as 'green washing' if we shout too loudly about our ethics. ... Recycling, we do that ... but we talk about the quality of our chocolate first and it is just a given [that] we recycle. ... There is so much, but how do we tell people about it [recycling of different parts of the FSC approved packaging] without being like 'we are ethical honest'.

Yvette, Lux Choc, 21/10/2011

For another member of the team, Sally, recycling was not how Lux Choc enacted its ethical reality. She had taken part in the recycling process, but told me it was rather enacted and realised through Lux Choc's knowledge of chocolates, along with its treatment of 'guests' and honesty in dealing with them. That is, not pushing to sell, but rather making the 'guest' enjoy his or her experience in Lux Choc. This was behaviour that I witnessed, and was told to replicate in my participation when I acted as a shop team member at various shop locations around the country (25/8/2011, 19/9/2011, 21/10/2011, 7/11/2011, 11/11/2011).

These enactments with both Yvette and Sally took place in front of a wall featuring the 'official' ethical enactment description. This description gave no mention of the previous enactments that I had encountered and discussed so far in the chapter, and instead focused specifically on cocoa and the programmes in place in Lombala to help the cocoa farmers, as transcribed here:

Genuine Ethics

We may be only a small player in the global chocolate market, but we are determined to try to bridge the gap between cocoa farmers and we who love and appreciate good chocolate. Our growing ethical programme directly assists cocoa communities in Lombala, West Africa, the world's second biggest cocoa producer.

Here Lux Choc's ethics were enacted through the 'programme' assisting the large number of cocoa farmers that made their chocolate. Additionally, a cocoa pod from the Lux Choc cocoa farm on the Island of Romona was on display in a glass case next to the till, as a physical representation of this ethical behaviour (see Figure 4 for the accompanying text).

Figure 4: Photograph of Lux Choc display cocoa pod



This brought to light another enactment — this one about buying a plantation on the Island of Romona and the programmes there that helped bring sustainable cocoa farming back to the fore. After moving back and forth between my findings, with these

contemporary offerings of objects' frameworks, and refining what parts of the present conventions help explore my understanding of the object found and what didn't seem to match, I am now able to offer a novel framework to further explore and understand 'my' object. This is a framework that is yet to be analytically explored or explained, and offers new conceptual organisations of what constitutes *an* object.

It is a framework that moves our contemporary knowledge of objects forward. The metaphor I propose is that of the chimera object with multiple reality(s). I start with an exploration of the notion of a chimera and why it appears to fit as the framework for the found ethical object. This is followed by an interrogation of if or why such a chimerical object seems to "successfully" hold the multiple ethical reality(s) both individually and together as a "whole".

5.3 Chimera

Chimera, as discussed in the literature review, is defined as a monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail. It is also used to describe 'a thing of hybrid character'. But what is it that enacts the chimera? Is it the animal bits that are present to create the whole? Or is it the absence of the other bits — the lion's paws, the goat's horns, the serpent's tongue — that enact the chimera? Is it the presence of the component pieces or the absence of the rest of the bodies that make it a chimera, or is it both the presence and absence of the component parts?

I offer the chimera as a heuristic tool to help conceptualise my argument and further interrogate the object of my research. As the mythical multiple chimera, the ethical

object of my research is both *and* neither what it is *and* what it is not.²⁶ No absolute singular answer is appropriate to describe the messy object (Law 2004).

The idea of a chimera provides a conceptual organisation not yet explored in contemporary frameworks. It also encompasses the useful working ideas of the previously discussed framework and enables the messiness to remain. It is more dynamic, like the fire and fluid objects, but, because it is mythical, it can jump from or flow into different realities.

This multiplicity has already been proved in the enactments of the ethical object already presented in this chapter, and it will be further explored in the remainder of this chapter and in the other empirical chapters offered. As noted previously, it has been enacted many times and in a multiplicity of ways, yet remains uncontested. This object is not restrained to one reality in a context, and unlike the familiar animals that make it, it remains unclear to define and hard to characterise. This is *an* ontologically multiple accomplishment, from an emergent ontology. It is what it is as enacted for a “user” (see discussion of this term in the following chapter): a reality for a transient moment of its “use”. The chimera heuristic evokes the idea of the ethical object being, as stated, as much what it is as what it is not. It is reified through continuous, debatable negotiations and temporal settlements. As shown in the example beneath, the multiple ethical reality(s) of both organisations are enacted through not present actants, as much as present actants previously showcased in this chapter.

²⁶ This is very reminiscent to Barad’s (2007) arguments of things being both, and not, at the same time and the implications for social science as detailed in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*.

At the happiness project launch and conference in London, 12/4/2011, Tessa, a founder of Good Business, explained to the crowd what it was that made Good Business an epitome of an ethical business and one where the employees were happy. It was all about the 'nots' at the base of why the business was created.

It is **not** making our employees travel in rush hour. It is **not** making them have to stand under someone's armpit. ... It's **not** about working 9-5. ... It's **not** about living for the weekend. ... You don't have to live for the weekend; Monday morning shouldn't be 'why do I have this feeling'. ... And that is why [Good Business] was created.

Emphases added. Tessa, Good Business, 12/4/2011

For Sarah and Ted, both from Lux Choc, there were differing 'don'ts' that enacted their ethical object. For Sarah, it was about the timing of sales:

Yeah, and our whole ethical stance on that is that we **don't** go on sale half way through the season. We are very particular about our sale points. So our customers know exactly what to expect from us. Like if you buy a dress one day and then the next day it is half price that's terrible. We **don't** do that any of that. We have particular points when we go on sale. ... For me, in my mind, that falls under our ethical stance.

Emphases added. Sarah, Lux Choc, 12/7/2011

For Ted, it was equally, but differently, about the don'ts. In his case, the reality(s) did not centre on the customers, but rather the use of resources.

We act, not just say we are going to do it and then actually not bother. Like recycling: electronic waste is recycled in the most appropriate way. We **don't** land fill. ... It's **don't** use resources you don't need to. Recycle and reuse when you can. ... [We] **don't** leave appliances running that we don't need to. ... I think you have to lead by example and I think everybody else follows suit. You know, here is ethical in practice: I could have ordered a large skip and all of the waste could have gone to land fill and cost us £250, but ... we **didn't** and we removed metal light fittings from the wood. ... So we have reusable light fittings and then

all the wood went to the Cambridge wood company just up the road. So they ***didn't*** have to travel far and they have a small carbon footprint, and they will use that. ... It mostly goes to animal bedding.

Emphases added. Ted, Lux Choc, 3/8/2011

These examples demonstrate “what it isn’t” — for example, no awful commuting, no negative surprises for customers, and no wastefulness. During my research, another very interesting example was discovered that no object theory could explain. It was an example of when the ethical object was enacted by ‘both *and* neither what it is *and* what it is not’, recorded when discussing with Julia, a Lux Choc tribe member, what for her made the ethical reality of Lux Choc. Mostly specifically, she focused on their chocolate production when she told me:

Fairtrade: and you know we ***aren't***, but we ***are*** to a certain extent. We are fair trade.

Emphases added. Julia, Lux Choc, 27/7/2011

What is notable here is that ethical is being enacted through the present actant of fair trade, and at the same time equally enacted by the absent Fairtrade. In other words, our object under examination is being enacted chimerically through both what it is and what it is not. I asked Julia to elaborate this point and again the same tautological answer was put forth, that although they weren’t Fairtrade, they actually were because of their trading policies. She ended the second explanation by again saying they did not have a ‘Fairtrade’ label and it was important that people didn’t think they did, even though it should be understood that they believed in fair trade and it was part of their ethics.

But how does this object of multiple realities hold together? The present object literature falls short of explaining this. Mol’s 2002 suggestion is that a multiple object can hold together because its various realities rarely ever intersect. There is no

discussion to be found of how a multiple object can hold together when its various realities intersect with each other frequently, as happened during my research. However, an explanation of 'how' is necessary to adequately address the questions raised in my literature review regarding what the object is and to extend our current ideas about the notion of objects.

As explored above, multiple enactments occurred in the same geographical and temporal contexts. The ethical object, though very specific in each enactment, was seemingly ambiguous enough so that no clashes were recorded. When the ethical object was used in differing enactments, it was still robust enough to hold together as many. It appears then this chimera object is a 'boundary object' — an object that is 'robust', but also 'adaptable' and allows 'cooperation' and 'common understandings' to occur across otherwise divergent enactments, an object defined by detailed information in different social contexts, yet still sufficiently vague in 'overlap' situations that no conflict arises (Star & Greisemer 1989).

5.4 Boundary Objects

During my ethnographies, no tension was recorded. Yet multiple reality(s) of the object were enacted, and at times overlapped, as in the example of the Reading shop discussed previously. The ethical object's vagueness enables its multiple yet very specific enactments to be temporally realised without any clashes. The notion of boundary objects was first proposed by Star & Griesemer in 1989, and describes things that are agreed upon and shared by a community or communities, that are and can be enacted differently but still manage to satisfy the informational requirements of the groups with no clashes (Sapsed & Slater 2004).

This type of object was found within Lux Choc's headquarters, just as it was at Good Business' headquarters. Lux Choc enacted its ethical reality(s) in divergent ways, and yet the ethical reality(s) always seemed to be the same thing: a self-avowed ethical *nature*. At an 'immersion course' I participated in at Lux Choc July 20-21st 2011, the different realities were enacted and detailed, but did not seem to clash during the course. More specifically, they remained completely tension-free during the ethics part of the course where the divergent enactments were offered in the same temporal and geographical space — as illustrated by the quotes and field notes below.

For clarification, the immersion course was offered roughly once every quarter at Lux Choc's HQ and all new employees (from all areas of the business) had to attend one within their first few months of employment with all travel costs being covered by Lux Choc. It was a two-day course to give all employees an understanding of everything Lux Choc stood for, explain the organisation's values and story, and provide a chance for employees to ask whatever questions they might have. Older employees were encouraged to re-take the course to understand changes in the organisation and to help share their knowledge with the new attendees. Anywhere from 10 to 20 people took part in each immersion course, and 12 people attended mine.

After we all met in the board room of the HQs and had gone through official introductions, Sarah, the course director (and my stand-in gatekeeper), started the course with the introduction of the most important thing, the 'official' ethics of Lux Choc:

Ok ... I am going to start with ethics. Nicola, who left the business about six weeks, or two months ago, well, she really started this, the Engaged Ethics Programme, over in Lombala and the Island of Romona and then really

championed it here ... so I am going to show her talk [via video]. She really does bring it home in terms of what our Engaged Ethics Programme *is*.

Emphases added. Sarah, Lux Choc, 20/7/2011

Sarah then turned on the video and Nicola, the official voice, yet no longer an official member of the tribe itself, explained how *the ethics* of Lux Choc was done. Here is an extract of the video (a fuller transcription of the video can be found in Appendix A):

For us [Lux Choc], engaged ethics is, well, we have to go back to about 2001 and that is around the time I joined the business and I had the 'privilege' — a word I use a lot about my job of starting our Engaged Ethics Programme in Lombala. ... [In] 2001 there was a documentary coming out and a lot of coverage of cocoa farms and talk of child labour, slave labour, and so on and our customers started to say to us ... 'what are you doing about making sure that your supply chain is ethical and you are looking after all the people all the way through the line?' ...

Eventually we found ourselves an NGO ... called Green Tropics Group who worked in a cocoa farmer company. ... We introduced this agreement: We would give you so much money and they would do certain projects. ... But what happened next was a bottomless pit because, once you start giving money for education materials, they get used up and then they need more. ... What we wanted to do ... [was make sure] that the programmes became sustainable and that there was as much commitment from the cocoa growers as there was from us. ... So projects became more rational and real and the projects achieved more. And, the engaged programme started to take shape. ...

Next step ... we committed to work with the Island of Romona government to try to reinvigorate the cocoa industry there and one way we did this was sharing our knowledge. ... We shared it with the other cocoa growers on the island and we also wanted to buy cocoa from the cocoa farms there, at a fixed price. ... First we promise to buy all the cocoa produced. We also fixed prices, so you know it will be bought and how much you are going to get paid for it. ... We also buy within seven days — this is a really big thing.

Nicola, Lux Choc, as viewed on the 20/7/2011

Nicola's official enactment of Lux Choc's ethics was specifically about the development of the Engaged Ethics Programme for Lombola and the Island of Romano and what Lux Choc was doing there to help the farmers. After the video, Sarah split the immersion participants into three groups of four people that she had pre-selected. Each group had

a mix of people based on the length of their employment at Lux Choc. Sarah waited for the groups to take different corners of the room and then gave these instructions:

So you got a flavour for ethics through the video there. ... So what I want you to do is [write] your ideas down. What you do, how you perceive it overall, or how our customers see it.

Sarah, Lux Choc, 20/7/2011

I was in a group with Eddy, who worked in the factory. He had been at Lux Choc for about four years and felt it was time to re-immense himself in the company's values. I was also with Lawrence, who worked in the logistics part of the company and split his time between the headquarters and the factory. He had been at the company for several months, but was taking the immersion course for the first time. I took the role of scribe so I could record and participate, but not affect the flow of conversation between Eddy and Lawrence.

I captured the flow:

Waste disposal. Er, recycling. Erm what else? Product and packaging ethics is definitely original and authentic. ... We have Surrey Uni[versity] looking at the ethics of our plants and how to make it more effective. ... It comes down to not GM products. ... And profit — if we didn't make that, it would affect all the people who are depending on us, so it all leads into us being sustainable. Ethics to our customer [is perhaps] website content. [It] has got to be true and all that comes into the packaging. And the environment policies, the sourcing, nuts content, not fatty chocolate. We don't have additives. We use natural flavours.

Field note 20/7/2011

From the lack of waste to the lack of additives, a plethora of different enactments came to light during the discussion. These enactments didn't overlap with each other and also differed from Nicola's video. After the discussion time was up, each group was asked to

elect one member to present their ideas to the rest of the immersion group. Lawrence volunteered from our group and gave the following presentation:

We sort of broke it down into a couple of areas: process, CET [operations].

We will start with process. So we try to use organic supplies where possible. ...

Then we went to ethics and people, staff and culture, how it impacts on profit and the customer is king, what effects the profit has on the estate supplier, the growers and trading.

In CET [operations], we get a lot of question and answers on our company ethics and a lot of it is about labour and fair trade but we can always refer to website content.

And then investment and ethics, education of growers, the land and research ... and then grants and bonds and how we put that out to the general public so they know what's in it for them ... and product labelling ... not third party-certified, Lux Choc-certified. Everything is hands on and we do them within Lux Choc and we do them right. Sustainable solutions, we go through things, we bash out ideas, and we have risk assessments, you know.

Lawrence, Lux Choc, 20/7/2011

Our group's enactments differed from the discussion to the presentation and contained multiple types of different doings — those that were process and those that were operations. All the groups equally presented many differing and some overlapping enactments of Lux Choc's ethics. Each group also was very different in detailing the enactments of Lux Choc's ethical reality(s) when compared with the 'official' video description we had all listened to beforehand. Not all of the enactments listed by the groups were based on the Lombola and Romano programmes. Sarah, the course lead, also took notes throughout each group's presentation and, at the end of the session, rounded up with her final comments about Lux Choc's ethics:

Fabulous, thank you. So ethics is a set of moral values for our group [Lux Choc]. ... [We use] profit as a force for good. ... Lombala particularly depends on our work. ... It is sustainable, as it is a win-win situation. Some of the other things I have picked up: ... Being honest, straight forward, with dealing with our suppliers and

customers. The way we deal with our staff and customers, it is definitely on an ethical stance. We are forever telling our story on how we deal with our staff and equally inviting questions and being ok with not knowing the answer as it helps us validate the answer because we go and find out or work on it. Lombala, engaged ethics in itself, and our green stance, you know, respecting the planet with intelligent packaging and waste control and energy control.

Sarah, Lux Choc, 20/7/2011

Here she repeated that the coterminous varying and differing enactments all the groups had reported enacted differently the same ethical object without any tension felt or shown by any participant.

What these examples illustrate is that at the everyday mundane level, the reality(s) of Lux Choc's ethics, like those of Good Business, were sometimes disparate, overlapping, multiple, and very specific on how the object was enacted, with the different reality(s) being very particular yet realised in a context without any apparent tensions. No one ever disagreed with a different reality. Instead, in the discussion of the reality of Lux Choc ethics, the object was sufficiently ambiguous in the 'interface' (Fujumura 1992). As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the ambiguity that originally provoked this research also appears to be its greatest 'success'. As noted at the beginning of this section, its vagueness enables its multiple yet very specific enactments to be temporally realised without any clashes.

What has not yet been explored, however, are the actants of the boundary objects. Thus far, these actants have been treated in a way that may be read as their being somehow homogeneous, or the stable building blocks of multiple realities. But this could enable claims of 'let[ting] essentialism in through the back door' (Grint & Woolgar 1995).

This chapter started with the mess and complexity found, then encouraged its utility by exploring the idea of objects, specifically *the* ethical object. The chapter now turns to the complexity and mess of the actants, to answer the question of how the analysis can be extended beyond the top level object to bring about a new extension of knowledge. Specifically looking at whether actants were not only “the building blocks” of objects, but if they are also vague and specific enough to enable *the* ethical object to hold together uncontested.²⁷

Exploring these possibilities, let us first review the assumed use of the term ‘actants’ thus far within this thesis. Then by using examples from the field, the idea of multiple ontology and boundary actants are interrogated. I selected three key actants: Organisation Values, Headquarters, and the story of Organisational Origins. These were selected because throughout my study they were revealed as very important to the ethical tribes. Their importance was made apparent by their repetition — they were recorded again and again as actants of the organisation’s ethical enactments.

5.5 Actants: Multiple and Boundary

The ethical object of this research, as noted, was found to be *an* object of multiple ongoing, transient, accomplished realities: a chimerical object enacted by actants. Other object-enacted frameworks have suggested that enactments (or practises) of the object are embellished by ‘props’ — the tools to help in the doing (Mol 2002).

In other words, for these frameworks, ‘props’ remain important, but not indispensable.

That was not to be the case in the enactments of ethical reality(s) I encountered.

²⁷ Interestingly and adding empirical weight to my claims, Huybrechts & Nicholls (2010) also argue that Fairtrade, one of the “other” terms, acts as the boundary object in social movement and corporate relationships.

Without the actants, the realities would not be enacted. What arose instead from my empirical material was the equal importance of actions, objects, people, words, discussion, and conceptual organisations in enactments.

This found symmetry acted as the catalyst for drawing upon ANT (see Section 2.3.3.1) terminology to describe the things of ethical enactment as ‘actants’. The “things” I found that enacted the object — which are further discussed in the following chapters — were as much human as non-human and included intangible objects such as speech, values, and virtual representations (Stimson 1986, Yanow 1995, Jones 199). In the example below, the reality of Good Business’ ethical *nature* is questioned in an email from an ‘outsider’ in response to an advertisement about an unpaid, not-for-profit internship posted on a 3rd party’s website. The advertisement was listed under the industry tag ‘ethical’ on the site and included an explanation of the role on offer, as well as giving a brief description of Good Business that included their values and their positioning as a ‘good’ company. In questioning the ethical reality of the company, the (re)enactment of Good Business ethical reality was (re)achieved — existing both prior to the exchange, as well as during it — through the intangible actant value of honesty as delivered through the email exchange below. When the founder related this conversation and forwarded the email correspondence to me she described the exchange as a win. This was of great importance as it was later shared by the founder with all of the tribe members to show the strength and importance of our values in showing and proving our ethical *nature*.²⁸

²⁸ When I was told about the occurrence, Holly the other founder mentioned that Tessa whilst dealing with the ordeal had commented: “If I can’t get this girl to stop pestering us we will set Lucy on her.” On further exploration of this comment it was suggested as I would be able to give an ethical argument the girl could not dispute (field note 2/5/2011).

Outsider email:

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I apologise for bothering you but I am writing about your advert as I wondered whether this position should be paid a bit more if you expect this person to do work for you?

Is that not right?

The response from Tessa, one of the founders:

Yes — the internship is an unpaid position, I have never said otherwise. It was never advertised as otherwise, we are covering expenses of £60 per week. ... I really don't understand your issue here. ... That is the nature of an unpaid internship. ...

They get more from the internship than money. Ask any of our current interns. You are more than welcome to visit us. ...

There are people out there who are struggling to get experience. I've had a teacher and three MA students email for the role, all over qualified but without work. ... Why? ... Because people aren't employing, that's why.

If you read the rest of our [Good Business] values, it says ***honesty***. ...

[E-signature]

Emphasis added. Emails from 2/5/2011

The *value* of honesty here for the founder is used to (re)enact and validate their ethical claim. Whether we can know if the (re)enacted ethical nature of Good Business was also 'read' by the outsider (external user) is discussed in the following chapter, though in this case the respondent did not question Good Business' ethical claims further. There were no additional emails or any other form of correspondence from the outsider. *These* values, like *the* origin story, were found to be very important to the ethical tribes as they were often shared with me as a way to not only enact, but also seemingly to (re)validate their *established* ethical nature. (A discussion of possible *new* ethical *nature* genesis is included in Chapter 7.)

Good Business, similar to what had been also found at Lux Choc, wanted to make it clear this ethical value was integral to the company and more than any PR stunt. Neither organisation was merely 'jump[ing] on [the ethical] bandwagon' nor 'just ticking the marketing boxes', but rather were doing *real* ethics (Nicola, Lux Choc 20/7/2011). However, as the investigation progressed and actants such as those named above (organisation values, headquarters, and origin story) became more multiple, the assumed ontological status of the term 'actant' became more 'problematic' for me to borrow. The singular term seems to assume the homogeneity of actants, but this was not the case for the actants that arose in my research. Instead, actants such as 'the values' were found to be just as multiple and messy as the ethical object they enacted.

An excellent example of the difficulty of assuming homogeneity was the Good Business 'actant' of their headquarters, also known by the tribe as 'the good kitchen'. This was originally located in Camden, in an 'innovative new office concept' named 'Collective', which was based in an old warehouse and was an open-plan, hot-desk office. The founders had won the rent-free space after pitching their idea to the owners, who awarded them six months' desk space for being 'a hot new ethical and creative business' that would bring life back to Camden. The founders felt the communal project did reflect and add to 'their good values', but wanted to have a more permanent space, which would equally, but differently, enact their ethical reality, as shown in the field note taken below on 11 October 2010. I spoke with one of the founders, Holly, about the move, why it was important, why they (the founders) thought it was important to do, and why now, and I noted:

Holly told me to look at the *officergroup.co.uk*. “Read about them and who founded it, they are the type of people we would want to be with.” It is definitely a possible place to move, it’s cool, trendy and fits with our [ethical] values how they run it. They have a wormery and roof terrace and ... organic cafe and ... funky barber.

Field note 11/10/2010

Good Business did not move to the space offered by *officergroup.co.uk*, but instead, after the founders and I visited numerous other ‘ethical office spaces’, Good Business moved to a street in the East End of London near Spitalfields Market on the 16th November 2010. I was asked to participate in the office visits so I could offer my opinion, and I did so. But I had not been on the visit to the East End office that was ultimately selected. When I asked why we had chosen it, Holly said that it was ‘the perfect place to do good’. We were in an area full of other ‘funky, ethical, and innovative companies’ with whom we could ‘link up and work’ to get plenty more ideas ‘bubblin’ in the good kitchen’ (Quotes from Holly, Good Business, 16/1/2011).

At Lux Choc, the importance of location for enacting the businesses reality also was discussed. Although the site for the first store was chosen before my time with the organisation, Steve, the founder, and other members of the team discussed with me why they ‘picked’ Watford. Even though the founders and company before this point had been based in Cambridge, they ‘thought if we opened in Cambridge it would just be their friends who shopped as they felt sorry for them’ (Sarah 12/7/2011). This would not have enacted the reality of Lux Choc as the founders had envisioned.

Although the geography of Good Business’ actant-headquarters did change, it remained the same ethical enacting ‘HQ’/‘good kitchen’ actant, just a different multiple of it. In other words, the selection of the headquarters was informed and enacted through Good

Business' ethical reality. It was important that the physical space and location of the office was seen to represent and reinforce (i.e., become an actant of) the company's ethical stance. The 'good kitchen' also seemed to be 'vague' enough to allow 'coordination' as there was no tension, no questioning of whether the changing HQ could still enact Good Business' ethical *nature*, even though it remained part of the ethical explanation and the relocation was promoted on the website and through their social media channels. For Lux Choc, there were more stores with changing locations, but each new spot was thought through. Anton, the managing director of operations for Lux Choc, told me on a tour of the London store locations that the sites had been 'picked because of the values and to make sure we are in the right space for us to achieve them' (written in a field note 19/9/2011). Each store was different, but yet the same in that they were enabling Lux Choc's values, and its ethical reality, to be enacted.

Therefore, the actants were found to be just as messy and multiple as *the* object they enacted and more akin to 'boundary actants'. To further explore this notion, I interrogated other important actants. Like the headquarters, other actants also enabled such a coterminous specificity while retaining vagueness.

In both companies, for example, the actants of the origin story and of the organisation's values were used to enact the organisation's ethical reality. Both these actants seemed to (sometimes) legitimise the self-avowed ethical claims of the organisations, in the sense of it being something that was there from the beginning. 'It is something that is woven into the DNA of our brand', not just an add-on that came later, said Steve, the founder of Lux Choc, as he pointed to a poster with the word 'ethics' on it during our meeting in his office on 20/7/2011. The poster showed some of the Engaged Ethics

Programme farmers. The importance of the story actant was clear, as similarly found in Neyland & Simakova's 2009 ethical explorations (also Hannabuss 2000, Boje 1995 and 1991, Diedrich et al. 2011, Clark & Salaman 1998, Brown et al. 2009, Boyce 1996, and Orr 1996).

In the case of Lux Choc, the importance of the story first became apparent in a conversation I had with Sarah, the immersion course coordinator and my stand-in gatekeeper, during our first meeting. It was my first conversation on site, where I arranged and set up my official immersion into the organisation.

She found it important enough in this initial interaction to check that I knew the story of how Lux Choc came to be. She first asked, 'Do you know the story? ... Well, you will hear it all at the immersion course, but ...' (Sarah, Lux Choc 12/7/2011). She went on to retell the story as quoted below. I have used a pseudonym for the previous company. This was the first time I was told the *full* story, and it was recorded, as Sarah was happy for me to record all of our interactions. I didn't at first think it was going to be relevant, for this actant did not seem to enact their ethical reality. She told me that the two founders, Steve and Richard, were with another company called Choc Express, but that the branding of the original company as such 'kind of says what it is on the tin — chocolates in a hurry'. That did not fit with what they came to envision Lux Choc to be, so Sarah explained: 'Then in 2003, we were born and rebranded as Lux Choc', with these new Lux Choc stores being 'very boutiquey, but not pushy' in style. She went on to say that the first store opened in Watford in 2004 and 'that was my local shop and the reason I joined.' The next store was in Milton Keynes 'and they were blown away by how well that store did and that started the ball rolling there.'

After this, she again reminded me that the 'story' is shared with all new employees of Lux Choc when they take part in the immersion training and that I would hear it again when I attended. What is important to this discussion, however, is that the story actant appeared to be enacting different realities among different members, and at different times, in particular, the framing of the founders and how the company and its ethics started.

For example, a few months later I was talking to a different member of the Lux Choc tribe, Anna, who worked on the graphics and packaging team. She had been one of the earliest employees and told me about the growth of ethics in the company (giving the impression it was not so inherent to Lux Choc as others had made it sound). She also talked about how it was enacted by Steve and Richard, the founders, even before they called it ethics.

When we first started, well, Steve is an ethical person, but it wasn't really part of the business. We had good business practice, but it wasn't pigeonholed into ethics. But I think it was just because Steve and Richard just are that type of person. So it was we were still ethical and working relationships were still very much what we were, but we didn't make our own chocolate or have a cocoa estate. But what were the ethics then? What was it then? Was it recycling? ... It was just very different, you know, even then we used FSC paper. But with the Tasting Club, and that started about 10 years ago, but I can't remember when they first did their thing in Lombala, but that's when we first became ethical.

Anna, Lux Choc, 19/10/2011

As you can see Anna got a bit lost in her answer and even questioned herself about 'what the ethics were in the early days'. After starting to talk about Steve and Richard, she postulates that maybe the ethics had to do with recycling, then FSC paper, the Tasting Club and the 'thing' in Lombala. Despite her messy answer, and her lacking a lot

of clarity in her own understanding of what comprised the ethics, she remained sure of the existence of the ethics.

Matt, the lead of digital communications for Lux Choc, was more confident in his answer and likewise told me of the role of the founders in enacting the ethics:

Yes, we are ethical. ... All of this starts at the top. [It was] the two people at the top of the company, Steve and Richard, who started the firm this way in the mid-90s and it has grown and grown and grown, but all the people who you meet, the senior managers the heads of departments, I am yet to meet one now who doesn't embrace the company values and what we stand for and how we do things. I think, if they didn't, they wouldn't last long.

Matt, Lux Choc, 27/7/2011

Matt again attributes the start of their ethics to Steve and Richard, but goes on to mention the importance of other members of the tribe and the company values. The story was again also told by Sarah at the immersion course (20/7/2011), although the story there was (re)enacted in a different way from how I had first heard it (12/7/2011). Again the story actant did not seem to enact the ethical object. The creation of the 'ethical DNA', the ethics at the base and shaping of Lux Choc, and how the founders founded this ethical *nature*, intertwined with the creation of the business, does not appear.

So in 1988 Steve and Richard started the Sage Marketing Company. Steve was a sales person, and Richard was in computer sales. ... Then in 1991 they went into Parisian chocolate. ... In 1993 we went into Choc Express. ... In 2003, Lux Choc as a brand was born. This is something that they are really proud of because it was all done internally and it was all done in 18 months. ... In 2004 we bought our own factory. ... In 2005, we went into the Island of Romona and we bought the Claro Estate in 2007. ... The hotel was meant to open in 2010, but Hurricane Thomas stopped that, so we opened the restaurant. ... We have so many great ideas. And then the hotel was opened in May.

Sarah, Lux Choc, 20/7/2011

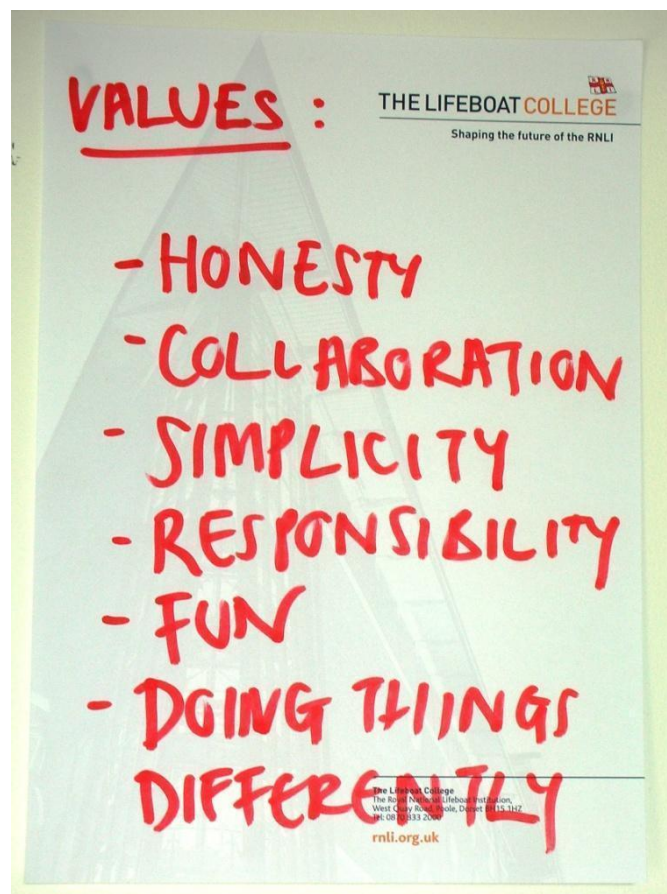
Ethics was not included in this multiple of the founding story. Despite these seeming inconsistencies of what reality the actant enacted, there was importantly no contestation of the story (Hannabuss 2000). For example, Anna, whose different actant story of the founding had enacted the ethical legitimacy of the organisation for her, had also been present in the immersion course (members are encouraged to re-immense themselves), but the story 'came to define *and* share realities' (ibid., emphasis added). Anna's and Matt's stories enacted one of their specific ethical reality(s) and shared Lux Choc's ethical multiple reality(s). During my entire stay with Lux Choc, I never came across any disagreement concerning the origin story or its importance, even when multiple enactments of it were openly presented and enacted different reality(s) of the organisation (ethical and other).

Another example that shows the interface of a 'robust' yet 'specific' other actant concerned 'the values'. Lux Choc's other two values, 'Originality' and 'Authenticity', were equally interrogated at the immersion course and were shown to be multiple and specific, yet the values remained ambiguous enough for no tensions to occur. And for Good Business, as noted earlier, 'honesty' was one of its key values. They also had five more: Collaboration, Simplicity, Responsibility, Fun, and Doing Things Differently (see image below). In both companies the values seemed very important to the tribes as they were often discussed and were also displayed in various places in the headquarters. For the bigger company, Lux Choc, these values were also in all shops' storerooms, as well as displayed on glossy A2 posters on the corridor walls of the factory, and (as previously mentioned) in Steve's office. For the smaller Good Business, the values were displayed

on their webpage, and (as previously noted) they made up part of *the* description of what the company *was*.

Below is a photograph of the Good Business' Values prominently displayed in the 'headquarters' per the wishes of Tessa, one of the founders. The display later became a typed and branded document at her request and remains (as of January 2013) a key feature of the headquarters' walls.

Figure 5: Photograph of Good Business' Values



Again it was discovered these actants are more fruitfully and more appropriately thought of as boundary actants that allow coordination to occur between the very specific yet different realities of the actant. The specific reality of the organisation's values differed strongly among employees or at different times, yet they remained

uncontested in the contexts of interface, such as the headquarters, factories, shops and immersion courses.

This point was emphasised by Tessa during one of my last visits to Good Business on 4 November 2011. When she started to explain the core of the business to the newest intern during onboarding, she said, while looking at me, 'I don't think these things have changed much. In fact, our values haven't.' Then turning to the new intern, she went on to explain, 'So our values are what take us through to projects and whether we decide to do it or what to do.'

She then explained the values, how they enact the self-avowed ethical reality of the organisation and are 'the key things that drive everything we do and how we make good decisions essentially'. First, Tessa discussed the value 'to be honest' and noted that the key to this was 'to say, when we can do something, when we can't do something.' She then discussed the value 'to collaborate — there is no point doing something new and doing it by ourselves. ... It's about bringing people together.' Third was 'keeping it simple' and she explained that the rationale of what Good Business should and shouldn't do boiled down to the question of 'what is the simplest thing,' as that was 'normally the best.' The next value, 'act responsibly', she noted, was one they were not always so good at, but it was realised through how team members work together and 'who we work with [externally], the projects we choose and the money that we have.' Next, Tessa described the 'really important' value of the company — 'have fun'. 'I would never want anyone who works with us to ever wake up and think, "I don't want to go there today," 'cause that's not what we are about at all.' She noted the final value was

to 'do things differently', saying 'other agencies can be who they are and do things as they do them, but we are not like that. We'll always try and do things differently.'

Although the values had 'not changed', as Tessa informed us, the specifics of the values and how they enacted the ethical reality(s) of the organisations had and seemingly continued to do so: There were multiples instances of the same actants. This is demonstrated in the two additional examples below, taken at two other times during my ethnography, and relating to different reality(s) enacted (temporarily) at those specific times. Both quotes come from the same co-founder. The first example is from the beginning of my stay and in the early days of Good Business. The second example was taken only a day before the onboarding presentation to the new intern and around a year after I had joined the company.

Honesty, so that's in the way we operate as a business internally, but also externally in with our products in MBG [Made By Good]. We will be honest, try our best to make sure it is 100% ethical, and if there is a tiny bit we really can't make happen and it is just not possible and we have tried our best, we will tell you. ...

Collaborative for good with solutions. So it is a bit like open source. A lot of technology to do things is out there, so let's collaborate and create a better solution for someone else. There is no point trying to recreate the wheel or open a market when someone else out there is doing something you already like.

Keeping it simple. So you will hear us challenging ourselves to be, like, is that simple and especially when we are talking about the language of what you are saying. Think, would someone have to think too hard? Would they have a lot of questions? If the answer is yes, then we have to go back to the drawing board and rethink it.

Acting responsibly. So again that is how we operate as a business and also in the products that we create, the events that we do ... just literally everything we do we need to ask ourselves, are we being responsible? Is this the best thing for all involved?

And make life fun. If it is not fun, who wants to do it? I have no idea. I wouldn't do it. That is essentially who we are, and everything we do will stem or be grounded by those values.

Tessa, Good Business 18/10/2010

A year later, 3/11/2011, the *same* values of Good Business remained at the 'core' of the business but were different:

We say Good Business is a social good agency and we are founded on a set of values that I have just forgot [*picks up note pad*].

So, we got simplicity. Simplicity really is at the core of what we do. If you have to think too hard about something, then it probably doesn't fit and we won't want to do it. We always try to push back hard and say, is it simple?

Making life fun. If we are doing something that is not fun, then I probably won't want to do it and so I don't think anyone else will. So that is definitely a core thing that drives us.

Honesty. We will always be honest, if that is with the team, the consumers, people who buy into us. ... We will always be honest about what we do. And if we can't do something we will say why.

And collaboration. So there are a lot of companies out there who believe similar things, there are lots of people out there doing things, who may be doing things better than us, so there is no point reinventing the wheel. So we are wanting to collaborate to boost the sector of purpose-led business.

And act responsibly. ... As a business that is a core aspect of what we believe.

Tessa, Good Business 3/11/2011

The values listed remain the same. What enacted the values were multiple. Particularly noticeably missing in the two later quotes is the mention of MBG and how these products were made and sourced as enacting the honesty value. In the later enactments it is about the team, the people, and their honesty to others. The value of responsibility is also different. In the earlier quote, it focuses on the products and services. In the same instance, responsibility is also described as relating to how the company operates as a whole and the enactment is not just personal. But in the later onboarding example, it is

much more about the members' own personal behaviour and even acts as a tag on in some ways to the value of collaboration. Differences between the other values — fun and collaboration — are less pronounced. Collaboration continued to be enacted by working with others beyond Good Business and not trying to 'reinvent' or 'recreate the wheel'. Fun, however, was more nuanced. It was different in what it enacted but like the ethical object it was enacted out of what was not there. There was no feeling of not wanting to go to work, no feeling of not wanting to do something. Quite strikingly, also like the chimerical ethical object they enacted, the values seem to be temporal and their reality could quickly change.

The contrast was apparent even on the walls. For instance, the prominently displayed values poster — encouraging onlookers 'to do things differently (shown in Figure 5) — was absent from the value discussions taken between these two events. Though, those values were enacted in multiple ways, they do remain the same reality. The interpretative work needed to get a 'value' out of the statements appears to elicit different 'values' out of the statements.

The reality(s) of doing 'good business' had multiple enactments inside of Good Business ranging from the 'Made by Good' product line to being a 'good agency specialising in social innovation and campaign management'. The values at the vague interface level did not change.²⁹

This was the same for Lux Choc. Even as other interfaces that expressed the organisations' ethical attributes changed, such as the Good Business website or the Lux

²⁹ There were even more multiple realities in between, such as pop-up shops, Good space, *Good Business Magazine*, Good Week Festival.

Choc marketing material (see more discussion of this actant in the following chapter), the values did not. However, they were not enacted homogeneously. They were just as multiple and messy as the ethical object they enacted and seemingly potentially as temporal. They were vague enough to stand the interface of *the* multiple ethical objects, but were also informative and specific for their uses in their enactment of their ethical reality(s), as shown in the above examples and the example discussed earlier through Good Business' email exchange with an outsider. They were found to be as multiple, messy, and as much a boundary object as *the* ethical reality(s) they enacted.

5.6 Conclusion and Reflections

In this chapter, I have interrogated the question of what the ethical object of my investigation was, in order to address and develop this question analytically, but also to investigate whether contemporary STS sensibilities and frameworks could help to answer the question and theorise what this object was or was not. I developed our current object knowledge, having also shown the utility of thinking through the object and actants as messy and letting them reveal themselves through their use, rather than pre-defining them.

The question was posed as to what is the ethical object of my study and how can it be best explored as revealed in its use. How can the phenomenon under study be that of an object? Within this chapter, I discovered through my ethnographies at self-avowed ethical organisations that their 'ethical' appropriations could be usefully analysed as an object. I discovered and showed that the ethical object was a messy actant-enacted chimera object with multiple ontologies — enacted by as much as what it was, as what it was not. The ethical object's multiple reality(s) were not restricted to any temporal or

geographical location and could overlap without any tension due to its boundary object qualities — being vague enough in its overall enactments, yet specific enough for its user's use. This enabled the seemingly ambiguous and ubiquitous presence of the multiple ethical object within its current commercial settings. The actants that enacted it were as multiple and messy as the object and those actants ranged from doings, actions, locations, documents, and discourse in all its forms.

In particular, I argued that the chimera object was a messy object, having a multitude of ontologies, and being difficult to spot at first under its own 'mess' of the many reality-guises, while remaining an object of useable-stability all the same. It was not a static, homogeneous entity as was previously suggested by the majority of other theorists reviewed in chapter 2, but instead could be otherwise by being and residing in a plethora of enactments. It took a great deal of stubbornness to argue for a messy multiple object and carry on this route of exploration, especially since the initial findings of mess are not readily accepted as adequate and I instead could have more easily explained them by my own methodical or technical failing (Law & Singleton 2005).

It was the tribe themselves who validated my stubborn argument of chimerical objects with multiple ontologies by their numerous revelations of ethical enactments. More specifically, they shared the same view of their heterogeneous ethical *reality*: 'That's the beauty of a start-up, we can change every day', said Holly, one of the founders of Good Business, when I asked in one of our first meetings about all the changes I had already encountered (18/10/2010). This was similarly expressed by Lux Choc and was specifically described by Anna who spoke of their 'constantly evolving' ethical designations (19/10/2011).

It must be stressed that suggesting this was an object of multiple reality(s) implies a 'commitment to a form of ontological radicalism: a willingness to push the boundaries about what an object is, or could be' (Law & Singleton 2005: 340). This, as indicated by the use of other theorists' quotes, is not a new radicalism for this thesis, even if it is new for ethical business investigations. However, as I demonstrated in this chapter, the existing concepts of 'radical' objects in the literature were helpful in thinking through my work, but were still not 'radical' enough for my own object, which flowed *and* jumped between realities, and was formed of both what it was and what it was not. The enactments of this object's reality were not context-specific, but could overlap (albeit temporarily). This led me to propose the heuristic of the chimera to fully explore the ethical object. The chimera object's ambiguity was highlighted as its greatest 'success', allowing the object in question to be as specific as the 'user' enacted it, but vague enough to hold together as an apparently unified tribal one.

What has also been explored in this chapter is the extent to which STS sensibilities concerning research, objects, ontologies and mess are helpful for our scholarly understandings in this context. Prematurely perhaps, it can be argued as a result that STS does mean ethical business, though this question will be further interrogated throughout the following empirical chapters and fully explored in Chapter 8. However, as this chapter has shown, the frameworks drawn upon did not fully explain my ethical object or the actants of enactment. It may be that there is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to objects. I am not claiming generalisation or universality of chimerical ethics, but rather an opening up of the next steps in radicalism research and in exploration of the utility of chimerical theories for different objects.

What was shown and explored in this chapter was the utility of explaining and not hiding the mess that was found. It was difficult to bring the mess of empirical realities back into the coherent, linear text required here. However, by exploring my research difficulties, my 'messy' thoughts in finding the object, and by inserting a few choice images that escape some of the limitations of text, I have tried to bring some of the mess back in at the beginning of these empirical chapters. This was done in hope of enabling you, the reader, to 'read' it yourself, and to frame the 'messy' discussions that in which I continue to explore the object of my research in the chapters that follow.

The next chapter, shifts the focus to the 'users', (attempted) transfer and framing' of the ethical object.

Chapter 6. Configuring the Ethical User

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I established the idea of researching *the* ethical object, and illustrated that “locating the object” is a contested process. I have also argued that the ethical object itself is not a static, homogeneous entity as was previously suggested in contemporary literature and instead is most appropriately explained through the novel object framework of a chimera object with transient ontologically multiple reality(s).

This chapter examines the issues raised in the literature review of the prominent contemporary explanation of the (homogeneous) ethical transfer being portrayed as a dichotomous, unidirectional, neo-Foucauldian flow from the homogeneous producer (or supplier) to the demand-driving individual consumer, a consumer portrayed to get their ethical reality through their consumption choices. I, however, argue we should reject the terminology and assumptions of market, producers, and consumers, and instead focus on all of them as users.

This chapter also explores the potential and utility of ethical transfer through a user-centred approach, specifically by using the language and sensibilities of configuring the user (Woolgar 1991). Henceforth then transfer will be rather discussed as configuration. Further, an examination is made to consider if we can establish whether configuration has occurred and what technologies and tools are employed to attempt ethical configuration from the ethical organisations to their (assumed) ethical users. The question of transfer even through the framing of configuration is laden with boundary assumptions. Most obviously, there is an implication of from-internal versus to-external

reality imposed by me as the researcher, however, perceived boundaries are often drawn upon and created for their own use (as originally discussed by Latour 1983). As was found in the ethical organisations, where there was a perceived creation of an 'external audience' of those beyond the organisation, who referred to as 'consumers', 'clients', and, specifically in the case of Lux Choc, 'guests'.³⁰

Before discussing in detail my empirical material in the context of configuring the user, it is important to highlight the new areas of research that will be covered. The focus of STS literature on the performance of consumers and configuration of users has focused on what can be understood as the external user, the consumer beyond the organisational 'walls', and the consumer in relation to the different and separate producer (as found in Woolgar 1991, Green et al. 2001, Oushoorn et al. 2004). My research focuses additionally on internal-organisation configuration, again analysing the 'technologies' used.³¹ From this it was discovered that configuration is not unidirectional as previously implied and rather is much messier, made especially clear by the processes of internal configuration.

³⁰ Although as mentioned in the critical literature review, the dichotomy is problematic in light of my STS-sensibilities, this performance of internal v. external was enacted by the organisations of my study, so I draw upon it as they did, to organise my own text and use it to review the 'internal' as separated from the 'external' in this practice space. In particular, when such a performed internal or external audience was present or had the potential to be present, I found that a configuration to achieve a sense of transfer of the tribe's own ethicality was in effect being sought.

³¹ The idea of internal-configuration reads in a similar parlance to a thread of marketing research, which focuses on ideas of 'Internal Marketing', agreed by Rafiq & Ahmed 1993, 2002, to have first appeared in the writing of Berry et al. 1976. Where appropriate, reflection on this literature and overlapping ideas are discussed. However, as documented, although it has been around for over 30 years, it remains an underutilised field of empirical research. This may be attributed to a lack of conceptualisation or even definition of what is meant or could be meant by 'Internal Marketing' although it is thought to be due in most part to a three-pronged historical development (Rafiq & Ahmed 1993, 2002, Valentine & Fleischman 2008, Shabnam & Sarker 2012, Pantouvskis 2012). So although it is drawn upon lightly, this literature remains too underdeveloped for my discussion of the internal-user to be based on it.

This chapter is divided into four sections in order to interrogate and discuss the discovery of the types of attempted configuration of ethical reality. The chapter starts with the previously under-explored examination of the internal-organisation users and the tools of configuration.² These tools were found to not only to configure the internal-ethical user, but also enacted *the ideal* persona of the employees. In the second section, the chapter examines the organisation's attempts to configure their assumed external-users into their ethical *reality*. In the third section, the chapter explores the occurrences of multi-directional and within-organisation configuration; here it emerges that configuration is not as linear as it might first have been assumed. The fourth section assesses whether the researcher can claim that configuration *does* occur.

Throughout this chapter an underlying question of the thesis — 'Does STS mean ethical business?' — remains. This is being partially addressed through the appropriation of STS sensibilities in my analysis, specifically here focusing on the configuration technologies found. In addition to adding to our contemporary understanding of configuring the user and contrasting previous notions of transfer between producers and consumers this chapter shows a prominence of non-human actants, adding to my argument in Chapter 5 that 'actants' — human and non-human — enact ontological multiple reality(s) of *the* ethical object. Especially important were documents and publications, though analysis was not limited to these and spanned the range of actants found within the organisations. These were not only analysed as a source of content, but as 'active agents' (Prior 2008, her ideas were drawn upon but terminology not used however as discussion limited only to documents), henceforth described as active actants, of

configuration detailing the processes involved with each type of attempted configuration discovered.

6.2 Configuration of ‘Internal Users’

As discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2), there was a heavy emphasis at Lux Choc and Good Business on internal members (employees) being ‘their type of people’. At Good Business, the language of their type of people revolved around ‘good qualities’, whereas at Lux Choc, their type of person revolved around ‘the Lux Choc Competencies’.

My investigation found that these competencies were very important to Lux Choc’s configuration of users. All new employees took part in a compulsory immersion course, and all other employees were actively encouraged to re-take it. At the beginning of my ethnography I also participated in this course. Within my group were new and old employees who held a variety of roles at the company ranging from junior to more senior; the uniting factor for the group was that they were said to be the *right* sort of people. Sarah emphasised this commonality when she stated to the group:

You all have your different reasons for applying to [Lux Choc]. It might be the customer service side ... different things appeal to different people, but you’re all here because you’re *all Lux Choc people*. So all those *competencies we measure* against you all are present, or you wouldn’t be here. That’s one thing we are really hot on. You fit or don’t fit.

Emphasis added. Sarah, Lux Choc, 12/7/2011

As Sarah points out what was most important is that the group was made up of the right sort of people — we were all ‘*Lux Choc people*’. It was such an important thing that Sarah notes that members are actually measured to ensure they had the right level of these competencies.

When further investigating these important competencies, I was repeatedly referred to the document: 'What makes a Lux Choc person'. I was told that this document described *all* the characteristics of a Lux Choc person. Although I heard about this document throughout my investigation, I didn't see it until October 19th 2011, when I was spending the day participating and observing with the marketing team.

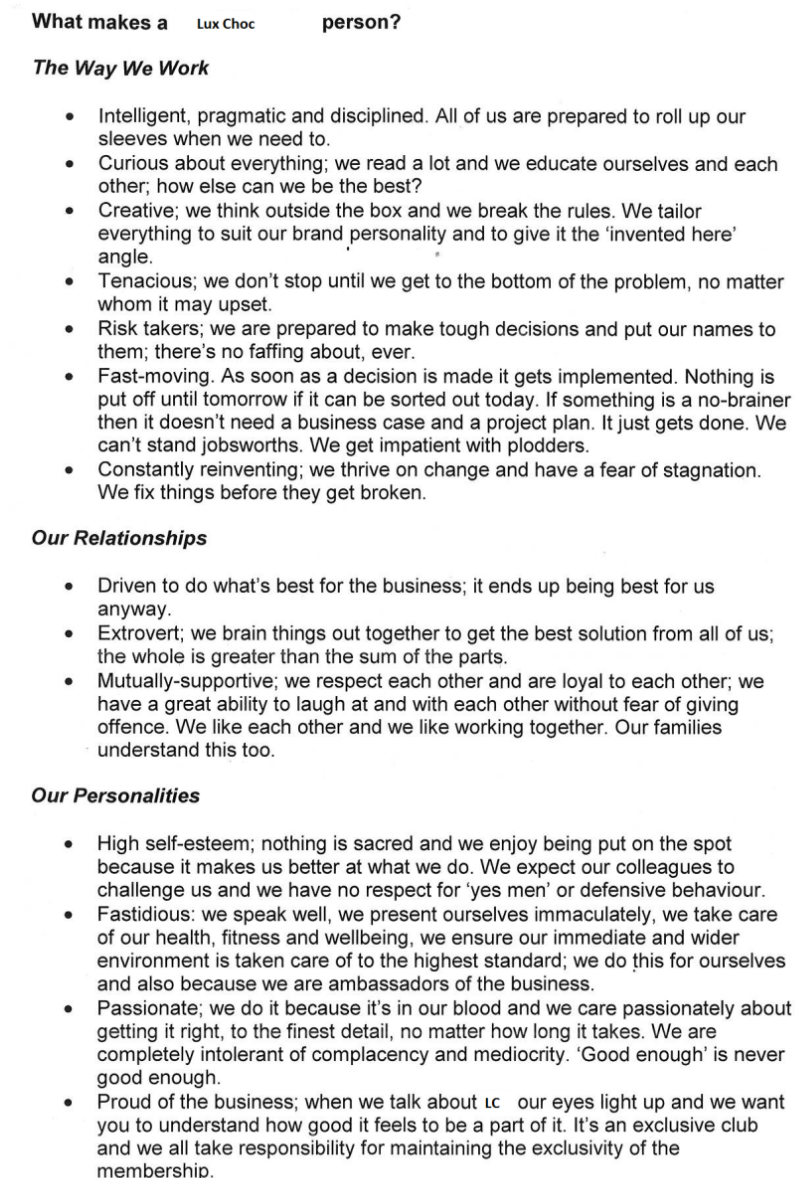
Jen, the Commercial Development Manager shared how she proud she was that the members of her team were all very Lux Choc people. She especially noted that 'for my team [ethics] is sort of just natural' (Jen, Lux Choc, 19/10/ 2011) — thus indicating that achieving the ethical reality was aligned with meeting the competencies of being a Lux Choc person.

When I pressed Jen for more about what made her team members ethical and thus Lux Choc people, she asked me if I had seen the Lux Choc competencies. When I said no, she quickly disappeared into another room and returned with several documents. She described each one as she passed them to me.

Their importance and high status 'within' the organisation was again illuminated when Jen suddenly broke off her explanation of the documents to check that I had been properly immersed into the company. Only after my reassurances did Jen nervously decide to proceed: 'You can have this, I think' (Jen, Lux Choc, 19/10/2011).

The first document she handed me was titled 'What makes a Lux Choc person' and was separated into sections detailing 'The way we work', 'Our relationships', and 'Our personalities' (Figure 6 below).

Figure 6: Scan of the document 'What makes a Lux Choc Person'



The document is titled to suggest it is all about an individual Lux Choc person, but the content is all about enacting the person and their behaviour as part of the tribe and ensuring that they act as all the tribe members do. Although each section refers to a different component of what makes a Lux Choc person — it is always in the context of the larger group. There is no individualisation; instead the whole organisation is included through the use of the group possessive terms 'our' and 'we'.

The subsections reflect this tribe mind set in exploring a member's attributes as part of the team (*The Way We Work*) and the solo relationships a member has as part of the team (*Our Relationships*). Even a member's most individual trait, their personality, is framed as a uniform consistent (*Our personalities*) (emphasis added).

Within each subsection is a further breakdown of the specifics of what 'we' all do to achieve the attributes of a Lux Choc person. Any deviation from the internal-user norm would exclude a member from being part of the Lux Choc tribe.

The second document I received was 'Commercial Specific Competencies'. This document had a subsection titled 'LC Competencies' that listed these competencies:

The Lux Choc brand

Market Intelligence

Market Dynamics

Networking

Culture of Change

Chocolate

Ethics

The way we work

Relationships

Personal Style

The last three competencies reflected the subsection of the 'What makes a Lux Choc person' document, but none of these competencies came with any explanation or definitions. Even though the documents presented had different lists of competencies, the documents were referred to interchangeably. Given that these competencies

defined a Lux Choc person, it seemed strange that no one ever clarified which set of *these* competencies were being referenced.³²

After giving me these documents, Jen presented two further documents: the 'Appraisal Form' and a five page untitled document ('Untitled document'). She explained that these documents with the previously shared 'all relate[d] together'.

The Untitled document was split into three sections: 'Chocolate Ethics Zones', 'The Lux Choc Person Competencies' and 'Lux Choc Business Knowledge'. Underneath each title was a table divided in these five columns: 'Subject', 'Zone 1', 'Zone 2', 'Zone 3' and 'Zone 4'.

To further explain what a zone was, Jen referred me to the 'Commercial Specific Competencies' document. This gave the zone that was associated with each competency. Jen told me that the zones were 'not linked to seniority', but were 'more to do with their [Lux Choc employees'] role'. As an example, she pointed out that in the subject, 'History of Chocolate', a 'Retail Sales Advisor' would be zone 2. Jen wrote these notes on the document seen in Figure 7 to help me understand how the zones related to the roles.

³² In the Internal Marketing literature, Overmeer (1997) suggest that 'core competencies' are an organisations' version of individual, unique know-how which lead to and explain 'superior competitive performance on the part of certain firms' (Pantouvakis 2012: 180).

Figure 7: Scan of the 'Untitled document'

Not linked to geography more to do with their role.

Chocolate Ethics Zones
Retail Sales Advisor ↓

Chocolate - My Level of Expertise				
Subject	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
History of Chocolate	I can talk about the history of chocolate, describing the different cultures and how they have influenced its development, the key inventions and the different ways it has been used. I can also talk about LCs own history.	I can explain some of the key events and influences in the history of chocolate, and link them to our products in an engaging way; for example, I can talk about Montezuma and our hot chocolate, and I can describe the invention of the conch and link this to texture of our solid bars.	I have a good grasp of all the significant stages of the history of chocolate; my colleagues respect my knowledge and I am often sought out to provide more detail or answer specialist questions.	I have read a number of books on the history of chocolate. I can lead an informative presentation on the subject to a variety of audiences; I can create theatrical engagement and generate commercial differentiation as a brand ambassador.
Bean to Bar	I can provide some credible information about where cocoa is grown and the key steps involved in creating chocolate. I am aware of the Rabot Estate and can explain what it means when HC describes itself as a Cocoa Grower and Chocolatier.	I know the different types of cocoa bean and how they affect the flavour of chocolate. I can explain how the key steps in the growing and conversion process influence the quality of chocolate. I can more or less describe where and how HC's products are made in a way which differentiates us from our competitors.	I can talk confidently about the research work we are doing on the Rabot Estate. I can explain the manufacturing techniques that we use at Hadley Park in an engaging way to create differentiation for HC.	I keep abreast of pioneering developments by leading chocolatiers including . I can lead an informative presentation on Bean to Bar to a variety of audiences. My style creates interest and generates more questions which I am always comfortably able to answer.
The Chocolate Market	I can describe LC's vision, mission and values. I can name several other fine chocolate brands and I can explain the difference between mass market and fine chocolate.	I can confidently explain who LC's main chocolate competitors are and how LC differentiates itself from them.	I am familiar with the story, marketing approach and channels to market of most of LC's competitors and have sampled their key products. If a customer or guest tells me which products they enjoy, I can identify which LC product would be comparable and explain how to compare it.	I am familiar with international attitudes to chocolate, and can talk about forthcoming trends in the chocolate market. If a Director invited me to an event where I might be challenged about my chocolate knowledge, I would be confident rather than intimidated by the opportunity.
Chocolate Tasting	I have compared mass market chocolate with fine chocolate and I have noticed the difference. I can explain my own chocolate tasting preference.	I know how to identify flavour notes in chocolate and I can explain single origin and single estate concepts. I have tried all of LC's Purist range and I can describe my preferences.	I have tasted a range of origins and blends, and can compare different products confidently. I am regularly sought out to provide specialist advice to customers or guests who really know their chocolate.	When friends and family travel abroad, I give them a chocolate shopping list. I often hold tasting sessions with my colleagues, and have a network of chocolate tasting enthusiasts within the business. I am virtually nerdy when it comes to my passion for chocolate. I have led several tasting events for a variety of audiences and have been complimented for the sheer detail of my knowledge. People cannot resist buying chocolate when I have talked to them about it!

On the second page of the 'Untitled document' was a section called 'Ethics Zones — My Level of Expertise', as shown in the scan below.³³

³³ The scan has been modified to maintain the anonymity of Lux Choc. LC stands for Lux Choc and resembles the organisation's own company name abbreviation.

Figure 8: Scan of the second page of the 'Untitled document'

Ethics Zones - My Level of Expertise				
Subject	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Engaged Ethics Programme	I can explain LC's Ethics value by talking about our work in C... and S...	I can describe several projects that we have supported in ... and I can explain the key points of the PEE programme in: ... I regularly check our website for updates.	I can engage in a detailed conversation about the added value of our programmes in ... with customers or guests who ask challenging questions. I am recognised as an authority in Engaged Ethics and my knowledge is sought out by colleagues.	I have presented our E/E programmes to an external audience and handled questions correctly. I keep abreast of the ethical stories of other chocolate companies and can evaluate those in relation to our own.
Fair Trade	I can give some bullet points to explain why LC does not have a Fair Trade range.	I understand some of the arguments for and against Fair Trade. I have satisfactorily explained to customers or guests why LC is not Fair Trade and how our E/E programmes compare favourably with it.	I can describe the operating mechanism of Fair Trade and can debate its pros and cons. I have trained other staff members to Zone 2 competence.	I regularly read news items about Fair Trade to keep myself abreast of its progress. I can discourse competently on the potential future of Fair Trade. I am aware of other ethical labels relevant to chocolate and can compare and contrast the key features of them. I have a network of colleagues with whom I regularly discuss my views.
Responsible sourcing	I can explain why some customers or guests might be concerned about the conditions in which cocoa is grown.	I am familiar with LC's sourcing policy and can respond to specific enquiries, eg, palm oil, organic milk, free range eggs, recycled packaging	I understand how LC's supply chain is measured and monitored for responsible sourcing and can explain this to others.	I keep myself informed of developments affecting ethical sourcing of food and packaging. I am aware of current trends and can evaluate their significance to Lux Choc ... I am able to quickly build a business centred opinion on new issues and inform LC policy and practices.
Responsible business	I understand the business's energy policy and can explain how I comply with it. I make use of the recycling facilities in my workplace. I have demonstrated proactivity in improving Health & Safety standards.	I can explain the business's environmental targets and know how close we are to achieving them. I check the website regularly to keep abreast of our progress.	I can demonstrate that I have introduced environmental improvements in the business processes of my area, and can explain the impact in quantitative terms. I am viewed as 'the green one' by my colleagues.	I regularly read news items about responsible business and find ways to introduce cost-effective related change to LC. I set and achieve ethical targets and provide updates which are used on our website.

This document alone shows that although there is *a* Lux Choc person who is measured by *a* set of competencies with a singularly portrayed ethics being one of them, there is a far more multiple and prescriptive reality of this competency as all of the competencies, that enact what the internal users *is*. Within each box is an 'I' statement, a statement that enacts what the internal user is. These I statements and their configuration potential are analysed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The Ethics Zones section is particularly interesting to this research because the different zones show the multiplicity of a Lux Choc person's ethical reality. Additionally, though the zones are singularly labelled, within each zone is further multiplicity of realities that show how a zone's ethics should be enacted in four subjects — Engaged Ethics Programme, Fair Trade, Responsible Sourcing, and Responsible Business.

Jen explained that every six to 12 months a Lux Choc employee had an appraisal. This process consists of the employee and the head of their department using the Appraisal Form to evaluate their achievement of the company competencies (Figure 9). The document is built around the competencies and is separated into two sections: Competency Review and Training Needs Analysis. The first section includes job specific roles and the same list of competencies seen in the 'Commercial Specific Competencies' document. The second section of the form records and prioritises the proactive, future corrective actions that are necessary to meet the competencies.

To make full use of the Appraisal Form, the 'Untitled document' must be taken into consideration. In the former, staff are graded on whether they have met, exceeded or need improvement on the standard. The standard, and its associated subjects are found in the 'I' statements linked to the employee's zone and in the 'Untitled document.'

For example, for a 'Retail Sales Advisor', which was the example Jen shared with me, the appropriate zone is Zone 2. The ethical reality of the internal-user (on the 'Untitled document') is however, more multiple and messy than first assumed by the homogeneous-sounding Zone 2 because Zone 2 competencies, as all the zones, are split into different enactments. Ethics has four multiples: Engaged Ethics Programme, Fair Trade, Responsible Sourcing, and Responsible Business. Thus a Retail Sales Advisor is expected to enact their ethical reality(s) through these four 'I' statements (Figure 8, green highlight):

I can describe the several projects that we have supported in Lombola and I can explain the key points of the Lux Choc programme in the Island of Romona. I regularly check out our website for updates.

I understand some of the arguments for and against Fair Trade. I have satisfactorily explained to customers or guests why Lux Choc is not 'Fair Trade' and how our Engaged [sic] Ethics Programmes compare favourably with it.

I am familiar with Lux Choc's sourcing policy and can respond to specific enquiries, e.g. palm oil, organic milk, free range eggs, recycled packaging.

I can explain the business' environmental targets and know how close we are to achieving them. I check the website regularly to keep abreast of our progress.

The Appraisal Form acts as an actant, in grading the employees' configuration. If the employee is under the ethical bar, the document is active in pushing for a correct configuration to take place. As Jen told me, if you were insufficiently ethical for your zone, the correcting option could be that the employee would be sent on a course to bring their ethics up to the right level. The corrective action needed as well as the date of completion are written on the form and push the employee to pursue the correct configuration. Although the word 'Recommended' is used, the inclusion of a completion date indicates that the action is expected in order for the employee, the internal user, to remain a Lux Choc person.

The finding that a specific tool of evaluation and can be instrumental between an organisation and employee, where evaluation of both inputs and outputs are examined is also supported in the field of internal marketing, notable in the works Lings & Greenley (2005) and Weider-Hatfield (1988). This is a field not traditionally associated with STS (see more in Section 2.3.3.1, Footnote 9). Koh & Boo (2001) and Valentine & Barnett (2003) from this field also focus on organisational ethics and conclude that they are related to a positive employee response to internal marketing (discussed in Shabnam & Sarker 2012:27).

By focusing on the content and structure of the documents, we can read that the various (assumed) Lux Choc internal-ethical-users are enacted within the text.³⁶ The multiplicity of the internal-ethical-user's, or *the* Lux Choc person's, realities is a combination of the 'Commercial specific competencies', and the 'Untitled document' and leads to multiple realities of zones, and competencies that differ for the internal-users. Thus there is not one homogeneous Lux Choc person, but a multitude, who are reported as 'exceedingly' or 'suitably' configured or who are highlighted as not being configured sufficiently. The insufficiently configured user would then be corrected (or an attempt would be made to do so) in order that *the* 'suitable' or 'exceedingly' Lux Choc person emerge. This multiplicity of the internal-ethical-user supports the findings of this thesis in suggesting that the ethical object is a chimerical object multiple in its reality.

If we focus on the Untitled document, the 'I' of each statement in it enacts the persona of *the* Lux Choc Person. As an example, we can take another zone from the 'Ethical zones', zone 4, and the subject 'Responsible Sourcing', highlighted in orange in Figure 7.

The statement reads:

I keep myself informed of developments affecting ethical sourcing of food and packaging. I am aware of current trends and can evaluate their significance to Lux Choc. I am able to quickly build a business centred opinion on new issues and inform LC policy and practices.

³⁶ As discussed in Chapter 3, the text analysis utilised for the documents was based predominantly on Smith's studies (1978, 1987) as developed by Woolgar & Pawluch (1985), Schneider & Woolgar's (2012), and Woolgar & Lezaun 2013 frameworks. This may be summarised as searching for emerging patterns of object and user enactments in the pieces, rather than searching for concealed social and political power relations (more akin to Fairclough 1995 in style).

In this example the ethical-employee is enacted alongside the ethical reality of Lux Choc. The expert ethical-employee is performed with the use of 'I' in the statements under the title of 'My Level of Expertise' within the 'Ethics Zones', Zone 4 being the highest, as explained to me by Jen. These Zone 4 'I' statements configure who are the ethical experts at Lux Choc.

Lux Choc's ethical reality is also enacted through the Untitled document through the implication that Lux Choc is already a 'responsible sourcer' who would, if 'needed', quickly adjust policy and practices to maintain ethical best practices.

Both companies, Lux Choc and Good Business, had copious amounts of documentation; I analysed the content and also the active function of much of this. Focusing on another document that emerged as important— 'Brand Positioning Strategy' — we can interrogate a further attempt to configure the internal-ethical-Lux Choc-user. I first learned of this document in my initial meeting with Nicola, a Lux Choc Director, on 17/5/2011³⁷. After she discussed its importance, Nicola suggested that she *might* be able to share it with me. She related that the document was produced by two of the other company directors. After a delayed start to my stay with Lux Choc (see Section 3.8.2), Sarah, another member of the Lux Choc team, also referred me to the document and also told me what a 'big deal' it was for two of the directors to sit down and 'create the brand positions' for Lux Choc. Again, it was suggested that at a later time that I *might* be able to see the document, but not yet. At the immersion course a week later, the document was discussed once more, this time with the whole immersion group by the immersion day leader, Sarah:

³⁷ Nicola was my original gatekeeper who was later made redundant: see Section 5.2 and Section 3.8.2.

I'll walk you through our identity, mission, and brand strategy as these have literally just changed. Has anyone seen these yet? ... No? Oh cool, so you will all enjoy it ... So I will talk you through it. It is sort of to explain what Lux Choc does ... so it is only an internal thing, not for external people.

Sarah, Lux Choc, 12/7/2011

Sarah then went on to say, when sharing the document with the immersion group:

Well, we have been putting this [Brand Positioning document] together for a while. ... We started to share it last week, hence why I can now share it ... and I will walk you through what it all means. But it's really, well we didn't have anywhere in the business, if you were to go to anybody here and say what really represents [Lux Choc] and what it is about, everybody would give you a different version and it would more be they would give you the version most personal to them. ... So instead we have tried to create a framework around it for you.

Sarah, Lux Choc, 12/7/2011

Sarah made it very clear that this doc was only to be seen by internal users and that a lot of time, energy, and care had gone into producing it correctly before sharing it. Even before I looked at the document, Sarah indicated the configuration goals of the document — they had the explanatory 'framework'. Because, just as I had found multiple reality(s) of their ethical reality, the company too had found multiple versions and had created this document to give everyone *the* correct framework of it.

This 'internal' only document described *the* characteristics of the company through a celebrity persona and a list of adjectives *that are the official characteristics* of the brand to be applied to products, stores, and employees, etc.

The list of adjectives included 'honest', 'sophisticated', 'stylish' and 'ethical'. Although it could not be shared externally, Sarah informed the group that all internal-members would receive a copy so that everyone could have documentation of what Lux Choc *was*.

The importance of an inscription that enacts the seemingly solidified, if temporal, *factual* reality of Lux Choc, is very similar to the cementation of scientific *facts* found to occur through inscription as found by Latour & Woolgar (1986) in their earlier STS study, indicating the parallels discussed in Chapter 1.

These documents were not the only active actants that enacted an organisation's ethical realities and functioned as a technology of internal-user configuration that I encountered during my ethnographic stays. At both Lux Choc and Good Business, wall displays were also acted as configuration devices. I refer to them as within-organisation as they were found within the companies' offices and I had been informed and seen for myself through the difficulty of gaining access (as described in Section 3.8), I can confidently report that few 'outsiders' would have engaged with these actants.

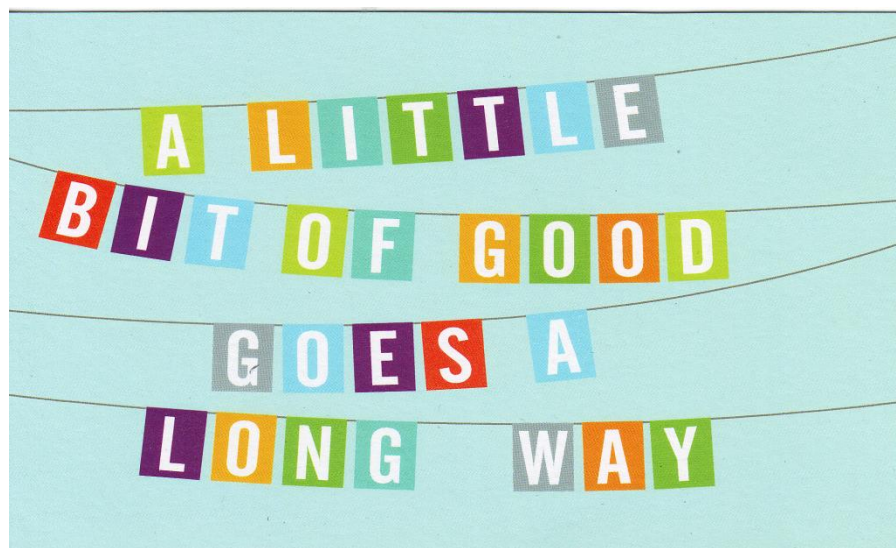
Both organisations prominently displayed their values to enact their reality and to configure their internal users. In both the Lux Choc offices and factory, the walls were adorned with visualisations of their 'Ethics in Practise', with a particular focus on the Engaged Ethics Programme. Images of cocoa farms in the Romona Islands and Lombala depicted the associated farmers or the cocoa plants alongside images taken from advertising materials.³⁸ These visuals importantly had the word 'Ethical' printed on them and so enacted and demonstrated that the ethical community of Lux Choc included not only those members at the UK base, but also Lux Choc cocoa farmers and plantations. Around Lux Choc, the other company values of 'Authenticity' and 'Originality' were also visualised. The placement of the images around the building promoted the reality that the company was to its very core, even at the bricks-and-

³⁸ Island of Romona and Lombala are pseudonyms for the actual countries in which Lux Choc operated its Engaged Ethics Programme. This is in order to keep the anonymity of the organisation.

mortar level, an ethical business (a point both that had also been found to be very important for both organisations in Chapter 5).

At the smaller organisation, Good Business, it was the responsibility of the tribe members to bring in 'good quotes' that summarised the business and to write them on the white board above the founder's desk. On the adjacent wall, above the kettle, which was a very busy area of the open plan office, was a promotional poster for 'A Good Week,' the flagship event of Good Business that celebrates all that is good in the world. This poster displayed the saying 'a little bit of good goes a long way'. This served to remind the team of the week, and that it was the responsibility of all to enact this notion.

Figure 10: Scan of the motto from the Good Week Promotional Poster



Similarly displayed was another poster that showcased one of the mottos of 'A Good Week', the poster displayed the question, 'what is good in the world?' The framing and layout of the poster led the reader to conclude that at least one answer was a Good Business; it reminded the internal members of their role to be part of this good and to

enact the 'good' of Good Business. The use of internal marketing material within the offices of both organisations highlights the importance of this process to the organisations' overall ethical reality, not just for the individuals (Shabnam & Sarker 2012, Javadein et al. 2011, Pantouvakis 2012). The advertising material's role was communicating the company's values and attempting to configure the internal users to make them the right sort of people for the two organisations (Hogg & Carter, 2000).

Based on my study of the configuration processes at Lux Choc and Good Business it seems fair to suggest that: 'We should accept that users' needs rarely pre-exist the efforts and activities of producers [organisations] to engage with them' (Woolgar 2000:169). A sentiment that sits in contrast with the field of internal marketing and other marketing and consumption literature that assumes that marketing is used in a unidirectional way to meet consumer pre-existing needs (see Berry 1981, cited in Javadein et al. 2011). If we carry on this investigation instead by focusing on the users found in my ethnographies and with no assumption that users' needs pre-exist an organisation's configuration attempts, questions from the literature review arise, such as whether it is possible to identify how and where the external-user's ethical "needs" as well as the ethical external users themselves are enacted? And, can we identify the activities and tools used, and whether these configuration attempts seem to be present in the organisation's external-facing active actants, such as their marketing texts?

6.3 Configuration of 'External Users'

From the external texts I came across during my ethnographies the assumed external ethical user can be interrogated through textual analysis. Additionally, the presented ethical reality of the organisation as bounded and enacted through the "ethical story"

and the “characters” invoked can also be analysed. Whether or not these external texts successfully configure external ethical users to read the organisations’ ethics will be examined in the next section after an analysis of some key texts collected from both organisations.

This first text is an example of the standard text found within Lux Choc’s monthly confectionary catalogue (Figure 11). The positioning of the ethical story is not random. Instead, all elements are strategically placed, as Adele, a member of the production team whose main role was to design marketing material and packaging, informed me:

... they [the marketing team] analyse on space to sale, so we put items and products that will do well on the right-hand page, so when you flick through you see these first ... They [marketing team] give us a list of what goes where and we can link it all and tie a story through the range.

Adele, Production Team Lux Choc, 9/8/11³⁹

As Adele says, every element is carefully selected and strategically placed. The storytelling is a balance between the production team’s expertise in aesthetic and story and the marketing team’s knowledge of where to place items for maximum sales. The overall goal of the placements is a carefully told story that thematically unifies Lux Choc’s ethical reality. By placing standalone actants on the recto page, as seen in Figure 11, the Lux Choc story is still told even if a reader merely flicks through the catalogue.

³⁹ Although this is beyond the scope of this research, it is interesting to question whose expertise has become *the fact* of how a reader reads a text, and why it is assumed that we look ‘from’ right to left on ‘flicking through’ a magazine.

Figure 11: Scan from the confectionary catalogue with modifications for anonymity and line numbers added



The text starts with 'we' as an inclusive "wink" to the reader, thus making the reader part of the conversation and successfully inviting them to 'take part in the spectacle' (Smith 2005, Gabriel & Lang 2008). Indeed, the first paragraph "preaches to the choir", and acts to loop them in by sort of saying "we all know this, but we are going to highlight again that you choose to buy this chocolate as you and we know it is the best available. Remember that is why you buy it."

The second paragraph starts with a 'But' that acts as a contrast structure to direct the reader that there is more, beyond what has already been listed, to the Lux Choc story. The 'but' frames the following text to read as different to the norm. In this case the difference is not deviant to the norm, but rather supersedes the norm: Lux Choc reads as being much more ethical than other cocoa sources. Lux Choc proposes to the reader

that they through the activities listed throughout the paragraph that the company not only grows great cocoa, but that they do so in an ethical way. They go beyond 'just growing cocoa' (line 8). This notion that Lux Chocolate makes an active choice to be an ethical company is enacted by the use of 'we're not just ... we're also' (line 8). The 'also' especially suggests that the ethical is prioritised above and in addition to great confectionary. These contrast structures within texts is to make it possible to read them 'factually' (Schneider & Woolgar 2012).

The second paragraph portrays the "ethical-story" of Lux Choc. The characters of this ethical story are the narrator, Lux Choc and two key others, 'the island' and the non-Lux Choc 'cocoa growers' who come from the Islands of Romona and Lombala. The first "other" is enacted in the first sentence of the second paragraph that relates that the 'island' of Romona in terrible decline, a decline that could not be reversed without Lux Choc's 'help' (line 9). The second 'other,' 'over 100' local 'growers', is enacted in the following sentence (line 11-12). These growers need relief from the island's 50-year decline. But who can help these poor cocoa farmers?

Even though this is a short text we can see that the answer is Lux Choc and its Engaged Ethics Programme. Although the programme is not mentioned until line 12, the first sentence of paragraph 2 enacts Lux Choc as the island helper, the saviour of the other non-Lux Choc cocoa growers. It suggests that the organisation is not just using their own cocoa, but is 'helping' and rejuvenating the island and the other growers at the same time. The conclusion of the text is given at the beginning and then framed throughout. The reader is given the answer to the question before they are asked it so that they are equipped with the 'right' answer when the question is posed (Smith 1978).

The reader is now aware that Lux Choc is the saviour of and of the other growers through the 'Engaged Ethics Programme'. In lines 12-14, Lux Choc explains that this programme helps the poor other farmers who have been missing 'technical help and know-how' among other things (line 13). But the most crucial element of this programme is what Lux Choc does to buy cocoa: Not only do they buy from their farmers, but they guarantee to buy the other farmers' 'entire crops' at a price 'above world rate'. The amount tied to this rate is immaterial here; it demonstrates that Lux Choc is more ethical than the rest of the world via the rate they give these helpless cocoa farmers.

In another example of Lux Choc's promotional material, we can again use textual analysis to understand the 'ethical story' portrayed. Again the document is an active configuring actant. The extracts below are taken from the 'Annual Report' that goes out to members of the Lux Choc Club.

The first extract is a scan of the introduction of the report.

Figure 12: Introduction of Lux Choc's Annual Report with modifications for anonymity and line numbers added

What your funds are helping us achieve

LINE:
2 Our business is built on three guiding principles
3 - originality, authenticity and ethics. They
4 penetrate to the very core of our company and
5 they remain at the heart of all we do. That includes
6 growing cocoa in Romona, making our own
7 chocolate here in the UK, running a thriving UK
8 Tasting Club that also is reaching out into Europe
9 and now into the USA, as well as opening Lux
10 Choc stores across the UK and beyond.
11 But we're an ambitious company and we want
12 to do more, much more. So, with our mantra of
13 originality, authenticity and ethics firmly at heart,
14 we have exciting development projects planned,
15 both here in the UK and internationally.

The second abstract, below, is a scan from the third section, subtitled 'Developing a truly Sustainable Business Model in Cocoa Growing'.

Figure 13: Scan of the third section of Lux Choc Annual Report with modifications for anonymity and line numbers added

DEVELOPING A TRULY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL IN COCOA GROWING

LINE:

16 How do you know when you have a robust and
17 sustainable ethical culture? See how it stands up
18 when 'the chips are down', like when Hurricane

19 Tomas hit Romona on Saturday 30th and
20 Sunday 31st October 2010. It passed straight
21 through Lux Choc's Claro Estate while
22 Co-founders Steve and Richard
23 were staying at the estate with their wives, so
24 they all experienced everything at first hand.
25 Steve takes up the story:

26 “There were two main things I saw that gave
27 me real confidence about the strength of our
28 Engaged Ethics culture in Romona. Firstly, the
29 day after the devastating hurricane, we opened
30 our fermentation station as usual. It was essential
31 that farmers who were not badly hit and who
32 could make it with wet cocoa deliveries, could
33 keep on doing business with us, earning much
34 needed funds to help with rebuilding and
35 replanting. It would have been all too easy to
36 have kept it closed, but our team made
37 exceptional efforts to keep the promises we
38 have made through our Engaged Ethics Cocoa
39 Programme – that we will buy all your cocoa,
40 you can rely on us. That was fantastic to see!
41 Secondly, in the days following the hurricane
42 we despatched our carpenters, stonemasons
43 and builders into the community to help repair
44 properties and replace roofs, clear roads and
45 distribute food. We had our own building
46 programme to finish off, but it was clearly
47 more important to help people in desperate
48 straits first.”

These excerpts illustrate the active enactment of Lux Choc's ethics and the enactment of other characters used to tell the ethical story. Again, the reader is given the means to answer the puzzle of the text before the puzzle is framed in order to (attempt) configure

them to give the appropriate answer. The social organisation of this text is very important in making it read as a factual account of the ethical nature of Lux Choc.

To discover and analyse how the features of a text *authorise* a *factual* account, I focus on some key points. Including who is given the privilege of definition, how are other versions of the story are mitigated, and how is the text written and formed and placed so that it is portrayed as factual and real (Schneider & Woolgar 2012).

By delving further into this example of public-promotional material, we can see how the three features listed above are part of the text enacting the ethical and writing the *factual nature* of Lux Choc.

In this account, unlike the first text, there are two narrators who are given the privilege of talking. If we focus on the second selection of text ‘Developing a truly sustainable business model in cocoa growing’ (lines 16-48) we can identify the two narrators. The first narrator, like before, is *the* voice of Lux Choc, but in line 26 the privilege of authorship is instead given to one of the co-founders. Why is that? Importantly, Steve, who is an eye witnesses to ‘the chips are down’ situation (Line 18) of the hurricane hitting the island, can answer from a first-hand perspective whether or not Lux Choc does indeed have ‘a robust and sustainable ethical culture’. The answer is they do. When Steve saw this it gave him ‘real confidence’ (line 27) in the ‘strength’ (line 27) of Lux Choc’s Engaged Ethics Programme.

Next, Steve gives his eyewitness account of Lux Choc’s ethics. The speech marks around the second paragraph demark this text from the first paragraph, which asks the reader to “take it for granted.” Now the reader hears directly from the founder about the

programme in action. It is important here that an eyewitness is telling the *real* story, which, in Steve's words 'was fantastic to see!' (line 40). Eyewitness accounts remain one of 'the most persuasive of all forms of evidence' (Holmes & Weaver 2010: 47, discussing Wells et al. 2006; also see O'Neill, et al. 2011, and the 'Innocence Project' report 2011). This encourages the reader to read the factuality and reliability of the story and attempts to give the reader confidence in what the engaged programme *is actually* achieving.

The story starts by informing the reader that there were two events that led the co-founder to know that the engaged ethics Lux Choc practises are real (line 26).

First, the fermentation centre was opened (line 29-30). Again a contrast structure is used in lines 35-39 to make the action of opening fermentation stations seem especially ethical. This is enacted through the text 'it would have been all too easy to have kept it closed, [the framed 'normal' action] but our team made *exceptional* efforts to keep the promise we have made through our Engaged Ethics Programme'. I emphasise the 'exceptional' here because this provides the frame for the uniqueness of Lux Choc's actions.

Lux Choc ethics are again enacted and framed to the reader through the 'you can rely on us' statement (line 40). This 'you' speaks to the reader (the Lux Choc external-user) as much as to the cocoa farmers Lux Choc went out of their way to help. Throughout this first 'main thing' that Steve saw (line 26), the community that is involved and plays a part in the Lux Choc ethics is enacted. The reader is brought into this ethical community with Lux Choc and the island's farmers. Lux Choc is 'essential' to the farmers' ability to earn '*much needed* funds' to help the island's 'rebuilding and replanting' efforts (line 33-

35 emphasis added). The terminology '*much needed*' asks the reader to accept Lux Choc's expertise in understanding and doing the best it can by its extended engaged ethical community 'the farmers'. Lux Choc is 'much needed' on the island to provide vital services to the island's cocoa producers.

The second paragraph of the co-founders' story again utilises the contrast structure to show that Lux Choc's actions are not just ethical, but that they go above and beyond the normal level (lines 41-48). This is enacted in the second ethical action reported: the building. In lines 45-48, the reader is told 'We [Lux Choc] had our own building to finish off, *but* it was clearly more important to help people in desperate straits first.' Here, as seen previously, the ethical, rescuing superhero figure of Lux Choc is enacted in comparison to the poor 'desperate' non-Lux Choc people. Again in this chapter Lux Choc enacts its ethical community, but in this paragraph it is carried beyond the farmers to the whole island 'community' (line 43).

But, Lux Choc is not the only actor enacted as ethical in this text. The community is widened to the ethical-external reader. If we return to line 1, the larger title that spans the width of the report, 'What *your* funds are helping us achieve', suggests that it is not just Lux Choc saving the poor Cocoa farmers, but also the reader. In other words, the readers' funds are integral to Lux Choc being able to 'achieve' their ethical reality. Here is yet another contrast structure, this time the reader is included with Lux Choc in contrast to those islanders in need of help.

Why go to such lengths? The reader has already been configured to give the right answer. If we return to the introductory text of the report we know the company was not only 'built on three guiding principles and ethics' (Line 2-3), but that these

qualities are not just aspirational ideals. They are enacted through Lux Choc's action on the island. These principles 'penetrate to the very core and they remain at the heart' of Lux Choc (line 5), and like a heart they are essential to keep the company 'alive', 'real'. This point is repeated for the reader in line 13. In summary, Lux Choc *is* ethical and the reader is encouraged to read everything it does as ethical.

Before the question of who are the ethical actors is posed in the Annual report's text, the reader is shown a series of images on the front and back cover of the report that equip them to answer the inevitable question. These images are placed between these two statements 'Doing things differently' and 'doing things better'. More than half these images show the characters of the island, the cocoa growers and cocoa, thus showing the reader how Lux Choc enacts the 'ethics' at the heart of its business. Arguably, the added framing of the sentence split above and beneath the photos aims to configure the user to read the images as empirical evidence so to speak of Lux Choc 'doing things better', doing things 'ethically'. This finding highlights how important visuals are in marketing material to enable the user to read the organisation's intended message (Scott 1994). Indeed Lux Choc told me *themselves* of the importance of having and using imagery in their storytelling. It was emphasised that 'powerful imagery ... we can use in storytelling' was what 'we get from' the Engaged Ethics Programme (Nicole, in the official ethics video discussed in Section 5.4, viewed 20/7/2011).

The importance of the positioning and choice of images was further emphasised in a very telling conversation with the 'senior graphic designer' of Lux Choc, John. He explained the importance of selecting certain images of the cocoa farmers while discarding others that were simply not acceptable to use.

The pictures are supplied by our contacts in Lombala. These [points at computer screen showing latest photos] are a couple of weeks old. They will send over a selection and we will pick which ones are most appropriate. [Flicking through the images on file, he stops on a particular photo]. Actually that is, well we will delete that as he looks like a convict. [Gets to another photo and stops.] So again that is not an appropriate picture. He doesn't look very happy and he looks like he is imprisoned in his room [laughs], so I don't think we will have that one. ... You have to pick photos on how they are going to communicate.

John, Senior graphic Designer, Lux Choc, 9/8/11

John is picking the photos that most enact the ethical story that Lux Choc is writing. Ironically, even though all the photos are coming from the reality of Lombala, not all the photos adequately 'communicate' the Lux Choc ethical reality correctly. Here the inappropriate pictures that could be read to suggest convicts or unhappy people are ones that deviate from the story of happy grateful farmers who are helped by Lux Choc.

On the back cover of the report, there is one further image prominently displayed and printed in standout white ink against the dark brown cover: the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) stamp, a third-party certification. As I was informed, this is 'when they use sustainable forest for where the paper and card comes from' (Adele, 9/8/11, Lux Choc, Production Team). This stamp also appears in all the examples of packaging and promotional material I saw while researching and it was always printed in contrasting colours (a visual contrast structure) on all these items. The placement of this visual is very deliberate, as shown when I spoke to Adele about it:

So on all our packaging as well you will notice the FSC logo [points to an example on a mock up product container] there. ... So we try and make it visible as we pay more for the FSC board.

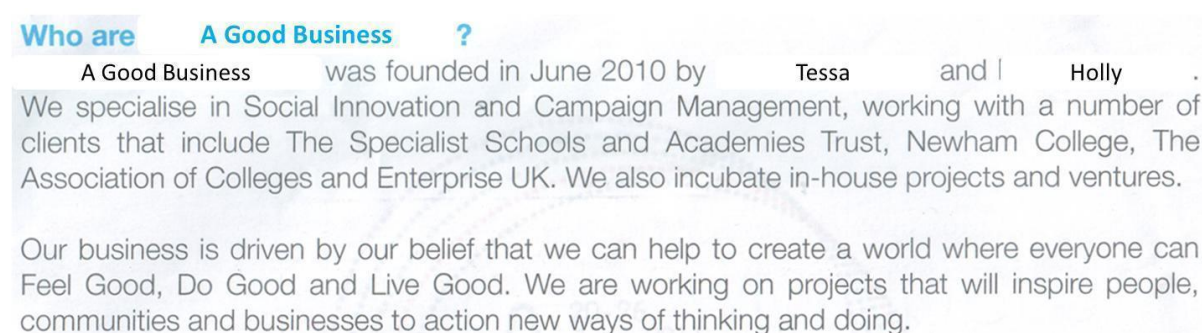
Adele, Production Team, Lux Choc, 9/8/11

The mark is important enough that Lux Choc pays more for it and makes sure that the mark is seen by their users. The stamp can be read as a 'guarantee' that the material

used is 'ethical' in the way that it is sustainably sourced. As such, the reader does not have to rely on Lux Choc's own word on this ethical enactment, instead they can trust the third party, who is allocated the privilege of (ethical) definition. In other words, at play here is an act of giving this enactment of ethical a certain 'facticity' via the endorsement of what can be read as an 'objective official other' (Smith 1978).

These findings were not restricted to the public promotional materials of Lux Choc. Good Business' promotional material similarly showed these technologies and can also be analysed to identify the (attempting) active-configuring actants that enact Good Business' ethics.

Figure 14: Scan of document 'Who are Good Business' modified for anonymity



In this text, the facticity of a Good Business' ethical nature can be understood as being enacted through their 'specialist' 'social innovation' and 'campaign management', which is authenticated by the privilege of definition being given to the 'other' clients listed.⁴⁰ Much like Lux Choc's use of the sustainable third-party stamp found, this third-party certification can be read as claiming a factual quality to the account. It is not a subjective statement. Instead, the text has built allies, 'other credible ethical institutions', who

⁴⁰ The emphases on Campaign management is prominent in this version of who a Good business are, as this was a document used as a sponsorship document sent out for a Good Week

have the 'authority of definition' and similarly recognise 'the fact' of Good Business' ethical qualities so much so as to work with them.

To further back up this enactment of ethical reality, in the second paragraph the reader is reminded that 'good' is at the core of a Good Business, reminiscent of the 'ethics at the heart' of Lux Choc. In other words, Good Business not only does good, but is 'driven' by it. Although not specified, it is implied that all projects, even those 'in-house', are done to 'inspire people, communities and businesses'. The listing of the 'people', 'communities', and 'businesses' enacts the community of a Good Business. This community includes everyone.

In the following example, an interesting idea of 'co-construction' is found (see also Simakova 2010 Gabriel & Lang 2008, Stern 1989, and Scott 1994). In particular, the below "documents" are a scan of the range of three 'interactive cards,' which were produced for the Good Business 'soft launch', and for the official pre-'Good Week' launch. The three cards as shown have different 'good' actions that the user is encouraged to complete, with an additional space for the user to identify their good self: 'If you feel like telling us who you are'.

Figure 15: Scan of each of the three Good Business 'interactive cards'



In the act of co-construction above, the readers do a 'good' doodle, idea, or thought that additionally and simultaneously enacts the 'good' of the Good Business. In this way, the user, or reader of Good Business, is also the author who is given the privilege of defining what is 'good'. The cards were additionally drawn upon to make a visual display that grew during the launch event, a section of which is depicted in the Figure 16.

Figure 16: Photo of 'interactive card' display at Good Business soft-launch event



Notably, the importance of these co-construction tools is not only a proposition from myself and the other theorists noted above, but also for Good Business. The sourcing of the interactive cards was a point of great significance and stress for Eve and the co-founders. Eve, who was responsible for creating the design of the interactive cards, was also responsible for having them and other promotional material ready for the 'pre-launch' of a Good Week. On the day before the launch, 11/4/2011, my field notes record her stress at the delivery having not arrived yet. This stress increased by the time of the launch morning on 12/4/2011. All members of the team assembled at 'HQ' to collect everything they needed, however the cards still hadn't arrived. Eve as I noted in my field diary '[kept] leaving the room. She [looked] increasingly worried. When I asked who she was ringing, unusually for her, she snapped, "the delivery company".' With time being short, the rest of the team agreed to start the set-up and planned for Eve to follow as soon as the parcel of the cards arrived. The question of what would happen if the cards

didn't arrive wasn't asked. Although I thought to ask it, as noted in my field notes, the situation had got so intense I was too worried to mention this, as I felt it might further stress Eve and the founders, which was not necessary on this important day.⁴¹ Eve was the official photographer of the event and the importance of the cards is emphasised in Figure 17, which was featured as one of the few photos taken and was then further refined and selected for the website. It is the only mundane, or in the words of Goffman (1969) 'backstage,' photo publically shared from the day.

Figure 17: Photo of soft-launch promotional material featured on the Good Business website



But why were these cards so important? The co-construction of the marketing material like the cards above is now suggested as essential to producing 'successful' marketing (Stern 1989, Scott 1994, Gabriel & Lang 2008). The 'savvy' consumer will no longer passively accept advertising speak (Scott 1994). Instead he or she needs to be included through acts that draw the consumer into the co-construction of the product. Although

⁴¹ And, as a side note in the margin of my field dairy said, 'not a insider thing to do'.

a discussion of whether or not the consumer was ever “passive” could happen, it is not pertinent to this present discussion. However I do argue, similarly to the mentioned theorists, that these cards and all the documents presented act as technologies that not only draw the user in, but aid them in reading the text of the organisation’s ethical reality(s). They act then as a tool of configuration and so bring us back again to the notion of configuring the user. Although I have analysed the tools that were used to configure the readers into reading the organisation’s ethical reality(s), I have yet to address whether or not this configuration occurred, or if indeed it is possible to answer this question from my position as an investigator.

6.4 Successful Configuration of the Ethical User

6.4.1 Within-Organisation

To address this question of successful user configuration, I start with the organisation’s internal user. This proved to be the easier of the questions given my role as a participant-observer. At both companies, normally after introducing my research and why I was there, I was told in some variation that ‘we are ethical’. My normal response was to delve deeper, to ask how? What do you mean by ethical? This sort of question never once silenced a respondent. No one in either organisation was ever short of the ways in which they carried out their ethics; I was often presented with a list of several different ways. The organisation’s ethical reality(s), as previously argued, could be understood as chimerical and ontologically multiple.

In situations outside the companies or when I acted as a “member of the team” at external events I found that I, now more participant than observer, also spoke of the

ethical *nature* of the two companies.⁴² This tendency for me to tell the organisation's story persisted even after my field research had finished; I was given a gift of some chocolate from Lux Choc by a friend who jokingly said 'I hope this is ethical enough for you.' In response I found myself not only agreeing, but also, like so many members of the organisation, listing off a plethora of ways they were *indeed* ethical. Just like the other members of the ethical tribes under investigation, I appeared to have been configured to the 'ethical stories' of both a Good Business and Lux Choc.

In all the studies previously discussed (see Section 6.1) where 'configuration of a user' has been used, the discussion of configuration has focused on a unidirectional form that is from within the company to the (assumed) external-user. The internal marketing literature, as discussed in Sections 2.3.3.1 and 6.2, does focus on the internal user but is also unidirectional because it examines the flow of marketing from the assumed homogeneous organisation to the individual internal consumers.²⁰ Even if there was room for an internal user or reader to not be fully configured and to read the technology differently in these works, it would still have been described as unidirectional from the organisation. There has been little suggestion that configuration may be multi-directional and that this multi-directionality could be found within the organisation. The concept of the external user has been analysed to see if it can be (re)performed within a business (Woolgar 1997), but here I specifically address a reconfiguring of the organisation's ethical object *from within and* whether there is multi-directionality.

In both organisations, I witnessed multi-directional configuration. At Good Business the strongest example of this came when Eve joined the team. Eve came to Good Business

⁴² Woolgar shared similar reflections on his stay at the microcomputer manufacturer, which formed the empirical base for his 1991 paper about configuring the user.

herself, instead of the usual process for tribe-building which involved Good Business sending out a specific job advert and then reviewing applications. Eve found Good Business through an Internet search of the 'ethical space' (as described by Eve 18/1/2011). She first met the directors for coffee, followed by a brief introduction to the rest of the team (which on that day was just me) on 18/1/2011. As my field notes suggest, even at the first meeting she had 'impressed' the co-founders:

The co-founders have just met Eve — she is the girl who followed us on Twitter and FB [Facebook], they met up [and] want to get her on board — she [Eve] suggested as an intern but we [founders and I] are thinking as a director.

Field Note 18.1.2011

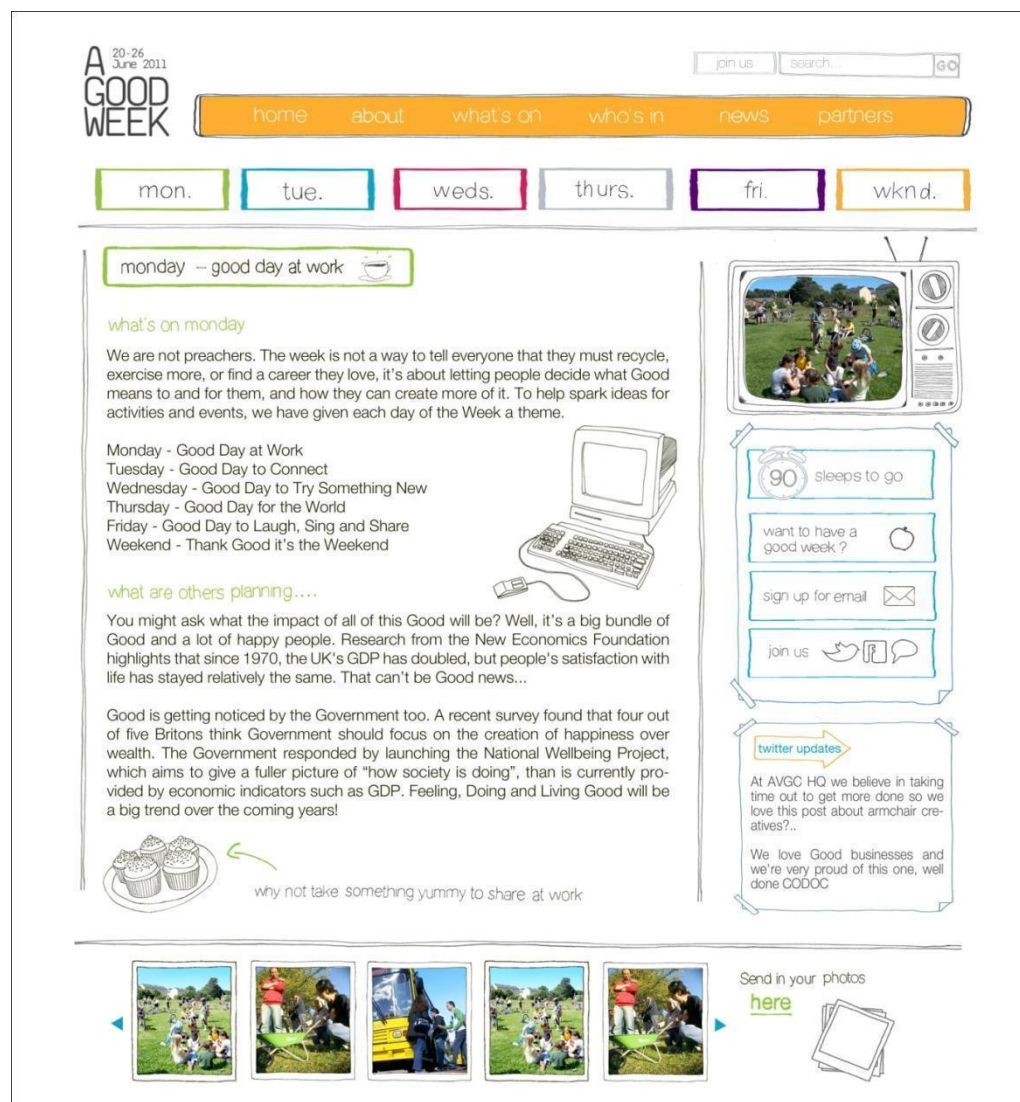
Another field note from that day and a later Web search I performed revealed Eve was:

Writer, Designer, Communications Consultant and Brand Strategist. She has a specific interest in work dedicated to creativity, education, well-being and human potential

Caption taken from Eve's Biography on her own website 18/1/2011

Eve seemingly had all the credentials Good Business would look for and had a lot of shared interest. Eve was soon 'part of the team' and took responsibility for producing the 'Good Week' website and additional external marketing material (some of which has previously been analysed in this chapter). What was not mentioned in the early analysis of this material was that there had been a different Good Week enacted before Eve. The slides beneath are taken from the original 'Good Week' site presentation, demonstrating what the 'week' was.

Figure 18: Slide from the original Good Week website presentation



The original Good Week, a multiple of Good Business' ethical reality was much different. It gave each day of the week a different theme, and these themes are shown adjacent to the image of the computer. It was about doing specific good ethical deeds on specific days not like the later week's reality that was about the week as a whole and how a 'little bit of good' in any form across the week went a long way (see Figure 10). In the original Good Week programme each day had its own Web page on which there were examples of actions you can take. It wasn't about co-constructing good through note

cards, but about recording and celebrating each day's specific good via the page 'Call To Actions' (CTAs) through the 'send in your photos here' button at the bottom of the page.

In addition to this reconfiguration of what a Good Business' ethical reality was, as enacted through a Good Week, there were other examples of the multi-directional configuration. I emphasise the multi-directionality of these process(es) through Eve's experience. Whilst configuring a Good Business herself, she also become a member of the tribe, used a 'Good language' (discussed in Section 4.3.1), followed the seating rule (see *ibid.*) and espoused *the* ethical nature of a Good Business. But, she had also changed the Good Business website, the primary virtual external-user facing text. The changes shown in some of the before and after Eve examples below indicate the re-configuration of this interface of a Good Business' ethical reality.

Figure 19: Screen shot of Good Business' website homepage before Eve

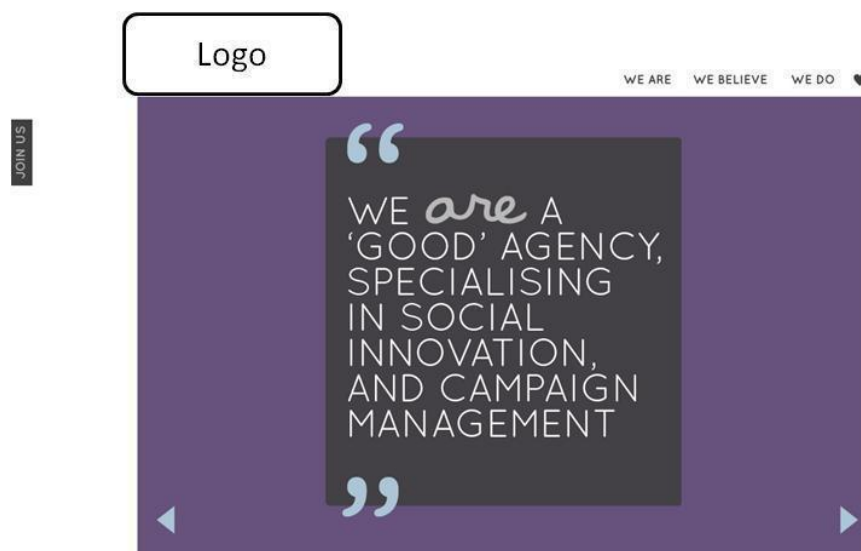


Figure 20: Screen shot of Good Business' website homepage after Eve



Most notably, focusing on the text of each image of what a Good Business *is* under Eve's (re)configuration changed the reading from Good Business as a 'good agency' to Good Business as a 'social innovation company'. Additionally, a Good Business' speciality changed to be social innovation (rather than that being one of many specialisms). Thus in their 'new' reality of being a 'good solution' producer, they lost their 'specialising' reality in 'campaign management'. A subtler configuration that occurred for Good Business, which is alternated above, and cannot be shown visually for confidentially reasons, was the organisational logo. Under Eve's direction it also "read" differently.

At Lux Choc, close textual analysis of the who, how, and where enactments of ethical realities occurred also showed (re)configuration that appeared multi-directional. Similarly, not just one author, but numerous ones could attempt to re-write the ethical text of the organisation. On 7/11/2011, I participated and observed at one of the many Lux Choc's nationwide stores. In this store I met the manager, Elizabeth, who was by her own admission a keen recycler and felt that enough wasn't being done on a Lux Choc

storewide basis. She explained to me that she had taken additional and different actions to further Lux Choc's ethics at least within her store:

I think we have taken it [ethics] further with kind of greening our store up as it were. We have tried to get involved with that. Obviously that's kind of a passion of mine, but they have bought into it, and it is great the guys are on board and behind that, and know they take the same pride in talking about ethics with our guests [external-users] and also we talk about it amongst ourselves as well ... We do live those values and engage with them ... Recycling wasn't here at all, I started that. They recycled cardboard, but that was it ... I got rid of [the old recycling] company because they were rubbish ... and got the city council instead.

Elizabeth, Lux Choc, Retail Assistant, 7/11/11

Her furthering (re)enactment attempt of Lux Choc's reality was based in 'greening' up her store and doing recycling right. She then told me her head of region had asked her to co-produce a presentation about how they could roll out this increased, 'deepened' level of recycling — an actant of Lux Choc's ethics, specifically relating to all stores and including all materials possible (beyond cardboard, which was the only shop requirement). The presentation was due to occur in about four weeks' time (the date of the meeting was TBC whilst I was researching) and was to be presented to the director level of the business. Arguably this was not a finished configuration across the entire organisation, but an attempt to establish a new writing of the ethical story of Lux Choc, and it does portray a shop-level multi-directional configuration and a potential future within-organisation-wide configuration.⁴³

⁴³ I have tried to find out if the recycling recommendations have now become policy at Lux Choc, however with my departure from the organisation, I am no longer privy to such internal knowledge.

6.4.2 Beyond the Organisation

This question of whether the external-user was configured is a much more problematic one to answer and is a point of difficulty not yet addressed in the literature. Although textual analysis offers the tools to analyse the attempted configuration process, I found for this somewhat 'mystical [external] user', it actually cannot be absolutely answered (Shove and Rip 2000).

I did not officially become an external user of the organisations during my research. The best I can do is to merely suggest, based on the findings I observed, whether or not I felt configuration occurred. But, as we have seen in the analysis above, the question of who was the outside 'user' to the organisations was re-enacted in multiple ways. Much like it the ethical object discussed in the previous chapter, the ethical user can also be enacted in multiple ways. It leaves us with the question of who are the external users? This needs to be addressed before I can delve further into the question of configuration.

In the case of Lux Choc, it is sensible to portray their consumers, referred to as their 'guests', as at least one segment of their external-users. However, during my various days acting as a 'Retail Assistant', not one guest asked anything about the ethics of the organisation (25/8/2011, 19/9/2011, 21/10/2011, 7/11/2011, 11/11/2011). I was informed by several of the other shop assistants that 'not many people ask'. Indeed they seemed 'ambivalent' to it (a characteristic also found by O'Donohue 2001). However, in a different role as a participant in a promotional evening named the 'Chocolate Adventure', I was told by the adventure lead at another store that people do often ask (25/8/2011). Indeed at this event in one evening, I witnessed two questions being asked that related to the 'Engaged Ethics' sign painted on the wall. The external-users asked

what it meant, and after the lead answered it and referred to the Engaged Ethics Programme, they further inquired about the goals and outcome of the programme.

At Good Business, identifying who *the* users are seems even more difficult. They have client-users with whom they work, but additionally I witnessed, as in the case of the launch and previously analysed 'interactive cards', a huge participation in co-enacting the 'good' by other users. These were all users, but there was multiples and in all of these situations I was only observing and not participating as an external user.

What makes this question even harder to answer is the notion, already discussed, that we are now in a modern sceptical age that has led to modern savvy users (Brown 1993). Only if modern savvy users have been drawn into and winked at will they read marketing material, let alone let the potentially included technologies configure their reading. Again this is a point of participant observation in which I am unable to take part. Therefore, I cannot adequately locate nor robustly give an answer from the external user position of whether configuration has occurred or not. This is a point that no other theorist has adequately acknowledged; rather they have put forward mere assumptions disguised as fact as to the success or failure of the external consumers' configuration.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the utility in rejecting the terminology (and assumptions) of the market, and moves away from ideas of homogeneous producers and consumers. Instead, by focusing on users as they arose (rather than pre-determining them), I have used the sensibilities of user configuration to explore and analyse multi-directional

attempts of transfer. I have shown that it does seem to be the case that attempts at ethical-configuration in order to transfer the tribe's own self-avowed ethical *nature* were being sought.

The question was proposed who, or what, are the ethical users of this investigation; how is the configuration of the ethical object attempted. And is it successful, and for whom? Within this chapter, it was discovered and demonstrated that users of the ethical object are not a homogenous, or only external group. Instead it was shown that there are multiple users both internal and external to the organisations of my study. For all the users explored, configuration attempts were discovered through different but equal technologies — most notably through literary devices found in active actant-documents that enacted the type of ethical users they were created for, as well as at least one of the ethical reality(s) of the organisation. The terminology of 'active' was used alongside the 'actants' analysed in the configuration attempts, not to suggest there is inactive or non-enacting actants but rather to avoid the potential that the longstanding fallacy that documents are in some way passive, static, immutable sources of evidence and inert receptacles of content would be assumed. The word 'active' was also used in order to clearly develop the theories of previous researchers who have shown the importance of documents in enacting realities (including Latour & Woolgar 1986, Star & Griesmar 1989). The work of Prior (2008) and her research focusing on the function of documents, which she described as 'active agents', was especially important for this research. This concept was developed into 'active actants' in this chapter to further build on the findings of chapter 5 where the ANT terminology of 'actants' was first appropriated. It was shown in both chapters that a focus on documents as the only non-human actants

in the ethical enactments would have been far too limiting. It was also discovered that configuration was multi-directional between internal users, not only outward to users as previously theorised. The internal users were seemingly configured by these technologies never failing to re-enact the ethical nature of their organisation. However, it remains seemingly impossible for an internal in-situ researcher to know if configuration happened for the external users.

As in the previous chapter, the equal importance of non-human actants has been illustrated. Specifically, the tools used for enactments including but not limited to various types of documents were found to be active actants used in order to try and encourage certain configured readings, in this case the reading of the ethical *nature* of the self-avowed ethical organisations.

It has yet to be widely discussed in the contemporary literature that configuration could be multiple in its direction and attempted for internal- and external-users. What has been demonstrated through developing and drawing upon ideas from the underdeveloped internal marketing field, specifically building on Shabnam & Sarker, who point out that there are few studies which focus on the ethical claims of an organisation and their internal-users [2012: 24] is that attempts of user-configuration can be found within organisations in addition to those external attempts. By focusing specifically on the internal-users, further development of the present ideas of configuration, such as the case that configuration can be multi-directional have been made.

However, the mystery of external consumer configuration remains unsolved as it was found that this is a position that cannot be adequately answered by this research. This

idea of external consumer is a problematic concept that is further complicated if we return to one of the first conversations in this chapter where the boundaries of External vs. Within organisation were described. However, I can propose that, 'it may be concluded that the marketing department is not the only one engaged in marketing processes of an organisation' (Javadein et al. 2011: 368).

As to whether or not this chapter can help answer the underlying question of this thesis (the fourth question to arise in the literature review) 'does STS means ethical business', it has been shown that using the framework of (attempted) configuration of users has been very fruitful in the critical analysis of current contemporary ideas of market actors (producers and consumers). Additionally, this chapter has also developed the ideas that this framework's previous use has tended to focus on a unidirectional configuration of external users. Further, it has been argued that Smith's style of textual analysis as developed by Schneider & Woolgar (2012) of social ordering can be seen as particularly useful as noted in Prior's 2008 call to not only look at the content, but also consider the active use and function of documents. By building on both of these STS texts, I argue, as noted previously, that non-human actants are of particular importance in the construction and reconstruction of the organisations' ethical reality(s). This includes the ethical reality of members as enacted through their own organisational texts (and later enacted by myself in this text). This is a light, chapter specific, reflection on the question of whether 'STS means ethical business?' (a fuller discussion of this will follow in Chapter 8).

First however, the thesis now moves on from the questions of transfer and user configuration to address another under explored assumption: that of ethical genesis and

the provenance of the ethical object. This will be explored by focusing on a workshop I attended while at my third ethical research site — the ethical consultancy. This will be the last empirical chapter that focuses on external research sites and the ethical object before the thesis turns inwardly to focuses on the overall body of the thesis, and the research site of my own ethnography.

Chapter 7. The Work of a Workshop: its Tools, Bricolage, and the Genesis of a New Ethical Object

7.1 Introduction

This penultimate empirical chapter builds upon the previous chapter's discussions of *the* ethical object by focusing on a much smaller sub-section of my capta. The chapter also develops a critical perspective on contemporary theorising and frameworks (including my own) which assume that an ethical object has *emerged* and is available for investigation. With the exception of Mol (2002), other object literatures take for granted the reality of the object to enable investigation. Here, I contribute to contemporary knowledge by exploring and analysing (possible) processes of ethical genesis — the enactment of *an* ethical object. My methodological standpoint is that of observing participation rather than participant observing, in the tribe rather than of the tribe. It builds on Woolgar's suggested 'technography': ethnographic research that is 'intensive, reflexive, in situ, a collaborative exploration of the *genesis* and development of *new* technical artefacts' (emphasis added, 2004: 347).

The chapter is separated into three main sections. The first considers the work of a workshop at my third research site, the ethical consultancy, Ethicentre. The section examines the workshop purpose and motivations and it analyses process(es) involved in workshop work. The workshop and tools act as a technology to allow for a reality to be enacted that was not apparent to the participants at the beginning. The end product — the ethical object — appears to be a shock enactment for participants, and yet once discovered and revealed, participants talk about it as an object that always existed, even

though they had not previously asked the questions necessary to discover it. The section concludes by exploring the utility of framing the work of the workshop as bricolage.

The second section examines the tool kit of enactment, including both human and non-human actants. The human actants are the invited delegates and the facilitators; and non-human actants include sticky notes, felt-tip pens and inscriptions, all of which are explored. This part of the chapter reflects the more traditional focuses of STS studies by building on the idea of fact creation. Where appropriate, I address and explore alignments, similarities, and differences between my analysis and the literature in order to clearly and succinctly show where my research bolsters contemporary knowledge and where it extends or disproves it. This section also further explores the use of and potential for borrowing an ANT sensibility of thinking of 'things' not as passive, but rather as actants (and, as Chapter 5 argues, as boundary actants). This chapter finds documents, including sticky notes, to be active actants and sees the ways they function as fruitful points of analysis (adding to the analysis and findings in Chapter 6).

The third and final section of the chapter reflects upon the assertions made in the two earlier sections, particularly whether it 'could have been otherwise'.

7.2 Setting the Scene

The workshop was set up to facilitate a conversation between two multinational organisations about working together, as described to me prior to the workshop by the head facilitator. The first multinational organisation (pseudonym: Agro-tech) researches and implements controversial new agro-technologies and has more than 25,500 employees in over 90 countries. The second organisation (pseudonym: Right World) is a

well-established (self-avowed) ethical not-for-profit NGO. Right World has around 5,000 employees based in the UK and a presence in 98 countries. The lead member of Right World explained that Chatham House Rules were implemented for the session due to the confidential and delicate nature of the conversation.

Agro-tech approached Right World about developing some collaborative business plans, but Right World initially rejected Agro-tech's proposal because they had publicly denounced the technologies that Agro-tech was previously involved with.⁴⁴ Right World, as noted on their own website, insisted that the technology had 'not delivered against the guiding principles of participation, transparency, choice, sustainability and fairness.' Right World argued further that the technology should not be used or developed unless organisations such as Agro-tech could guarantee that it carried no risk. During briefings with the project's head consultant in the days leading up to the workshop, I was informed that Right World believed that Agro-tech's underlying principles were in tension with their own ethical ideals and that Right World could only form partnerships with organisations whose policies matched their own ethical standards. Right World also discussed the potential backlash, internally and externally, that could result from working with a company of such ill repute, particularly since the mass media also publicly criticised Agro-tech for its technological developments.

After an extended exchange between the organisations failed to result in any sort of progress, they decided to arrange a facilitated conversation within the framework of a workshop held in a neutral, atypical location and run by 'objective' ethical consultant

⁴⁴ As reported in a Guardian article (2001) and discussed in a Right World self-published report (2008), and presented on their .org page dedicated to the technologies. Full references not included here for confidentiality reasons.

facilitators — Ethicentre. I was one of the consultant team. We, the consultants, claimed expertise in being a ‘catalyst for change and being able to bring organisations together in strategic partnerships’ (according to ‘our’ website). We proposed a conversation with no prior expectations set for specific outcomes. The focus of the conversation would be a particular development topic (pseudonym: pro-poor women initiatives, specifically to benefit small holders). Both organisations had previously agreed this topic would be of interest for future work.

I acted as a facilitator in a workshop aimed at exploring whether the organisations could find, agree to, and plan a collaborative piece of work on the topic of interest through the ‘natural’ course of catalysed discussion. Through the work of the workshop, they apparently *found* (enacted) a newly appropriated ethical reality imputed to Agro-tech. Right World’s resulting agreement to work with them effectively moved Agro-tech from its previous position as an unsuitable partner organisation to a suitable partner of assumed, taken-for-granted ethical integrity.

The *natural* process of *finding* collaboration in order to formulate the plan took a day and a half of work, required tools to construct it, and entailed pre-workshop work. Interestingly, the majority of this work appeared lost and forgotten once the *natural* taken-for-granted ethical partnership was *discovered* and stabilised into the final plan of action detailed in eight sticky notes. The following section unpacks and critiques the process(es) of *discovery*, whereby the actants and assumptions are interwoven into the plan enactment in the chronological order in which they were *done*.

For the sake of textual clarity and cohesion, the processes are separated out, even though they were messily intertwined. Previous work done was part of each process and

provided the rationale for the ongoing work just as ongoing work provided the rationale for previous work that had been done.

7.3 The Process(es)

7.3.1 Pre-Workshop Work

Before the official workshop began, significant work, which I was involved in, was carried out. I was briefed on my role as a facilitator, and helped to produce three pre-workshop documents, labelled 'The Agenda', 'The Creative Flow', and 'The Brief'. All invited delegates shared The Agenda, while the other documents were shared just within the consultancy team. What these documents have in common was that they set out the workshop's outline, which included the times certain things were happening and what they planned to achieve in the time slots. For example, at 2 p.m. on Day 1, '4 key Solutions' would be discussed (or 'discovered' as it appeared in the workshop). The documents are similar to Latour and Woolgar's (1986) grant application, which laid out what they would achieve in their seminal exploration of the science lab (again drawing the parallels initially discussed in Chapter 1).⁴⁵ Significantly, these pre-scripted action flows seemed to be forgotten in the 'natural' progression of the official workshop.

We sent email invitations just over two weeks before the workshop, and 23 delegates attended. One 'initiator' from each organisation had contacted the consultancy and helped organise the event, and those two people invited delegates for their diverse

⁴⁵ I draw upon Latour & Woolgar's 1986 work multiple times throughout this chapter. Since its original 1979 publication, *Laboratory Life* has been cited by over 6500 times. I am aware of the developments in the field of STS since this seminal piece was published but value it as the first exploration of this type. Subsequent work interprets what they found. Rather than relying on others' interpretations, I purposely returned to this piece to see if parallels exist. I build my own interpretation in my exploration of whether or not STS means 'ethical' business. Subsequent works have not developed Latour & Woolgar's ideas in useful ways to this particular line of exploration.

expertise, for their apparent necessity to the discussion, and for the purpose of representing the views and needs of their respective organisations. The delegates' job titles seemed to indicate their expertise and needed to be shared before the 'neutral' workshop. For example, a Word document (that I created) disclosed the full names, organisation affiliations, and job titles. The importance of sharing the delegates' expertise became even clearer when I received three emails informing me that I had incorrectly listed a delegate's job title. The delegate's role within the organisation, and apparently expertise, had changed.

Showing off their diverse expertise enabled both organisations to establish that they had similar amounts of expertise. Job titles, as much as what the title-holders said, highlighted their expertise and authority to the rest of the group. Diverse job titles within the organisations further suggested that the workshop delegates were a representative selection of employees able to speak for their entire organisation and therefore acted as plausible surrogates and suitable proxies (Lezaun 2007; Muniesa & Trébuchet-Breitwiller 2010), despite both Agro-tech and Right World being large, multinational organisations. Other market testing literature, just referenced, has not yet fully explored whether or not the proxies themselves felt that they could claim adequate surrogacy, but delegates from each organisation in my workshop suggested they could:

I want to say two things really. One is the importance of bringing our organisation [Agro-tech] with us.

Chris, Agro-tech, 25/6/2010

I just want to say that it is not easy for Right World either.

Lynn, Right World, 25/6/2010

Not only did the delegates themselves assume expertise, but other delegates also took their expertise for granted. As a delegate suggested near the end of the workshop:

Jeff's presence today has been really useful ... because he has been at the forefront of the discussions and is able to see where we are going.

Joe, Right World, 25/6/2010

The unquestioned ability to speak on behalf of real organisations remained an important assumption throughout the processes of accomplishing, or 'finding' the core of, the collaboration planning, as the Right World member articulates below:

I wanted to say that one of the things we were struggling with this morning, there were a number of questions about if ... we were going to run into cultural barriers. But that has all almost evaporated. It seems to me that what we have got here is a **complete consensus** that empowering pro-poor women's initiatives is what we [Agro-tech and Right World] have to do.

Emphasis added. Barbara, Right World, 25/6/2010

The barriers between the two organisations as a whole had evaporated via the workshop participants. There was a sense of complete consensus, and a 'we' had been established. Yet, as discussed throughout this thesis, the homogeneity of any organisation is questionable, leaving the ability of any one member to fully represent the views of their entire organisation dubious. If one member (or even a subset) of an organisation cannot speak for an entire organisation, can an assumed organisation-wide collaboration enact an ethical genesis for Agro-tech? Section 7.8 explores this question more thoroughly.

7.3.2 Initial Thoughts

The first stage of the workshop revolved around four PowerPoint presentations about 'Women Small Holders'. Two experts from each organisation presented their views on the issue. The head facilitator then instructed the whole group to 'summarise on a lovely sticky [sticky note] an image or a keyword' that represented their thoughts on the topic. The production of key inscriptions onto sticky notes was seemingly very important. The head facilitator repeated the instruction for the delegates to share their expertise 'in any which way you like. You can draw a picture. You can do a cluster of words or a keyword'. The head facilitator instructed me to aid and guide the expert expression in 'any which way'. He told me, 'Just encourage them [delegates] to get the right pens, and get them in their hands, and thinking and drawing out the keywords and images'.

This creation of key findings on sticky notes appeared to (re)enact the expertise of each delegate (and their organisations) onto a sticky note. The head facilitator then collected the notes from each delegate and re-stuck them onto pieces of white A3 paper which were taped to the front wall, at first, in 'no particular order'. Each note no longer belonged to an individual but appeared to represent a collective knowledge of what 'we', the workshop group, thought. The identity boundaries shifted from that of two distinct organisations, individual experts representing these organisations, and facilitators into a newly enacted identity: the workshop group. The terminology used to describe the group by the head facilitator and the delegates also changed to 'we', assuming homogeneity of the group. This newly constructed 'we' boundary identity was subsequently important later in all of the process(es), such as in finding the core of collaboration and reconstructing the organisation's identities. Here again, the things —

the actant-tools, especially sticky notes and their ability to move — appeared just as important as the people involved in the process(es) of the workshop (as found in Chapters 5 and 6 where it was stated that human and non-human actants are equally important). After initial key ideas were collected, the workshop continued.

7.3.3 Finding the ‘Barriers’

The next issue ‘we’, the newly accomplished workshop group, tackled, was to identify the ‘key barriers to the topic’. To be clear, this was not the barriers to the two separate organisations working together. This barrier had seemingly disappeared when the proxy delegates chose to come together in the neutral setting. The ‘key barriers’ in this case referred to anything that would stand in the way of the organisations helping Small Holders through a joint initiative.

At this stage, the ‘we’ separated into four delegate ‘home groups’, which were assigned to different rooms. The home groups included a mix of members from Agro-tech and Right World, which the facilitators selected to balance out the expertise (based on job titles) and strength of personality among groups. Each group was sent to their respective rooms and instructed to ‘get the barriers onto the paper’, as listed in the workshop agenda. Each room was well equipped for brainstorming with ‘lots of stickies and pens so you can get your ideas down’. The purpose of inscribing onto the tools provided, namely the sticky notes, was twofold: (1) home groups could bring their (representations of their) discussions visibly back to the main room and (2) the use of sticky notes and their functionality (the ability to be moved) served not only as a tool to transport discussions back to the main room, but also enacted another movement —

that of creating key prioritised knowledge and peripheral (forgotten) knowledge (Star 1983; Boxenbaum & Rouleau 2011).

A spokesperson from each home group presented the expertly identified barriers to women becoming successful small holders that each home group identified and stuck their sticky note collage onto a peripheral wall of the main room. At this snapshot moment, the identified barriers were multiple and messy in reality, spread around the room and reflected on sticky notes. From this mess of home groups and expertly constructed barriers, we identified a smaller group of four *true* barriers, leaving the other barriers to become forgotten and unrepresented artefacts of the workshop.

The entire workshop group found the key barriers through the interwoven work of the actant-tools and of the facilitators. After the home groups presented the barriers that they had identified and written onto a sticky note, the head facilitator removed the sticky notes of repeated words from each presentation, took one exemplar sticky note from this chain of repetition, and moved it from the home group collages to the front wall. In this movement from periphery to front wall, the exemplar sticky note no longer belonged to the home group, but instead became a barrier owned by the entire workshop 'we' and one of the *real* problems facing the two organisations together in tackling pro-poor women's initiatives.

However, what was assumed to fit 'naturally', in fact, 'could have been otherwise'. In placing each of the exemplar sticky notes on the front wall, the head facilitator arranged them under yet another sticky note with the word 'infrastructure' on it. For example, the sticky note inscribed with the word 'water' was moved from a peripheral home group presentation to 'infrastructure', a move that appeared to unproblematically alter

the note's meaning. Although the sticky note inscribed 'water' had previously represented a standalone barrier, its move to the front changed the expert knowledge it represented. Water was no longer simply a necessity to grow crops as the home group described, but rather once incorporated into the barrier 'infrastructure', the 'water' sticky note also indicated the lack of efficient channels for moving 'goods'. In other words, the barrier on the sticky note morphed from water used to feed a plant to water as an inefficiently transported commodity due to inferior infrastructure, which is the 'key' problem. The importance of the sticky-note-actant here was not only based on the content of the note, but also the active function of it (building on Prior's 2008 discussions). It is easy to think through how it could have been otherwise; the sticky notes and their corresponding representations could easily be reversed, so that the barrier of 'infrastructure' was a contributor to the identified barrier of 'water'.

By the end of this process, the head facilitator announced 'four key areas which we [the workshop participants] are seeing as big blocks'. It was unquestionably taken for granted that the *natural* outcome of the work would result in identifying **four** key barriers, quickly and effectively eliding the other artefact-barriers. Yet, as noted, the pre-workshop agenda had already disclosed that four barriers would be found. The choreographed work to 'find' the key barriers seemed the *natural* progression for the workshop's goal to find 'solutions'. However, the agenda also already identified and inscribed that solutions were needed in order to find the core of the collaboration. The solutions thus provided the rationale for the previous step of finding the barriers.

7.3.4 Solutions

The next stage of work to attain the stated goal of collaboration involved 'finding' the solutions. Here, each home group was assigned one of the key barriers to think about 'how could **we** solve those issues'. At the end of the allotted time, each home group's spokesperson presented conclusions with the aid of a collage of sticky notes inscribed with words and images. The head facilitator then asked the entire group, 'With the visions you [home groups] came up with, what solutions would you prioritise?' They narrowed their answers into a subsequent list of 10 key items and inscribed these onto a piece of paper placed on the front wall. Non-selected solutions lost their prioritisation and became another set of forgotten artefacts on the periphery. The work of the workshop got *simplified* until it resulted in a statement of text that reflected the external reality (originally theorised by Latour & Woolgar 1986, this idea is discussed later in the chapter). Similarly, the list of 10 ideas was still too broad and needed to be cut further to reveal the four *real* possible solutions (as the agenda had suggested). So the list was narrowed:

'Get up, pen in your hand and just put a marker against the one big issue that, if we just solve that, that would be a significant chunk of the work.'

Head Facilitator 25/6/2010

To visually attribute more importance to certain solutions, the home groups physically moved the sticky notes, just as they had done previously with the barriers. This process allowed the groups to collectively identify and (re)create four key solutions on another A3 piece of paper at the front of the room. And all of this became co-enacted technology and co-enacted reality.

At this point, the head facilitator addressed the group:

We should capture this. It's something **your** organisation should think about further and I would like you to get hold of a lovely yellow sticky and just draw that picture. ... I want **you** to capture what you are feeling are the key things that are coming out of this.

Emphasis added. Head facilitator, 25/6/2010

Under this instruction, the 'we' workshop group identity was deconstructed and the organisational and individual identities became (re)realised. Importantly, this splitting of the group ontology had a secondary effect. By (re)realising the organisational boundaries, the key solution statements metamorphosed from 'key' workshop statements into 'real' actions for the organisations and their delegates to take forward together in the 'external, out there' world. For example, a key solution statement was 'metrics', and one of the Agro-tech delegates noted how progress on this solution would be faster with the two separate organisations working together:

In our group, we were looking at that and we discussed, [with] the combined power of the two organisations, we could make some real headway into that quite quickly. ... It wouldn't be the complete picture, but it would be a good place to start.

Mark, Agro-tech, 25/6/2010

Inscriptions such as metrics now no longer enacted a reality, but instead also represented what was out there and needed doing. The 'out there' now represented on the sticky notes of what the organisations had to do together was 'constituted solely through the use of (these) inscriptions' (Latour & Woolgar 1986: 128). With the 'out-thereness' of the collaborative work identified as a 'consequence of the [workshop] work rather than its cause' (ibid.: 182).

The solutions co-created during the workshop now seemed to be taken for granted as the two organisations' members appeared to realise that the 'real' solutions would need

collaborative work to be put into action. Delegates from both organisations expressed this when they were asked to share their feeling with the rest of the group:

Not one organisation can do it alone. There is no way we could do it alone.

Jeff, Right World, 25/6/2010

We can't achieve [a solution] ourselves alone. There's got to be partnerships in it.

Kat, Agro-tech, 25/6/2010

The revelation that the delegates from both organisations *needed* to work together as a 'we' did not just assume the inclusion of the in-workshop delegates, but assumed the collaboration of the delegates' greater multinational organisations. Rather than just finding solutions, the two organisations arrived at a consensus that collaboration lay at the 'core' of *achieving* and *doing* the *real* (key) solutions to the problem of pro-poor woman's initiatives.

With this enacted *real* need and agreed-upon collaboration, there was a novel enactment of a new ethical object, namely, Agro-tech's new ethical status. The addition of facilitators to the two organisations' conversation had come about because Right World could and would work only with ethical companies. At the beginning of the workshop, there had not been an agreement to work together due to the perceived unethical reality of Agro-tech. The controversy of working with the unethical Agro-tech was seemingly forgotten by both organisations as a result of the work of the workshop. Right World's collaboration meant that they had 'found' and now took for granted the ethical reality of Agro-tech. It was as if it had always been there: Delegates had just not known it, as they had not used the right technologies to discover it (just as with Schneider & Woolgar's 2012 ironic revelations). It seems that 'facts are constructed in

such a way that, once the controversy settles, they are taken for granted' (Latour & Woolgar in their reflection of factual construction 1986: 183). One of the Right World's delegates expressed this sentiment at the end of Day 1:

It is hard to believe [that] this is for most people the first time we've met. At the end of the day it feels as if it's **natural** to work with each other, and I think that's very positive, and [I] think that reinforces the point we're working for the common vision. Success looks very similar to both of us.

Emphasis added. Right World delegate, 25/6/2010

The process had led the delegates to find the 'natural' way for working together for a common good. Arguably, since Right World is very well known and public about who they will work with, the enactment of Agro-tech's ethicality was not only 'found' for Right World, but also could be (re)enacted and taken for granted beyond the workshop. However, 'facts are only facts *if they are actually treated as facts when they arrive at their destinations*' (emphasis Law and Mol's own, 2011: 2). I was unable to follow the ethical enactment beyond the workshop setting since I was a member of the consultancy rather than of Agro-tech or Right World.

The splitting of a scientific statement into an out-there object and a statement that reflects the external reality requires a great deal of emphasis on inscribing the finding into a document (Latour and Woolgar 1986). Such inscribed documents appear to bolster and stabilise the reality of the object. I observed this process of further inscription during the workshop Day 2, when Agro-tech's ethical reality now appeared taken for granted in agreed collaboration. This *fact of **agreed collaboration*** was formed into a plan of action, written down on eight sticky notes, and later inscribed (by me) into a 'workshop report'. The report was sent around to all delegates to share with their organisations.

Before further reflections on the genesis of Agro-tech's seemingly solidified and reported ethical reality, it is appropriate to interrogate the 'work' done by the workshop facilitator (work done by other actants is explored later in the chapter). I started this chapter by questioning the taken-for-granted assumption that a once-started ethical object is available for exploration, and I then explored the possibilities of a genesis process. What I have not yet analysed is the work of the facilitators as active actants in the ethical genesis. Although there are many similarities/parallels to the market/consuming testing literature in particular, this literature has yet to sufficiently explore the work done by the moderators. The focus had been on the consumer reality produced and the doings of participants. Even though the doings of the moderators has been lightly touched upon and hinted at as a worthy thing of research — 'moderating techniques ... are crucial to group performance' (Grandclément & Gaglio 2011: 105) — they have been largely left unanalysed.

7.4 Work as Bricolage

'Work ... takes work' (Law & Singleton 2000: 4). Here I explore a possible framework for understanding how the work was done. Instead of describing the effects of the movement of certain sticky notes and prioritisation of key knowledge in order to keep the workshop and process(es) going and taking for granted that it *was* done, I experienced first-hand the *doing of the work* in my position as 'observing participator'. Without this experience, I could only have theorised how it was *done*.

From my *in situ* ethnographic position, the work done seems to be appropriately construed as bricolage and the role of the facilitator as that of a bricoleur. As noted in Chapter 2's literature review, 'bricolage' describes a sort of collage effect in art, but it

was first used within academia by Lévi-Strauss (1962) to explain the equal but different rational logic of how primitives acquire and enact knowledge, as opposed to scientists, whose theoretical frame is to find the ‘real’ ‘universal’ truths and invent new techniques to complete the work. The bricoleur, then, is someone who ‘makes do with whatever is at hand’ — just like the facilitator, who used the expertise on sticky notes to create an improvised collage of knowledge.

A bricoleur *does* ‘by improvising, borrowing, and experimenting with new and existing elements’ (Di Domenico et al. 2010: 685). In this instance, the job being done was the work to create a collaborative consensus between the two multinational organisations. Likewise, the elements in the workshop were the ‘existing’ annotated and shared sticky notes with the “new” meanings enacted. The reader of the notes transforms the reality they temporally enact, which is reconfigured upon each ‘reading’, as the Agro-tech and Right World workshop facilitator did with the (re)enactments of the meaning of the sticky notes.

The facilitator’s work was the re-enactment of the meaning in a sticky note. She used the artefact notes at hand, selecting one note to enact the key and others to enact and become part of the new reality assemblages. Her steps were ‘retrospective’, drawing on an ‘already constituted set of tool and materials’ to form a dialogue to give answers to the problem of collaboration (Lévi -Strauss 1967: 33)

However, in contrast to Lévi-Strauss’ depiction of bricoleurs, the workshop examples in this chapter illustrate that the artefacts and possibilities were not ‘preconstrained’, that the actants are active, and that the desired outcome is chosen and framed throughout. The outcome for the workshop collaboration was ‘preconstrained’ prior to the act of

bricolage, as noted, since ‘achieving’ the plan of collaboration had already been written into the Agro-tech and Right World agenda two weeks prior to the start of the workshop. What was not ‘preconstrained’ was the assembled ‘reality’ of the enactment of consensus. It could have been otherwise. The resulting plan — which consisted of eight sticky notes — could have involved more or less notes and different actions. The possibilities and processes were not then limited by the elements; rather, the artefacts at hand act as actant-enablers to enact emergent meanings in the artefact combinations within a planned ‘preconstrained’ contextual use. Chapter 2 introduced the term ‘ethical bricolage’, and I propose that the work done here is that of said ethical bricolage.

7.5 Reflection on Processes(es) and Work

The bricolage-work of the workshop enacted and then began to take for granted *the* reality of a novel ethical object (Agro-tech’s ethical reality). The production of the finalised plan of action — an eight-sticky-note plan and the ‘workshop report’ — erased the bricolage-work of the workshop itself. Sticky notes left on the peripheral walls thus become peripheral knowledge. This fits with STS sensibilities focusing on “work” done with previous theories looking at it happening within a science lab in the process of fact creation, but it was equally found that the info and data — the ‘inference chains’ — not used were ‘eliminated’ (Star 1983: 216). In the workshop, a relatively small written plan of action, or final production, appeared to have eliminated all the chains of inference, including work done at the workshop and before it. Similarly, Star (ibid.) asserted that a process of ‘simplification’ takes place in order to achieve a small, stable, reified ‘fact’. Unlike Latour and Woolgar (1986), whose analysis didn’t help describe the process(es)

noted at the workshop, Star offers a theory of how to analyse 'complex (scientific) work patterns' and how 'fact' production 'routinely' happens.

Star (1983) argued that the process of simplification takes two forms: the simplification of selected results and the forgetting of unselected results. In other words, simplification is a product of choice. The prior form, which involves stripping the complications from the results, does not fit here. Less mess does not necessarily mean simpler. However, the latter form of simplification provides a valuable framework to understand how the 'fact' of Agro-tech's ethical reality was enacted in the process(es) of the workshop. In each process(es) of the workshop, a small subset of 'results' was selected and prioritised over others. The other data were subsequently seemingly forgotten.⁴⁶ *The fact* of Agro-tech's taken-for-granted ethical reality is isolated from its relationship to the larger and historical context of its creation.

It seems to be an oversimplification of the process(es) occurring in the workshop. The end product in my case is less substantial in quantity relative to the accumulation of the work done to get there, i.e., from hundreds of sticky notes to the eight-sticky-note plan. But it is not a less complicated position. Instead, each stage of the workshop process left some knowledge at the periphery and forgot it, but distilled other knowledge into a 'simple' next stage, which nevertheless represents a complex web of taken-for-granted work that was done in order to achieve the end result. As discussed, key solutions may

⁴⁶ On another occasion where I was acting as part of the ethical consultancy, I witnessed the taking down of a sticky-note from a wall — a yellow one reflecting a 'touch-point' moment with the organisation. It was being screwed up and thrown in the bin. The sticky-note in its moment of creation by the delegate had a reality of a touch-point, but its move from wall to bin meant all the expertise objective knowledge enacted had gone. The simplified knowledge momentarily reflected the world out there, and then, in its movement, reflected nothing of the organisation's external complex reality. It was unstuck from view, discussion, and, presumably in all but my field notes, memory.

not have acknowledged the key barriers, but they formed part of their reality and their construction (and vice versa). These solutions in turn formed part of the plan that contained the barriers. Furthermore, the next 'simple' process(es) included the past process(es) as well as the complexity of people — further complicated by not only involving the delegates, but also the wider multinational organisations and the people who are affected by the workshop topic (the women of the pro-poor initiatives). The final production of *the plan* provides a clear example of this, as the head facilitator notes, the 'we' of doing the plan means the two organisations and not just the workshop group:

In terms of these and next steps, there is a group behind [the initiators] who were pulling you into this room in the first place who are going to say how are **we** going to take this forward.

Emphasis added. Head Facilitator, 26/6/2010

Reflecting part of the notion of simplification, the facilitators did produce a "simple" plan and it was a restricted, version of the production of the workshop group. However, the plan was not simple in the sense of its interwoven complexity, which included the prioritised knowledge of the workshop as well as the other workshop delegates *and* their wider organisations in the enacted 'we'. The fact produced included the complexities of each process of the workshop including the pre-workshop work of inviting delegates. In this situation, the stabilisation of the fact occurred not because the complexity was stripped, but rather because it was distilled into the simple seeming report. Star (1983) and Latour & Woolgar (1986) blankly accept that the unused is forgotten or lost, but that was not the case here, as some knowledge got used for reification and only the peripheral or unprioritised knowledge was forgotten. Yet what is prioritised could have been otherwise.

The 'tools' used here are of great import in the work of the workshop: accomplishing collaboration and enacting a novel, yet taken-for-granted ethical reality. Unlike their human counterparts, this chapter has only noted rather than explored the 'tools' used by the facilitators and the delegates of the workshop. As found in previous empirical chapters, the non-human actants were not merely props, but actively involved in the realities enacted. I now turn to the 'tools', both the human and non-human actants, to interrogate whether they are equally important in the genesis of ethical realities.

7.6 The Tool Kit of Construction

The 'tools' of the workshop were important to the enactment, and as argued in previous chapters, objects and people are equally interwoven in the enactment of the multiple ethical object. Here again, both are active actants of this genesis. To elaborate on this assertion of their interwoven role, the assumptions attributed to and 'actions' done by both the object and human 'tools' are reviewed.

Although the actants here are drawn from the workshop discussed above, I also participated in other knowledge-producing exercises in my role as ethical consultant as part of Ethicentre. Most notably, these included an ongoing strategic planning exercise for an NGO to ensure that their ethical business practices would continue despite changes in funding. I also produced a pitch on behalf of an 'ethical' off-setter, in which it sought a contract to implement changes within a multinational company. Although the setting, invitees, and specifics of the outcomes differed, the generalised 'tool kit' became an observed pattern of similarity between the ethical consultancy field sites. Over a year after the Right World/Agro-tech workshop, my field notes of another site read:

After arriving at the HQ, I start the day as normal. While my colleague finishes typing up the PowerPoint to start the presentation, I unzip her rucksack and, as instructed, start to pull out mountains of sticky notes, placing them on a table in stacks of colour (whiteish, pink, green, blue) and size. (I put the 'jumbo'-sized sticky notes at the back as these are useful for labelling the 'key outcomes'.) On each chair, arranged in a semi-circle facing the wall, where I will next stick up a long roll of white paper for us to attach sticky notes to, I place a stack of yellow sticky notes and give each person a different coloured felt tip.

Field Note 2/8/2011

The same "tools" were present — sticky notes and felt tip pens for all the delegates. In this and the example at the core of this chapter, the present actants, the tool kit, appeared to be important in enacting and enabling the work done and accomplish this (temporal) ethical reality.

By being an *in situ* practitioner and in utilising this position for my research, I now build on the Chapter 6 discussion of the function and the content of actant-tools to understand what they *do* and *did*.

7.6.1 The Delegates

Although I officially invited the delegates, the two initiators selected them on the basis of their 'expertise' and 'authority' on the topic of discussion, as well as their position within the organisation they had come to represent. As explained earlier, the delegates also assumed the expertise, authority, and voice of their organisations.

The delegates "worked" in the workshop (re)producing their 'expertise' about key inscriptions and visuals onto the sticky notes that decorated the room. The delegates' identities 'worked' on multiple levels — as they temporarily represented themselves, their organisations, and the workshop group.

The delegates also “worked” on the ‘natural’ flow of conversation. They not only talked but also created and sustained the conversations that produced the ‘natural’ outcome. The delegates themselves were apparently surprised by the ‘natural’ consensus that they created, as one Right World delegate emphasised in her comments:

I am overwhelmed about the amount of ground we have actually covered ... the ideas, the positive engagement, and constructive way we’ve all gone about it. That has been terrific and I just hope we can do justice to it.

Beth, Right World, 26/6/2010

Beth was so overwhelmed because it was unexpected to achieve what they had. She noted the large amount of ‘ground’ covered in the work done. Although Beth like the other delegates had received the agenda prior to the workshop, they were apparently ‘surprised’ that they had ‘found’ the collaboration. The conclusion of an effective communication comes at the beginning and is framed throughout so that the reader is equipped to answer the puzzle when prompted (as discussed and shown in Chapter 6). In this instance, the solution framed throughout the workshop processes and given to the delegates in the form of the agenda was ‘collaboration’. This became Agro-tech’s enacted and taken-for-granted ethical reality. ‘Collaboration’ became the resolution that the delegates “worked out” and “found” when posed with the question of how we solve the *real* puzzle of the development topic under discussion. Seemingly, the workshop delegates became configured users who read the text as they should, thus they took for granted the “natural” flow of the conversation and “found” from it the “surprising” outcome of collaboration consensus and the intertwined new ethical object enactment. Furthermore, we can suggest that the new ethical object reality was formed (and arguably could have only been so) by these configured, certain-on-collaboration users.

7.6.2 Surprise

Us, consultants, acted in a ‘facilitator’ role at the workshop. As the word facilitator suggests, it is assumed that we were merely helping to get a conversation started and then aiding it to flow naturally to the end, whatever that might be (Grandclément & Gaglio 2011). The delegates’ surprised reaction to their progress seemed to indicate that they assumed we were distant and neutral to both organisations and thus had no bias concerning the outcome that transpired. They also assumed that we were objective, like scientists merely pointing out the observable ‘reality out there’ phenomena of the developing conversations, and thereby helping the group to ‘find’ and ‘identify’ the truths being created. The head facilitator also took this positioning for granted, wherein she seemed to share the surprise of reaching the (un)planned outcome of collaboration as she discussed with her team (myself and the other Ethicentre facilitator) and shared with the company:

OK, that was quite incredibly productive I think from you all. You all worked so hard and got, well, as Barbara summarised really well, it’s gone from issues right the way through to solutions, and to real clarity there on the ways of working between you.

Head facilitator, 25/6/2010

As the quote above and the previous quote from Beth (Right World) indicate, there seemed to be a shared sense of surprise at the (planned) outcome of the workshop. The incredible productivity is where the surprise lay, the amount of work achieved seemed unprecedented — it seemed beforehand as if we wouldn’t get through to the end stage. This contrast between the outcome and expectation was ironic in the sense that the facilitators and participants were able to reveal and enact something that they had not previously known was there and seemingly could not have known without the

workshop's work, tools, or process(es). Yet, as previously mentioned, we planned the workshop and shared the agenda with the delegates (including a creative brief and meeting flow documents) prior to its start. For example, it explained that at 2 p.m. we would identify the barriers to the topic and by 3.15 p.m. we would refine this into four key barriers, one per home group. Rather than a 'natural flow' to identify four key barriers, identifying these barriers was contingent on the pre-workshop work of designing a model of four home groups and even of determining what the workshop 'flow' would look like.

This is shown clearly in the quote above and further emphasised by an email from the head facilitator sent with the 'Workshop Report' to all delegates:

Thanks to you all for putting such energy and commitment into the Workshop ... on 25 and 26 June. Please find attached a report of the workshop, which demonstrates how much you shared and achieved in one and a half days together.

12/7/2010

The consensus of the plan between Agro-tech and Right World and the achievement of Agro-tech's (temporal) ethical reality was instead attributed to all the 'hard work' and 'honesty' that the delegates put in during the workshop. Assuming that an 'un-steered' conversation had led to a 'successful' outcome ignores the role that the workshop documents (created before the event) and 'unbiased' facilitators played in the outcome. Although the facilitators (we) did fulfil the requirement to be unbiased toward a particular organisation, we were biased towards our own organisation and the role we had been employed to fulfil, even if unconsciously. Throughout the process(es), we leaned towards some presented knowledge, and ultimately enacted its prioritisation and created the reality of being key (even if temporarily). The other ideas thus became

leftovers that were distilled into the key concepts or forgotten and lost. In so doing, our paths and actions much resembled that of scientists who prioritised and solidified what findings equal fact, leaving un-prioritised findings to become artefacts (Latour & Woolgar 1986).

7.6.3 Sticky Notes and Felt-Tip Pens

As discussed in the first part of the chapter, sticky notes are mobile. They circulated between delegates and readily shifted to front walls and to peripheral walls. The sticky notes were used to make the movement of key concepts easier than it would have been if notes had to be torn out of a piece of paper and then somehow merged into another piece of paper. The inscribed sticky notes, a mobile materialisation of the concepts, enable the trouble-free movement of the concepts and their meaning. The sticky notes also provide a reliable mode of transportation, and work themselves to convince and sustain this assumption. There were no complaints when sticky notes moved or concerns that their journey had changed them or the knowledge that they represented. The importance of the humble sticky note has been noted before; however, other researchers have not focused on why the notes are important, just that the notes (assumed passive) prop-like presence is (Straker 1997; Thomke & Nimgade 2007; Hammersley 2009; Beynam-Davies et al. 2001).

The felt-tip pens also 'worked' as trusted actants in the process(es), again reinforcing the assumption that they were reliable tools of translation. Not a single delegate complained that the markings on the sticky notes were not a perfect translation of their expert knowledge, nor did anyone mention that the marking had changed when moved. Rather than statically transferring the meaning on the sticky notes, these tools' mobility

allowed for the (re)interpretation and (re)classification of the inscription and visuals in the workshop setting. This argument challenges theorists such as Hodder (2000) and Bryman (2004) who suggest inscription is a mute, passive, or simply 'out there' thing. Instead these inscriptions acted as a mediator rather than serving an assumed and passive intermediary role. Latour (1993) differentiates between an intermediary from a mediator: The former is merely a carrier whereas a mediator actively (re)creates and modifies. The inscribed sticky notes, as mentioned in the process(es), worked to change the attributed ownership of the expertise knowledge from individuals to the group as a whole.

At another consultancy event (held at a different NGO headquarters on 2/8/2011), the colours of sticky notes increased the potential that the sticky notes would act as a tool to enable different interpretations and the subsequent realities of what each of the keywords meant. In a field note (written on a white sticky note and stuck into my notebook), I listed what the different coloured sticky notes represented: Yellow for touch-points, Blue for blue sky moments, Green for emotion, Pink for labels and time. In an earlier session (July 2011), however, the same colours represented something different: Pale Yellow for users, Bold Yellow for location, Blue for 'what users they get', Large Pink for overarching audience classifications, White for audiences, and Green overlapping needs of audiences. By moving a key concept onto another colour sticky note, the interpretation for all involved appeared to change. For example the concept 'UK/USA' was written onto a bold yellow sticky note (representing location), it was then re(written) onto a large pink sticky note to represent an overarching audience

classification. It later moved onto a blue sticky to reflect ‘what users they get’, changing the content and reality of the words for the group depending on which sticky it was on.

In the same session I noted that by drawing a Venn Diagram shape on a separate piece of paper and labelling the overarching circles ‘charity’ and ‘business’, white sticky notes could be moved into the various parts of the diagram. In one position they (temporally) represented the ‘reality’ of the organisation’s (charity) audience layout until they were reshuffled, whereupon they once more represented the ‘reality’ of the (business) audience layout, albeit a different one, a multiple of the *real* audience.

7.7 Inscription

Even if not part of the tool kit *per se*, another actant unequivocally part of this ethical enactment is inscription and its ongoing creation. Various types of inscription have been noted throughout this and the previous chapter in preparing the pre-workshop documents and during the workshop “work”. Yet why is inscription so important in the work to achieve the apparent solidification of *the* plan of collaboration and in turn the interwoven solidification of the novel ethical reality of Agro-tech?

Latour & Woolgar (1986) were arguably the first theorists to notice how closely linked scientific ‘work’ is to the use, production, and circulation of inscription devices. Latour (1987) importantly elaborated on this emphasis, suggesting the framing of the immutable mobile — an object travels yet it holds its meaning and reading the same (see Sections 2.3.3.1 and 5.2).

Herein, this argument for mutable mobiles (rather than immutable mobiles) parallels the ethical object and actants of Chapters 5 and 6. Sticky notes and their inscriptions’

apparent success is that the visible could indeed seemingly change. For example, 'water' written on a sticky note "changed" from representing the standalone barrier of water scarcity and its necessary part of plant growth to representing the reality of the key barrier of infrastructure. In contrast to Law's claims that 'particular realities are constructed by particular inscription devices and practices' (2004: 21), it is not a particular inscription that constructs a particular reality here. Rather, the same pattern of five letters on a sticky note resulted in than more than one reality. This finding not only seems to question the plausibility (in this case) that the importance of inscription is based on its immutability, but also question in a larger context whether words have inherent 'meanings [which] are considered to be basic and stable' (Barbe 1995: 6). This suggests that, beyond the words, the function of the documents is equally important. Words, like the 'facts' they are used to describe, are often assumed to be a true separate representation of the reality 'out there'. Although the meaning of 'text' is often read as linear, structured, and uncontested, it is not the case in this example. Even though it remains visibly the same, the mobile inscription, the actant, is multiple in its reality(s).

As noted in Chapter 5, the notion of mutable mobiles or radical objects, has been considered in a plethora of ways — fluid (de Laet & Mol 2000), fire (Singleton & Law 2005), and of multiple ontologies (Mol 2002). However again these frameworks were found inadequate in addressing my findings, especially here focusing on the changes in the apparent meaning and applicability of the example of 'water'. The site of enactment does not change — it is still a sticky note with the same word. This adds to Chapter 5's discussion that multiple reality(s) can exist in the same contexts and that crux of this is

not because they rarely meet. Previous object theorists examples of ‘successful’ mutable mobiles focus on how a singular label is assigned to the different realities of an object. They assert that a singular label may be attached to multiple objects and, by extrapolation, cover multiple meanings of the same object. The literature does not, however, focus on the label itself — the word, or inscription, on its own. As observed here, it may be visibly stable and solidify statements, but also be mutable and mobile within the same geographical and temporal context, as evident in the collaboration of the two organisations described in this chapter.

7.8 Consensus

This chapter is built on the notion that an (assumed) homogeneous consensus of collaboration was achieved at the workshop. It seemed that a stable inscribed plan was created and then incited what “‘we” will do.’ As mentioned above, the ‘we’ included the workshop group as well as the organisations that the participants represented. This consensus of collaboration both enacted and took for granted Agro-tech’s ethical reality.

From the accounts introduced throughout the chapter, one could conclude that participants achieved consensus as the conversations of the workshop ended and the delegates left after the closing lunch, as planned. This movement toward consensus could also be seen as part of a broader social tendency. Both Goffman’s (1969) concept of decorum and Garfinkel’s (1967) discussion of breaching experiments suggest that the sociality of groups fosters (a presumed) consensus. This becomes an accomplished norm for any given social interaction. For this reason, it becomes very difficult to breach group norms and show disagreement. In other words, it is rare for a meeting not to finish in a state of (apparent) consensus. It seems that finishing or concluding a discussion enacts

some sort of consensus (as this chapter exemplifies in its own right, here in this presented conclusion).

What happens if the apparent homogeneous collaborative-consensus is not achieved? Selected delegate quotes reify the discussed consensus.⁴⁷ However, as queried earlier in this chapter, is it possible for these delegates to ‘really’ speak on behalf of their fellow delegates and greater organisations? What about comments from other delegates from both organisations that indicate a different ‘outcome’ of the workshop:

So I am sort of ultimately responsible for this and ... I don’t want to drive off thinking this will be very easy to do, because it is going to be an awful lot of winning the hearts and minds of people we don’t know.

Richard, Agro-tech, 26/6/2010

I think we have been very polite and we haven’t got yet to the point that differences haven’t [sic] started emerging. ... I think there will be challenges.

Jo, Right World, 26/6/2010

Interestingly, these two quotes come from the two ‘initiators’. These comments both mention that the work needed to meet full collaboration isn’t over and that differences still remain, implying that the unified consensus was not established and the delegates could not speak for their greater organisations. Both initiators note the challenges of implementing the plan and bring back into reality their greater organisations and the differences that will be uncovered. What does this mean for the enacted ethical reality? Although further work must consider whether a consensus was achieved, acts such as the making of the ‘sticky note plan’ seem to point to a type of deferral of an *absolute* resolution.

⁴⁷ Further discussion about the selection of quotes is explored and analysed in the next chapter.

The collaborative plan was not put into practice, as I learned about six months later when I inquired about the progress from the head facilitator. Like much of the peripheral knowledge, the collaborative plan seems to have been forgotten. What does this mean for the enacted ethical object? Arguably, it supports Chapter 5's discussion of the temporary reality of ethical achievements. A (temporal) collaboration temporarily enacted the ethical object. Does the apparently less-than-homogeneous consensus mean that Agro-tech's taken-for-granted ethical reality was not achieved? Or achieved partially? As shown earlier, some delegates are sure of the consensus of collaboration.

Does it point to the potential that this ethical object (as discussed in Chapter 5) not only has multiple realities in different spaces and times, but also has a multiple reality within the same space and time? Just as the chimera heuristic offered in Chapter 5, it seems that ethical reality could be as much what it is as what it is not, both present and absent simultaneously.⁴⁸ What was found is that 'realities are not flat', but the 'art of allegory' is 'crafting multiplicities, indefinitenesses, and undecidabilities' and holding them together (Law 2003). This appears to have happened in the workshop. In the temporal context of the workshop, the new ethical object was achieved, but whether this means that an ethical reality was achieved for a sustained time is left and enacted and decided both by the reader of this chapter and the actant readers of the workshop.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter interrogates an account of a collaboration workshop in order to explore whether, in this case, achieved consensus could enact an ethical genesis for the

⁴⁸ This supports Law and Mol's (2001) and Law's (2003) argument that to enact the present, you enact the absent, and vice versa.

organisation Agro-tech. At the same time, it asks to what extent this could be explained through STS sensibilities.

Whether a genesis of ethical reality can be enacted is not a straightforward question, but rather appears to depend on the interpretation of the 'reader' — in this case, interpretation of whether or not consensus was achieved. Adding to the complexity, whether an ethical genesis can or cannot be enacted does not have a finite answer. Even those delegates who achieved and expressed consensus and thus, a new ethical attribution, never realised their expressed plan. The enactment of Agro-tech's ethical reality through collaborative work seems to have been forgotten and artefacted, like the reality of the "other" peripheral sticky note facts of the workshop.

However, in order to explore the messy, chimera of genesis of the ethical reality, we can usefully draw upon STS sensibilities, particularly ideas of consumer and scientific fact-enactment that have already been discussed. This buttresses and provides a useful framework of analysis for questioning whether STS 'means' the ethical genesis of a business.

Broadly, STS theories did not address the 'work' of the workshop facilitators. In considering anthropological literature, I found the concept of bricolage valuable, especially in the move beyond mere description to analysis of how the 'work' of the workshop was 'done' by the facilitators. Interestingly, using this framework bolstered arguments about the similarities between science and ethics and scientists and ethicists, as the scientist could be framed as a bricoleur rather than its opposite (as Lévi-Strauss had originally portrayed, 1973). Whether the framework of bricolage is a usable sensibility for other actors and explorations requires further research. A pertinent area

for exploring this question might be markets, particularly the work of consumer tests and market research.

The next chapter moves on to explore whether the framework of bricolage is useful in explaining the work of a social scientist and this particular social scientist (me). Symmetry and reflexivity have been constituted as utilised tools for STS theorists and will next be applied to my own enacted ethical-knowledge reflecting on this and all the other empirical chapters. The notion of my own author-ity will also be interrogated, just as this chapter tries to highlight the use of selected examples in order to reify prioritised key realities *found*.

Again, this chapter indicates the importance of actants, not just human-actor, in the enactment of ethical reality(s). The 'tool kit' of the workshop included the 'hard-working' delegates, 'neutral' facilitators, sticky notes and marker pens. It also highlights the multiple places 'it could have been otherwise' — from the invited delegates, the selecting of the outcome, and the 'reality' of the plan of collaboration for both the Agro-tech and Right World workshops. Finally, it affirms the open-endedness and temporal achievement of the multiple realities explored throughout this thesis.

Chapter 8. Reflexive-Reflexivity; Does STS Mean Ethical Business?

8.1 Introduction

This is the fourth and the last empirical chapter of my thesis. Unlike the chapter before, it focuses on all the field sites including my internal one to take a reflexive look at my thesis as a whole. This reflexive chapter in turn is purposefully not neat. It *wants* to be messy, and in doing so attempts to push the boundaries of what can be done with knowledge production. The chapter also builds on the other empirical chapters' questions by developing the ideas presented whilst taking a more critical look at how these previous chapters' reflections came about.

In order to do this, I introduce an ethnography of my own ethnography, my fourth research site, to analyse the discussions, frameworks, assumptions, and theories thus far presented. The aim of this reflexive approach is to build up my analysis of the data collected and enacted to finally provide a critically reflexive answer to the thesis' underlying question: 'Does STS means ethical business?'.⁴⁹

A reflexive perspective has become acknowledged and somewhat taken for granted as an essential part of qualitative research (Watt 2007: 82). It forms a researcher's frame of reference that we are part of the world we investigate (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995: 18- 21). However as stated in Chapter 1, this thesis aims to go beyond the taken-for-granted 'benign introspective' style of reflexivity (Woolgar 1988a: 22). Instead I aim to be more active in my reflexive engagement by embracing a style of reflexivity that can

⁴⁹ Interestingly, Guillemin & Gillam (2004) suggest that reflexivity is itself an ethical action and a tool to be used upon to achieve 'ethics in practise' whilst researching. If we followed this line of thinking, then 'doing' reflexivity would be a requirement to legitimise my own ethical claims.

bring about the ‘ability to break away from a frame of reference and to look at what it is *not* capable of saying’ (emphasis added, Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000: 246). This approach I term overall as reflexive-reflexivity because it is a radical style of reflexivity that builds on Woolgar’s notion of ‘constitutive reflexivity’ (1988a: 22).

I aim to achieve this radical reflexivity by looking at the changing story of my own thesis and the use of a patchwork of other authors’ theories and how I have modified them for the purposes of my own research. Plus, in an additional reflexive turn, the double reflexivity, I critically review the analysis put forth in this chapter in a close-as-real-time reflexive voice as can be achieved in the most relevant section, mess, to highlight and analyse the closeness of researcher and data, and my politics that came with it — not discussed elsewhere.

This approach also enables me to address who I have assumed to be my “user”, my own enacting effects, the value of my own work, and ideas on ‘author-ity’, which, as noted in Chapter 1, is about being the author. I have the privilege of authority in my text and choosing to write what enacts what (Woolgar 1988a). With this reflexive-reflexivity and near-real-time analysis within my own thesis, I aim to further contemporary knowledge by pushing to expand other authors’ previous use of reflexivity and show the utility of this additional reflexive step in knowledge production by bringing additional avenues of analysis to the fore.

The chapter is separated into two main sections, the second building on the first.

The first section of the chapter is used to explore the utility of the ‘active concern with *one’s own* production of knowledge claims, texts, and talks’ (emphasis in original,

Ashmore 1994: 159). These sections centre around using the style of reflexivity based on ideas of 'symmetry' — a development of Bloor's 1976 notion that beliefs, no matter how they are judged (scientific or not, true or false), should be explained using similar frameworks and arguments. By doing this, I bring back some of the mess of research hidden within the coherent thesis. By focusing on symmetry, I produce new knowledge while also bolstering the ethical claims presented in the previous chapters and building on each of those chapters' findings about mess, users, and genesis. This analysis adds an additional context in which to prove and test my theories. It provides yet another example of an enacted, ethical object. The reflexive-reflexivist voice is intertwined throughout and looks at my ontological politics and my closeness in my research of data found and presented. Such a voice also comments on and critiques the previous discussion where appropriate to achieve my radical reflexivity, something I have pointed out that others have fallen short of achieving (see Section 2.3.2). This provides a way for the thesis to bring as-close-to-real-time reflexive voice back into the text and enables this thesis to explore the notion of ontological politics (Mol 2002), partial accounts (Rosen 1991; Neyland 2008), fractured and filtered data (Millner & Glassner 2004; Boddy 1989), and building allies.

The second section of the chapter focuses specifically on providing a reflexive and critical answer to the question of whether STS means ethical business. This is subdivided into two further sections: the intuitive inquiry and the enacted inquiry. In the first subsection drawing on the chapter findings so far and the greater research context of the thesis, I extend reflexive sensibilities to add to the debate about whether STS can or should move beyond the boundaries of its namesake areas — the intuitive reading of

the question. The second subsection comments and critiques on the answer prefacing it as well as the thesis at large to explore ideas of whether we can answer if STS does enact ethical business — the more counterintuitive reading of the question.

8.2 The Use and Utility of Reflexivity

Before the chapter proceeds, it is important to address the use and utility of reflexivity as it is presented. There are qualities used throughout this text to bring coherency and strength to the writing. These are used, however, given the assumption that my readers will be attuned to the STS sensibilities this whole thesis is based on, and thus axiomatic that these qualities are situated, contingent, constructed, and achieved given the context in which they are presented. Like so many terms, the meaning of 'reflexive' is debated, decentred, and offered under different auspices (see Lynch 2000 for an oversight of the different definitions). I find most utility in the use of reflexivity in the form of symmetrically and critically actively engaging with my own knowledge claims.

My chapter most closely aligns with the use of reflexivity labelled by Lynch (2000) as 'radical reflexivity'. I draw both on the sensibilities of this type of reflexivity and develop previous theorists' use of it. This type of radical reflexivity is relatively rare in comparison to the full reflexive gamut, but it provides the most utility for enabling thorough research and radical knowledge. This type of reflexivity focuses on interrogation of object, subject, research and write up's similarities. It is a development of the early 'methodological self-reflexivity' mostly associated with Merton (1978) and later the strong program (Bloor 1976) that critiqued and developed Merton's work to suggest reflexivity is a means for science to know itself (see more above on Bloor's use).

The proponents of radical reflexivity, most notably Woolgar (1988a, 1988b, 1992) and Ashmore (1989, 1993, 1995 - the later works being characterised by the author himself as ‘the analysis of debunking practices’), Pollner (1991), and later Pels (2000), demonstrated the shortcomings of the previous attempts of reflexivity as practitioners they still, to varying extents act as seemingly distant researchers and leave their own work largely unexplored.

The radical reflexive approach that I draw upon was shown by the earlier theorists to be one that is purposeful and explicit in its holistic treatment of representation and its dismissal of any form of scientific privilege over another (Woolgar 1992). The approach evaluates and analyses the construction of knowledge and its associated texts of all sciences including its own STS works. Practitioners deconstruct the ‘objective’ of their work and reveal the uncertainty, messy, and local contingencies of research done and research produced, helping bring a much more thorough understanding to knowledge production with no prejudice to any particular rhetorical or methodological uses or distinctions.

This is what I aim to achieve, showing my own ethical object and its messy enactment to be a fruitful and valuable additional research site - one that brings to the fore far more knowledge about knowing and representation, a knowledge that would have otherwise been lost. In addition, by focusing on my own ethical object, I meet my own claims of doing thorough research, as this investigation would be incomplete without this radical self-referencing chapter that checks that my own ethical object can also be robustly explored through the theories – chimerical object with multiple ontologies, attempted

to be configured to its users, and genesis from the work of bricolage - applied to the ethical object encountered at my external research sites.

As expanded in the chapter on methodology (Chapter 3), I seek here to push the boundaries of what can be *done* and discovered about knowledge production, and to show that I have avoided 'ontological gerrymandering' (Woolgar & Pawluch 1985) and 'instrumental irony' (Woolgar 1983), both of which I have used to critique so many other authors (see Section 2.3.2). Rather for the sake of contingency I have attempted to problematise the assumption of my own privileged researcher stance and in doing so, I explore and build upon the not-well-used radical reflexive sensibilities. This will highlight the utility of applying reflexivity to the problems — long discussed within the field and too seldom attempted — of bringing mess back into method and the problems of linear text not accurately representing *the* reality observed in research (an idea now widely discussed, but introduced within ethnographic-style explorations and write-ups by Clifford & Marcus 1986; Boddy 1989; Katz 1983; and Latour & Woolgar 1986).

The reflexivity I enact creates the 'protective mantra' (Fox 2004) of being aware of my biases, and it also focuses on the productive style of my social inquiry and the realities presented (Mol 2002). It specifically analyses my role as an active participant-observer in the realities I witnessed, recorded, selected, and wrote about.

I also show the closeness between the thesis' textual representation, the ethical realities it claims to represent, and my own academic engagement. By doing so, it enables further analysis of my own (ethical STS) knowledge constructions. As a result, I enact my constitutive position both through this narrative and my analysis.

In making this choice, I suggest that to engage in this self-reflexivity is not a mistake (Fuller 1988), or a waste of time (Lynch 2000), as I do not fear the methodological horrors (Woolgar 1988b) of applying the reflexivity critique to my own work. Instead, I argue that this reflexive step aids me in bringing mess very much to the fore of this text. As Ashmore also argues, this form of analysis 'is something to be treasured' (1988: 160).

8.3 Reflexive-Reflexivity

8.3.1 Mess

A primary critique of my thesis is that its conclusions aren't final, absolute, or cleanly rounded off. That's because they're not supposed to be. Still, the issue remains: How should I fairly represent the mess of *this* object, my thesis?

Current social science methods and the channels usually made available to researchers allow for only a limited ordered knowledge to be expressed. It has been argued by Law (2004) and Law and Urry (2004) that social sciences methods are not adequate to research 'messy objects', yet it is also argued by these same theorists that methods 'are not innocent' and help create the realities which they discover. Although I agree that it is not easy to convey the mess of what was found in the linear text of a D.Phil. thesis, by starting with the mess, I can frame the rest of the text and be unconstrained by a singular empirical lens. Thus, the mess is much less likely to be lost in the coherent text. In considering my reflexive symmetry, I attempt to disrupt my 'ordered' text (a use of reflexivity as detailed by Ashmore 1994) and move beyond benign introspection to produce new (reflexive) knowledge, rather than only reflect on what has already been stated.

After introducing that mess at the start of the empirical chapters, I go on to explore the object of my study that further explains how it became hard to specify or even *find* my object due to my research methods (more on *my* methods later in this chapter).⁵⁰ Like the ethical object(s) that were finally “found”, this thesis-ethical-object will be shown to be complex, theoretically unconventional, and actant-enacted.

As noted previously, people can have different perspectives. I don’t deem all differences to be of ontological positionings, but this thesis and discussions of its ethical object are ones of ontological-enactments not epistemological-perspectives. As discussed in Section 5.2 the weight of ethics cannot be reduced to mere meaning and perspective (Mol 2002).

Although the mess of my research has been framed throughout the empirical chapters, those chapters could all be described as not radical in their approach. The mess is there in a first level of reflexive awareness, temporally real, and helps to portray the robustness of this research and a sense of distance between the mess found by the research methods and the research methods themselves. As bringing to light the mess in this way adds to my claims of accurate, thorough research, it makes me the conscientious ethnographer, taking note of everything, including myself. However, here, in the radical reflexivity, the lines between research and reality are blurred — and the messy closeness of research done and realities-made-to-be-recorded are brought together. In this closeness we find messy ontological politics.

⁵⁰ This was a methodological difficulty found to be the case for *the* messy ethical object found in all my research sites, but it opens the question, whether this would be the case in other sites and enactments of *the* ethical object? Or whether such difficulties would be found for different types of objects?

Like the ethical object(s) reported in Chapter 5, the enactments of my thesis-object were multiple, yet they held together. Despite their momentary *nature*, they were real. They were enacted in-temporal-reality — at spans that lasted as long or as short as they were until a change in data or my theoretical framing enacted a new reality. I also show in the following section my chimerical rhetoric also can be usefully employed to discuss this ethical-thesis enactment.

For example, at the end of my first year of research, I enacted this ethical object through the process of drafting, revising, and submitting my Transfer Thesis. This reality was not only real, but was validated by an examiner pass with one caveat: The object of my study was to be more fully delineated and laid out in a follow-up addendum document to be submitted for approval by my examiners. I had purposely tried to avoid this position of establishing what the delineation of *the* ethical object should be. However, to ensure a pass and to carry on my research, I delineated the object in my Transfer Thesis addendum document. The ethical object of my study was thus enacted like so:

The study involves multiple intertwined ongoing levels of the investigation researched at multiple sites. These can be broken down into three statements of what my ethical research object is:

I will research how **ethicity** is enacted and done, *what actions create* and are attributed **ethicity** by the ethical company (in the department) of which I am a member. (I will refer to this as the centre point of my research).

I will research in what forms the **ethicity** of the centre can feature and whether it is transferred to the users. I will then identify how (if) transportability is accomplished.

I will research how (if) the **ethicity** of the company is ‘read’ and understood by its users, who will be identified independently by the research process rather than me simply relying upon the assumption that the dichotomous roles of consumers and producers are the only ones present. Furthermore I will investigate whether the enactment, what actions are done and attributed **ethicity** within the user’s interactions, is different or the same as the centre.

This is in contrast to the current literature which assumes homogeneous 'readings' and enactments across all users. Thereby I will identify the different dynamics of reading vs. enactment of *the* **ethicity** under investigation.

Emphasis added, extract from Transfer Thesis 'Methodology Addendum' 5/10/2010

In the addendum document, the enactment of the ethical object came through the lens of 'actions' only (as emphasised in italics in the text above). But, as was discussed in the previous chapters, the enactment of the object(s) found in the field were much more diverse. This is one of the first of the many multiple realities of how my 'ethical object' was enacted. One noticeable difference from later enactments, including this thesis, is a deliberate change in language. **Ethicity** was removed from the thesis (see bold in the extract above) upon the discovery the dictionary definition of ethnicity did not align with the nuances and mess I had hoped would be read.

In another example of my own object multiplicity, on 27th January 2011, in a discussion with several STS peers where I was expressing my difficulty in finding *the* object of my study, it was discussed and planned that a good place to find it would be through a breaching experiment using my first research site's social media channel, the Good Business' official Facebook page. After that discussion, the reality of my ethical object, my thesis methodology, and findings I encountered were very differently enacted through the boundaries formed around those in and out of the social media tools deployed by Good Business.

This enactment is noticeably absent from this thesis, not because it was unreal at the time of the discussion, but because its reality was fleeting and not deemed to be as significant a point in later developments of my findings. Such is the case with countless reality(s) of this thesis, including chapters on social media, that have come in and gone

out of reality. The use of different reflexive types of texts have been the reality of this thesis and this chapter in particular has now become a multiple ontology of the object and a temporal reality no longer enacted.

Like the ethical object(s) discussed thus far in the empirical chapters, my own ethical-thesis-object can be explained through the heuristic of chimera. Throughout, I have labelled how I have drawn upon or developed the work of other academics. Additionally, I have not shoehorned my findings into one academic framework, as I agree with Latour (1988: 174) that this makes for non-reflexive and poor academic work. Rather I have used bits and pieces of my STS background to create a smorgasbord of theoretical pieces to (re)enact the ethical object. Then like the chimera ethical object described in Chapter 5, my thesis object can too be described as being enacted by what it is, as much as by what it is not. It is this unique combination that creates novel findings. It is enacted from the parts of the other theories used and data drawn upon as much as the parts and data not. This was my choice — my ontologically political choice.

8.3.2 Ontological Politics

So far, even in this chapter I have tried to distance myself from my thesis and research findings. As the distancing was part of the thesis at large, but also my benign reflexivity to build up the robust reading of my thesis. I continually state through my thesis that I am not judging the ethical object(s) that arose in my fourth site (my thesis) symmetrically, as I did not do so for my other field sites. Instead, I observe the ethical object as it was enacted.

However, I now want to address the topic of ‘politics’ and the judging that comes from this. The politics I refer to have been coined ‘ontological politics’ (Mol 1999, 2002; Law &

Urry 2004; Lezaun & Marres 2011).⁵¹ This implies that ‘I’ — the researcher is a participant — am an actant in my own ethical enactments. And to an extent that I shall explore next, I am also a chooser of the realities produced, both the enactments of the realities I was involved within in the field and those I enacted for my thesis. To that end, no social science methods are innocent, and in some ways those methods ‘enact whatever it is they describe *into* reality’ (emphasis in the original, Law & Urry, 2004: 403). Language, texts, and actions enact reality; therefore, the methods of social sciences — are not ontologically superior nor ontologically different from the issues they study. Just like other actants, social methods do not just describe reality, whether it be financial theories enacting the markets (Mackenzie 2008; Mackenzie & Millo 2003; Beunza et al. 2006; Knorr Cetina & Brugger 2002); Hawkins’ (2011) plastic bottles; Marres’ (2011) carbon accounting; Lezaun’s (2011) Norwegian merchant ship *Balao*; or even my ethical theories enacting the ethical object at the centre of my investigation.

This does not mean there is no reality or that in some way there is *a* reality that is unable to be analysed through social methods. Nor does this mean that reality is arbitrary or even that all realities are the same in production. Rather, each method does produce reality, albeit different ones (Law & Urry 2004). What I illuminate is that my research (my ethical object) is both real and produced within the field *and* within this whole text of my thesis. The more stabile a reality seems, the stronger the impression that the politics have been removed from it (Papadopoulos 2010). That is exactly what I have done to build up the strength of my reality until this point. It took a lot of effort both here in my thesis and for my tribes of study to enact stable seemingly ethical

⁵¹ It is somewhat incorrect to reference Mol and Law & Urry here, as this term was first used by Foucault himself. However, its inclusion in this discussion is due to the way it was drawn upon and developed by the cited theorists.

object(s), and it has taken even more work to make my politics visible in this discussion. I accomplished this by unpacking all the work done and adding the mess back into the stabile. I claim throughout this research that I did not set out into the field with a predetermined framework in mind to explore the ethical object of my research. What I observed was not an objective absolute ethical object, rather the ethical object 'exposed to [my] method of questioning' (Heisenberg, cited in Capra 1996:40). This was a particular reality that could have been otherwise, but the reality, I, though modestly, *chose* to enact. In this choice lies my ontological politics.

For if 'reality is multiple, it is also political' (Mol 2002: 7), as ontologies are brought into being and either sustained or allowed to fade away. And, if methods enact realities, not merely describe them, it is possible to (at least attempt to) choose what realities to enact via your methodological approach. My methodological approach informed my time in the traditional external fields and my own ethnography of my ethnography. The multiple ethical object under enactment was not only that which I studied but also that which I wrote up and present as my own ethical object, this thesis and the knowledge produced.

At every stage of the research, there is multiplicity and political choices made. Even while in field, the data is not raw or apolitical because it is shot through with a filter of my interpretation (Katz 1983). My accounts are valid and thorough but partial. I chose the style of data collection via ethnography. The things that I deemed to be relevant to record included gestures; sighs; spoken discussions that I was part of or not; unspoken rules of the tribe, which I assumed I had learnt through length of time in field (for example, the 'washing ritual' in Chapter 4); and assumptions I had become enough of a

participant to observe correctly (see also Chapter 4). This was all tested-through thought or in-real-life breaching experiments. I also included objects in the form of all types documentation such as post-it notes, emails, social media, leaflets, letters, promotional material, signs, office layout, and packaging.

In the next level of filtering there is an ongoing back and forth through the data to create the multiple reality(s) of the thesis and its findings. This process is littered with exemplar, actant examples that are filtered from the mass and selected to enact the reality of the rest and bolster my arguments. For example, to make the field notes into the text presented here, I took my data out of the field and filtered them once more by a 'physical and cultural remove' (Boddy 1989) to be subjected to the further filtering of my time and my limit to make more observations, the ethnographer's memory, and the limitation of the medium available for writing. However, this does not undo my claim to have done my ethical ethnography to the highest standard and found and reported the messy object as well as possible (Section 5.2). By adding this current political analysis, I review all my research sites and points where the ethical object could have been reported and analysed and have only made my research more robust by taking such a close-up view.

To really make this thesis true to its mess and give the most accurate answer to my findings, it is imperative to critically focus on the unit of empirical research, that being data, used in all of these settings, including those data found in the form of field notes, examples, and quotes. References from others are not quite data, but are used in a similar way to add the thesis' external points of legitimacy.

Starting in the field, I collected data, what Laing (1967) referred to as ‘capta’, presuming the antecedent existence of the thing to be captured. This discussion critiques such an assumption and argues data can be more accurately described here in the midst of the mess and closeness as ‘enacta’ — I enacted data. This enacta is more messy than a process of method-enactment. Filtering explored thus far suggests that after the method’s effect there was more ‘out there’ - not just waiting - to be collected.

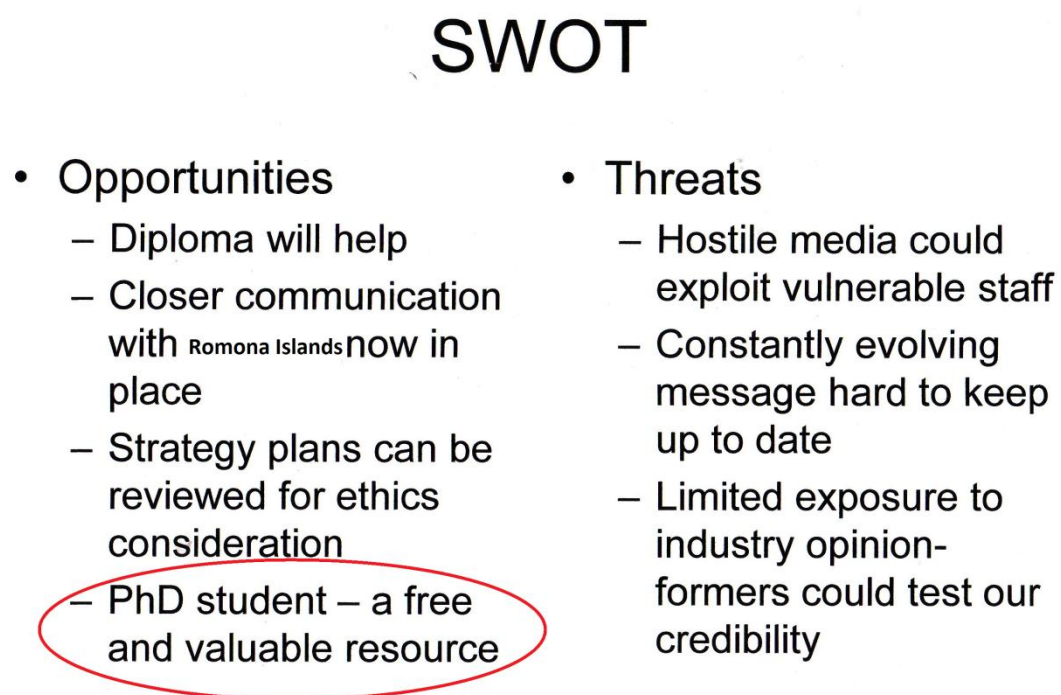
The next step of reflexivity, the radical step, is to show the level of mess hidden in my discussions above and analyse the closeness of ‘I’ and enacta. I was in the mess, part of the creation of the ethics I found and the ethics I recorded, not just the methods I chose. I not only became a legitimate member of the my self-avowed tribes (see Chapter 4) but an effector in findings I witnessed. What was there may not have been without me. There could have been something else, but not as I reported it. So now I move on to analyse bringing my use of enacta and references from my own reflexive ethnography to reflexively review the whole thesis, including the discussions already put forth in this chapter — and with that giving the second level of reflexivity and symmetry to my research and bringing a reflexive voice as close to real time as the text medium allows.

8.3.3 Enacta

At Lux Choc I was allowed access to the organisation on the premise that I would help my original gatekeeper, Nicola, write and create the ‘Ethics Communication’ strategy that all members would receive. Specifically, she asked me to help write the ‘chocolate diploma’, an online teaching tool to learn about Lux Choc’s Engaged Ethics Programme that was discussed in Chapter 5 and part of the multiple chimerical object I reported. In our second meeting where we discussed details of my access (12/5/11), Nicola said:

‘What you are doing will feed into that [chocolate diploma] and look, you’re on here [she pointed to the SWOT analysis] as a valuable opportunity’ (Nicola, Lux Choc, 12/5/11). Figure 21 shows where I was, as highlighted, written into the ethics plan as a valuable source of ‘free’ knowledge.

Figure 21: SWOT analysis within the Lux Choc 'Ethics Communication' strategy document



The page shows the ‘O’, opportunities, and ‘T’, threats, to the new Ethics Communication plan Nicola was working on. The page before had listed the ‘S’, strength, and ‘W’, weakness, of the SWOT analysis that she had used to show a balanced approach to creating the new documentation. She summed up a new ethics version of how the company’s ‘constantly evolving’ ethics (see Threats list) should be enacted. Not only does this note of constant evolution further bolster my claims in Chapter 5 that the ethical object found was multiple in reality, but it shows how much I was part of the enacta. In this context, I am an ‘opportunity’, actant for a new multiple of Lux Choc to

(re)enact the ethical object, an opportunity I had to seize in order to be allowed to report on it. This wasn't just a conversation but a formal document reviewed by the Lux Choc tribe who all, to the extent I can assume, agreed I was to be part of their ethical object and play an important role in enacting it. Even after Nicola had left Lux Choc shortly after this, I helped build the ethics section of the organisation's Ethical Diploma and remained enacted as an ethical expert throughout my research. For example, when discussing ethics with the tribe, I was frequently asked by people for some clarification of what I meant by 'ethics'. In one case, after Jen finished explaining something, she queried: 'Is that what you mean by the ethics, yeah?' (Lux Choc 19/10/2011). I had a similar experience on the 12th July 2011 with Sarah, who had taken on the responsibility to finish the Ethics Diploma. This time the ask was different and now required my specific knowledge of fair trade to complete that section of the Ethics Diploma.

At Good Business, the situation was the same in that my role as the ethical expert became my part in the tribe. I was given the role as the guiding voice, overseeing all work, and was also the ethical checkpoint (taken from my field notes 3/11/2010). Although, it felt in conflict of my "no judging" standpoint to give an absolute 'yes' or 'no' to projects that Good Business should take on and do under their own ethical remit, I did have to give my strong opinion as that was my role. Here again, I was not only recording data classified and enacted as data because of my research methods, I was part of enacting the ethics that I reported.

This assumed expertise on the part of the tribes is later assumed by myself in my ability to choose exemplar ethical examples of what I found and then suitably re-enact in this presented doctoral inscription. Throughout the empirical chapters and including the

above narrative, I am the expert that picks the most accurate examples to represent my findings. I was part of the enacted reality that I observed, part of the ethical reality recorded, and part of the enacted ethics written, including the reflexive and reflexive-reflexive ethics written in all sections of this chapter. Now focusing on what enacted this thesis, I turn to the references that were deployed to strengthen my text.

8.3.4 References

To add references was a political choice. They are scattered purposely throughout the text alongside my examples to enact the reality of my ethical object and encourage readers to read and (re)enact the reality of this ethical object for themselves. References from others are not quite enacta, but they are used in a similar way to add external data points to the legitimate reading of my claim. By including additional contexts, I employ the respect and authority of better-acknowledged academics to bolster my own empirical findings, and it is entirely appropriate to do so to provide context around instances where my findings align with the earlier research. I could have not used any, but a naked paper is an easier target for rebuttal, whereas ‘attacking a paper heavy with footnotes [references] means that the dissenter has to weaken each of the other papers, or will at least be threatened with having to do so’ (Latour 1987: 33). A lack of references also would leave it far from being the academic piece of work expected to be produced by a doctoral candidate.

The references’ positioning was not the only chosen aspect of their involvement in the texts’ enactment. They, like the actant-examples, were selected for their utility in expressing the findings, but they also were used to enact the reality of this being an STS object. They are references that, though sourced from a variety of different places, are

from authors and works that are labelled as part of the STS discipline. This is not a label based on my assumption; rather the STS label came from, for example, taking references from the STS handbooks, coming across some of the texts in my STS master course, taking articles from STS journals, and using the work of authors who label themselves and assumedly their work as STS. My readers (my users) were assumed and configured in the inclusion of particular authors that I selected for their interesting qualities. As briefly discussed in the preceding paragraph, the inclusion of references also was meant to give academic *strength* to my work and highlight the amount of research in support of or at least in agreement with my work.

As Latour explains:

The number of external friends the text comes with is a good indication of its strength, but there is a surer sign: references to other documents. The presence or the absence of references, quotations, and footnotes is so much a sign that a document is serious or not that you can transform a fact into fiction or fiction into fact just by adding references. The effect of references on persuasion is not limited to that of 'prestige' or 'bluff'. Again, it is a question of NUMBERS.

Latour 1987: 33

References build in a factual reading as it shows the apparent weight and seriousness of a text. But, references were not the only actants *used* — field notes, quotes, and images also were drawn upon to *strengthen* my work as shown throughout the thesis and even in this chapter's narrative above (see Figure 21 above for example). This is not to suggest that after these limitations what was left was an absolute reality, a certain outcome of the multiple. As described above, this process was equally messy, omnishambolic, and as multiple as I found within the tribes. It included many moves sifting through realities of my findings. I am not the 'neutral observer' who epitomises the qualities of realist 'value-free' rigorous scientific research (Brennen 2012: 15). Instead, I am messily

involved in all of it, a point most researchers do not address. This is not an ontologically superior reality, but a reality nonetheless and necessary to address the questions that sought to be accurately answered. This ontological-political, messy, relativist position is a benefit to *truth* rather than a hindrance. This is a desirable quality in confronting a weighty term such as 'ethics' because rather than merely defending relativism against accusations of moral dissolution, we can assert its moral and political strength.

As has been mentioned previously in this thesis, the reader writes the text. Given this, it seems fair to suggest the continual temporal enactments of this messy multiple chimerical ethical object continue. This discussion opens questioning of a broader line of ongoing STS debate. Such points of view include Winner, who claims that the absence of avowed political aim in STS research leaves it 'empty' (1993: 362), and those that call for STS to be more politically relevant (Martin 1996, Pel 1996, and Winner 1993, cited in Woolgar et al. 2009). Given the previous discussions, it would be difficult to classify the research projects that are 'empty' via their apolitical positioning. It is also unclear what is meant by relevant, as it seems all research is politicised through the act of investigation itself and presumably relevant to its area of research and its (assumed) users. I now turn to my (assumed) users, for whom I have presumed this political text is relevant.

8.3.5 Users

Throughout this thesis the ethical user is and has been enacted. 'I', the author, the researcher, the participant-observer, is enacted several times, as are 'you', the ethical reader. The readers' characteristics are assumed and form the basis of how my

arguments are framed; what theories I deem relevant to draw upon; and even the style of presentation that I offer.

Much like the 'external documents' analysed in Chapter 6, I produced other resources for people who will perhaps not read this thesis in order to attempt to configure those non-thesis-readers to my ethical research object. For example, conference papers have been submitted and accepted (October and November 2012) where I tell my own ethical story in a style I assume fitted and configured to that audience. I also have enacted multiples of my ethical object in order to try to persuade these readers of the robustness of this reality.

The abstract of this thesis gives the reader summary conclusions to the questions that I go on to ask in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and then answer in the empirical chapters. For instance, 'you', the reader, already know this is a chapter about reflexivity. Yet the reader who did not read this far into the thesis also knows the premise of the chapter.

As discussed in my abstract:

Developing previous applications of constitutive reflexivity, the research symmetrically investigates the appropriateness of my application of STS sensibilities to ethical business as a new research area, and interrogates my thesis as an ethical object in order to address the underlying question(s) of whether 'STS means [ethical] business?'

As in the marketing material of Lux Choc and Good Business (analysed in Chapter 6) the *factual nature* of my own claims and this work's academic rigour are framed through a multiplicity of literary devices. An examination of this whole text could be done to show the other devices that have been drawn upon to enact its expert authority. Just as in the promotional material of Lux Choc and Good Business, the title of this thesis, 'Ethical Business: An Ethnography of Ethics and Multiplicity in Commercial Settings', answers the

question of what this story of ethical business will contain and illuminate — ethnography and multiplicity — before it is even asked. And images litter the text in purposeful ways along with different “eye witness” narrators. This work is also littered with examples acting as the characters in this story to enact my part as the sufficiently ‘objective’ observer.

I am aware I was unable to remove myself or my biases from my researching, but like Evans-Pritchard (1973), one of the forefathers of anthropology, given my awareness of this, it becomes easy to dismiss. For example, in Chapter 5, I state that ‘the object is as much what it is as what it is not’. The statement does not present myself and my thinking as part of the wording. Somewhat more accurately, it could have been written ‘I observed and I think that the object is’. This example, taken from the empirical chapters, represents the statements found throughout and has no indication of any possible ‘I’ filters of data collection. Instead, it is written as if they are accurate representations and perfect re-enactments of the realities seen. Adding in ‘I’ and pointing out my literary devices enacts and reveals the behind-the-scenes mess of this thesis. However, this passage also is framed as a perfect account of the ethnography of my ethnography findings to bolster the factual reading. Discovering the mess behind the text could go on and on.

8.3.6 Ethical Genesis

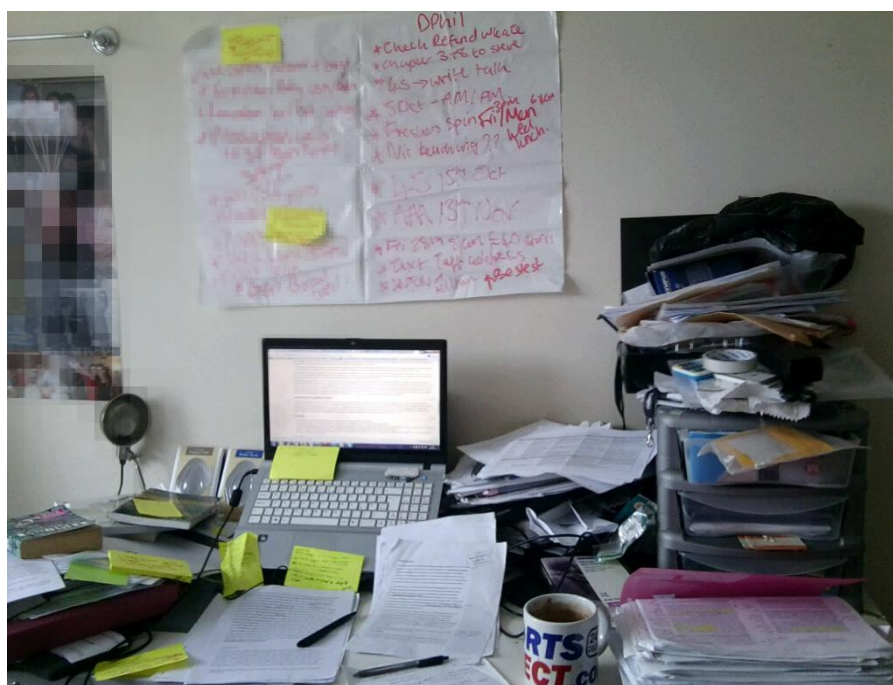
The symmetrical applicability and robustness of my theories can be proposed again with focus this time on the potential of ethical genesis discussed in Chapter 7. The ethnography of my ethnography is not a workshop *per se*, but it is a one-off creation, or in other words, a new genesis of knowledge that is enacted as such by this thesis. The

main focus of Chapter 7 was the idea that the facilitator acted as a bricoleur drawing on sticky-notes, pens, different wall surfaces, and especially inscription devices. The chapter additionally discussed whether the ethical genesis that arose could be explained through the STS sensibilities of the importance of inscription and the appropriated framework of bricolage.

The reality I am trying to explain was enacted through multiple, borrowed STS theories as exemplified in the already discussed sensibilities of mess, actants, ontology, and users. Thus, it seems plausible to suggest that it can be explained by what it is enacted by. As addressed throughout this thesis, 'language and acts are not separate to the reality they describe, they are in fact the constructors of it' (Pollner 1991: 372). Thus, language and action are not merely responses to a prior reality, but contribute to its constitution. Returning to the point of participation again: 'I' have become a character in my ethical text. As in Chapter 7, where I participated and observed in the role of facilitator in the workshop, once more, in this chapter, 'I' participated and observed as facilitator of this work done that enacted the enacta found.

In Chapter 7, I further argued that the facilitator drew on what was at hand in order to enact the workshop genesis. I demonstrated this empirically through quotes, descriptions, and images from the research site. For this doctoral genesis, again, I evidence this to be the case. Beneath is one selected photo taken during my research that depicts one of the places, my home desk, where I enacted my doctoral ethical object. Much as shown in Chapter 7, here the site of genesis contains many similar tools. The same key inscriptions are the primary tools used to help enact my new ethical object.

Figure 22: Photo of my home desk



On the desk, sticky notes litter the area with ‘A-ha’ moments and key ideas, just as in the workshop. Behind those notes are copious amounts of others: academic texts, field findings, and objects. This is what was at hand in my enactment genesis. Not all of those ideas are now seen in this enactment. Many of them were distilled into other ideas, and some were artefacted. However, that mess shown was the reality as it was in that moment of this ethical object.

So, just as the facilitator of the workshop, I have drawn upon the ‘key findings’, the selected smaller amounts of texts, and used these materials at hand to create a bricolage of the examples as evidence for my claims. Further, like the final report produced, I draw upon STS theories at hand to add to my selected empirical examples in order to enact my *new* ethical object: this doctorate document.

By way of the symmetry throughout this narrative, the new ethical object has shown the applicability of my theorising on the ethical object in another context (i.e., another

ethical object), one beyond the organisation field sites. It also highlighted that my enactments were intertwined throughout with my politics and that this thesis was work to produce. This work was my 'business', and it was the business of doing both an STS and ethical thesis as my methods and references were shown to enact an ethical, but also novel STS reality. This leads to the thesis answering its underlying question: 'Does STS mean ethical business?'

8.4 Does STS Mean Ethical Business?

8.4.1 The Intuitive Inquiry

This question — like the answer — is not homogeneous. It is instead much messier, just as all the other questions and answers presented in this research have been.

Whether 'STS means ethical business' has intended to carry with it the potential for multiple readings, all of which being both equally important and intertwined in their enactments.

This section first explains the more intuitive side of the question (as described by Marres & Dolan 2009, via a personal communication in my Transfer Viva Report). Or, as explored in the literature review, **yes**, it has been shown that STS sensibilities are a serious set of research approaches that can be appropriated successfully beyond the namesake Science and Technology into another area of research — namely here ethics — even though this is a controversial topic in the contemporary STS field.

I have appropriated STS sensibilities and applied them to explore my research with self-avowed ethical organisations, the proof of which is here, this thesis. But what this thesis has also continued to show is that *the* answer could be otherwise. With no answer being

absolute, even if we hit moments of temporal and presumed consensus, just as was found with the workshop delegates and the seemingly agreed to collaborative plan of action. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), theorists such as Guggenheim have suggested that to move STS sensibilities beyond the realm of science and technology ‘amount[s] to suicide for STS: *by definition* Science and Technology Studies needs to be about, well, science and technology’ (Guggenheim, cited in Woolgar et al. 2009: 12). Others, such as Lynch (ibid.: 12) think such a departure would not be a radical move, the boundaries separating science and technology from other areas of research being somewhat flimsy and not applicable when thinking of how both science and technology affect fields beyond those labelled as their own.

This question is further complicated when we think of what have we assumed by the title, STS. Although already discussed in this thesis (Section 2.3), it is important to re-emphasise that STS should not be understood as a singular, uniform entity, even if my use of its three letter acronym throughout this doctoral text may sometimes seem to imply this. It is not a stated method, framework, or analysis.

The heterogeneity of STS is a benefit for my reading of this question and the answer I proposed. What I have taken to hold STS together is a set of ‘sensibilities’ that emphasises caution about assumptions, unexplicated social science concepts and a willingness to ask questions and cause trouble and convert those ideas into objects of study (Woolgar et al. 2009).

And it is those sensibilities I have built my research on, from the conception of ideas to the selection of field sites, through to the enacta collection and write-up stages. It is also from these sensibilities I propose my answer of ‘yes’ (admittedly a qualified ‘yes’, as we

shall subsequently discover) to the question of whether STS means ethical business. I have built on the work of other STS theorists such as Mackenzie (2008) and Mackenzie & Mollo (2003) who showed STS could move beyond Science and Technology to explore Financial Markets; and that of Cochoy (2007) and Mallard (2007) who explored supermarkets and consumer testing, respectively. In my own thesis, the equivalent of the market is that of the ethical market analysed most broadly in Chapter 5. The internal and external documentations of this market were investigated in Chapter 6 and my own type of consumer workshop was explored in Chapter 7. This is obviously all far from the science labs and technologies STS started researching. Regardless of whether the boundaries between science, technology, and business are not as separate as the naming suggests (Thrift & Lynch, cited in Woolgar et al. 2009) this is more mere labelling convenience. What has been shown with the chimerical object, the technologies and attempts of configuration of assumed users, and the exploration of the genesis of the object is that all were multiple in their reality, temporal and enacted by actants. The move is yet another re-enactment of *the nature* and *life* of STS. These expanded sensibilities have been evidenced through the production of my research and presenting of those results to be serious and rigorous.

I propose STS, with its multiple manifestations, is a growing academic discipline, and that it does mean legitimate research and knowledge production.⁵² STS can be fruitfully appropriated to explore many other research issues. Arguably the question should not be 'does STS mean business', but rather 'is there is any research area to which STS cannot usefully be applied?'

⁵² I use the term 'growing' as in the speech of Fred Stewart, President of EASST, President Plenary at the 4s/ EASST Conference 2012.

Further reflections on the questions arose in Chapter 2. I suggest, much as Suchman's (2007) reflections on anthropology's move into business, broadening the reach of STS not only increases the ability of STS researchers to use it to explore new and differing research agendas but also 'builds the brand' of STS. There is a suggestion that to be 'successful', institutions 'must primarily produce brands, not products' (Klein 2000: 3). But, to increase public accessibility and consumption of the STS brand, researchers need to add to discussions about public-facing projects and brands, bringing about 'intervention by invitation' (Jensen 2012: 21). This creates a 'feedback process' and makes the STS 'brand' dynamic (Suchman 2007). This feedback process acts as the 'reflexive character of the [researcher's] relations to the making of brands, insofar as her own brand efficacy operates through the promise of its contributions to this same process' (Suchmann 2007: 10-11). Although this is framed as a positive step for STS, here, where I have the authority of narrative, this is not the end of the question of whether STS means business and who has the authority to define it (Suchman 2007, Woolgar et al. 2009).

This chapter is not about leaving answers in their simple form or rather a thoughtful once-reflexive form. This answer could have been otherwise and, because it is temporal in its reality, the question is turned to with reflexive-reflexivity and a critical eye passed on the answer already given.

8.4.2 The Enacted Inquiry

The chapter now turns to the enacted inquiry that was also framed as the counterintuitive reading of the question (as again described by Marres & Dolan 2009, via a personal communication in my Transfer Viva Report) of 'does STS mean ethical

business?’ Or, in other words, does STS enact ethical business? Specifically, this delves into the closeness of my answer and the research and data I was part of and thus what I base my answer upon. Unpacked further, the question can be read as: ‘Can the use of STS sensibilities illuminate new meanings of ethical business? Namely, is STS *useful* by bringing a reflexive perspective to the study of ethical business?’

The answer is not singular but is made up of both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and many shades of grey in between — much like the chimera object reported.

Yes, this thesis is a reflexive enactment of ethical business, my ethical doctorate being my work and my business of the past four-plus years, all done under the guise of my STS department. However, as discussed in the narrative above (Section 8.4.1) it was not one form of STS that made the thesis. There was not one ‘useful’ framework or school of thought that adequately explained all that I found. I instead drew on many different ideas and notions to enact my own ethical object and took from those only the most useful bits, leaving the rest. For example, I politically borrowed the ideas from the notion of actant from ANT, enactments of multiple realities from among others Mol (2002), boundary objects from Star and Griesemer (1989), configuring the user from Woolgar (1991), and textual analysis from Smith (1978). As noted in the ‘References’ section earlier in this chapter (Section 8.3.4), these authors were purposely referenced to build up my argument and STS reality of the object, but for none of them did I use their work verbatim. The exclusion of the rest of their ideas was just as important.

But, no, this STS does not absolutely enact ethical business, as I also ‘borrowed’ concepts from other academic disciplines. The notion of bricolage and the sense in

which I draw upon it originated with anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1962, 1967), and the new idea of a chimera object arose from my finding that no present STS object-framework provided an adequate explanation of what I found.

Can I then say that this STS offering, as I would bundle it together and label it for academic placing, means ethical business? Again, the answer is not a simple 'yes'. But this STS report does robustly enact the ethical object here, so, at least in this sense, the answer is 'yes'. However, it is based on four specific field sites and though I can soundly propose it could mean other ethical business, as the four sites were picked specifically to bring a wide and varied research set, this would be a point of further investigation. Therefore, I cannot *absolutely* extrapolate the answer. As I have already discussed, it has been ontologically assumed throughout the text that 'description and what it describes are not separable' thus I 'cannot yield more knowledge but merely an alternative description-described unity' (Schlecker & Hirsch 2001). That unity can help bolster the arguments presented and help build the robust and rigorous factual reading of a text.

I will not make any grandiose claims that my research explains *all* ethical business, with the added caveat that the addition of extra cases would not mean I came any closer to such a claim. This is real knowledge, but not absolute complete knowledge (Schlecker & Hirsch 2001, Calhoun 2007, Clifford 1986)⁵³. Therefore, no, STS does not entirely mean ethical business.

For instance, I tentatively agree with Barad's (2011) notion that 'isolation of different (inter)disciplinary practices risks missing some crucial entangles between

⁵³ It could be argued that there is no such thing, epistemological position depending (Linstead 1993).

epistemological, ontological, and ethical issues.’ My agreement is tentative because her idea of complexity seems to project that an *actual reality* can be known, or which is best known, by looking at it from different perspectives. I agree with the potential of seeing things enacted from different angles, but do not think this process enacts a singular reality to be observed, but rather multiple reality(s) to be explored. Thus, it is not a hindrance that STS did not absolutely mean ethical business.

The gaps in the STS frameworks that I have drawn upon to explore my findings encouraged me to mingle together different theories from different backgrounds and enact *new* knowledge, with the qualification that even if I took a realist stance and believed it was absolute, it would only be so as a reflection of Western, Euro-American knowledge conventions (Schlecker & Hirsch 2001). So, it seems that the answer to whether STS means ethical business is yet again a question of from whose ontological lens ? and what they understand as the reality of STS and ethical business to be.

8.5 Reflections

The symmetrical reflexive and the additional reflexive-reflexivist that have been used in this chapter are intended to help identify and critique the terms and answers, which some might assume at the outset of this type of research project to be stable and have a simple homogeneity. Such a tactic also brings to light further future research questions in both the ethical and STS research realm, such as: Who does or should judge the boundaries of ‘ethical business’? And, likewise, who addresses what is (or should be) understood as STS?

This speaks to the overall thesis' want for a user-centred approach achieved through observation-participation to study ethical reality(s) in the context of organisations and not assume the (homogeneous) character of terms of common academic parlance, such as 'producers and consumers', 'users', and 'STS researcher'. I accepted Shove and Rip's provocation to take the harder route of knowledge creation to find a more complete and new answer and to 'understand better the process of use even if that means abandoning the comforting fairy-tale of the [homogeneous] ... user' (2000: 175).

It can be proposed for all questions of assumed and taken-for-granted identification and boundaries that the shorthand answer of how they come to be taken for granted is as they are enacted and accepted in their temporal and constituted location by their users. By questioning these assumptions, we open up new research questions and further gaps in knowledge, such as: Can we identify the different users of a multiple thing, be it the multiple ethical object, or the users of STS? Such indeterminacy and multiplicity as was found with this whole thesis is an avenue for further investigation and more findings to enrich contemporary knowledge.

Focusing specifically on the question of whether STS means ethical business, additional questions worth future investigation also arise. What would further and increased appropriation of the STS label mean for the brand? Does broader consumption mean simplification of the STS brand? What other attributes, frameworks, methods, or sensibilities will become identified as STS? Should lessons be learnt from ANT, another heterogeneous entity (Gad & Jenson 2010) that has been labelled as part of STS within this thesis and used by others in very broad areas of research (Singleton & Law 2013)?

Who are the users who use it correctly? Who are the users who use it incorrectly? And, who is the judge of such use?

A full exploration of the nuances of the apparently simple question of ‘does STS mean business’ is an investigation in its own right and one for future research, especially as STS enjoys greater interest and uptake. Specifically, an exploration that could address the question, ‘Should STS mean business?’, even if I can suggest it does mean business, especially ethical business.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter introduced and discussed my fourth ‘research site,’ my own doctoral experience and the ethnography of my ethnography. I have emphasised that this site was not performed last, as a standalone contained space, but was continually researched throughout my doctoral process, in order to provide a critical radically reflexive lens on my own ethical enactment.

I presented it last in an effort to reflect coherently on the other empirical offerings of the thesis. I also presented it last in recognition of the conventions of the doctoral form, which inhibits a lot of mess and instead prefers a single flowing prose, and in awareness of wanting to configure my users of my thesis’ factual and robust reading. Although the flowing prose was established in this chapter, by drawing on reflexivity — achieved through critical attention to the fourth research site — it highlighted some of the difficulty of linear text in accurately representing *the* reality(s) observed and provided a tool to present the mess of my research more easily to the fore. Reflexivity also helps us to break down the assumption that the researcher is somehow different and separate

from the world they investigate and has problematised the assumption that the author and researcher stand in a disengaged relationship to the world they studied.

This research would be incomplete and fall short of my claims of thorough, rigorous, and radically reflexive research if this self-referencing chapter were not included. This chapter builds on the sensibilities of previous radically reflexive authors by being purposeful, explicit, and holistic in its treatment of representation and its dismissal of any form of privilege over another for this ethical object, my thesis. It does so in order to check that my own object is also robustly explored by the theories already applied to the ethical object encountered at my external sites. With this being shown to be the case — that my own ethical object is also chimerical with multiple ontologies, made through the work of bricolage, and its ethical story has been attempted to be configured to my users — this thesis proved to be another site of knowledge and research to further evidence my past empirical chapters theorising and further bolstering my empirical adequacy. It also added to the previous radical reflexive works by treating the research as an additional object for investigation and testing out how close to a real time reflexive voice could be brought into a doctoral thesis - while highlighting the mess of research and representation but still leaving a coherent piece of work.

It was shown that the inclusion of this self-critical, messy, radical reflexivity was not a threat to my empirical adequacy. It rather provided the opportunity to further improve it as to not include it I would have not only left my ethical object unexplored but in doing so left the assumption that my research practices were in some way different, distanced, privileged in their definition; and not as messy as the ethical objects discovered. This

chapter showed the benefits of critically studying our own studies, developing and strengthening the works of the earlier proponents (see section 8.2) to this approach by revealing the uncertain, messy, local contingencies of research it further developed our knowledge of knowledge, and our understanding of knowing throughout the research process and including the write up stage.

By reflecting on my own thesis, it was shown that the idea of a researcher and research disengaged relationship was not the case. It was also successfully recognised and discussed that the reflexivist's privilege is just as temporal as illuminated by the radically reflexive discussions intertwined in the text that critiqued the passages before and after it. The radically reflexive discussions achieved my thesis' overall objective to move beyond singular reflexivity and become a piece of constitutive reflexivity.

The first section of the chapter allowed a symmetrical reflexive voice to reflect on the author-ity of the empirical chapters of this thesis. Through critical analysis of the previous empirical chapters' proposals of what the ethical object is and comparing it to this ethical object — my thesis — as noted it found another object that was similarly messy, enacted through actants (human and non) and multiple, temporal, and chimerical in its enactments. The intertwined as close-to-real-time reflexive voice removed the distance still maintained in the reflexive text and portrayed between myself and the research enacta to bolster and further the reflexive discussions. In doing so, it developed and explored my own assumptions, theories, and ontological politics and showed how enacta were used throughout in attempts to configure you, my assumed ethical users.

By reviewing these assumptions, the chapter not only built on previous frameworks but, in a symmetrical stance, showed that the previously offered ideas and frameworks of the ethical object were robust enough to attend to this fourth research site. It showed a radical reflexive and symmetrical approach to be useful in expanding what can be *done* and *discovered* about knowledge production whilst proving it is possible to avoid ontological gerrymandering and instrumental irony within your own text.

From these discussions the chapter proceeded to answer the underlying question of this thesis, specifically ‘does STS means ethical business?’ The question was shown not to be homogeneous and, like the other questions of my thesis, was much messier and complex. By utilising the reflexive lens, it was shown not to be as straightforward as it may have first been appeared. The questions were instead multiple yet intertwined and dependent on the reading of the responder and what they assumed the reality of STS and ethical business to be.

First, the more intuitive reading showed that STS does mean ethical business — my STS sensibilities were useful in examining the ethical object. I also suggest that STS as manifested by its use can fruitfully ‘mean business’ for a range of other areas of study beyond science and technology and the question instead should be whether there is any research area to which STS cannot usefully be applied. But, I remain aware that I am unable to answer definitely who *the* users of STS can or should be and who should judge whether STS should mean business in new areas of research.

Second, the more messy counterintuitive reading showed how critical reflection of whether STS equates and enacts ethical business realities comes down to a point of perspective as to what STS and ethical business *really mean*. As shown, STS does mean and did enact my interpretations of the ethical business I studied, with a few additions as already outlined above.

However, I cannot claim this is an absolute answer to the question. What I can claim is that this chapter, together with the foregoing empirical chapters has enacted *new* knowledge of ethical business and STS sensibilities.

The thesis now moves to the overall concluding chapter, where it moves beyond reviewing the parsed-out sections and chapters and instead takes a more comprehensive view with the intent of developing and building upon what has been said thus far.

Chapter 9. Concluding Thoughts

9.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter of my thesis, I first revisit the motivations that were the foundation of this exploration presented as the narrative of the previous empirical chapters. This will speak to how well my research has addressed the knowledge gaps that were noted and explored in the critical literature review as being most pertinent to the multiplicity of ethics relating to business. It will further address the success of my attempt, the equally important and intertwined research agenda, the question of whether STS sensibilities can be usefully appropriated to address the contemporary ethical object, and whether such use of them in a new area of study furthered knowledge about the utility of these sensibilities. In other words, whether this thesis was successful in its desire to push the boundaries of what can be done and discovered about knowledge within the confined conventions of a doctoral thesis. It further explores whether the thesis managed to embrace the STS slogan and the stated guiding heuristic of this thesis: 'It could be otherwise' (Chapter 1). In a continuation of Chapter 8, I want not to in any way belittle the thesis findings, but to think through this heuristic of otherwise in this chapter, to show that what at first may seem a one dimensional flat text has multiple layers of knowledge that can be parsed out, analysed, and utilised.

This chapter then highlights the key findings of the research. I do not merely repeat what has gone before in the thesis. The previous reflexive chapter (8) acted not only as an empirical exploration of the utility of reflexivity, but also a recap of all the previous empirical chapters' findings. Therefore, rather than repetition for the sake of convention, I want to use this chapter to critically discuss the key empirical findings,

both from the empirical chapters and that of the thesis overall. Following this line of thought, the chapter will single out — somewhat superficially because this tactic is intertwined throughout the whole research — the ways in which this thesis embraced mess. This will be continued by a reflection on the ‘status of my description’. The chapter then turns to areas of further research to suggest how my findings could add to present strands of literature and the investigation of ethical business. Additionally, I explore some initial thoughts about the advantages of taking a messy multidisciplinary approach and potential ways of extending the rhetoric of ‘does STS mean (ethical) business’. Finally the thesis concludes with my closing remarks.

9.2 Motivations Met

Recalling both my introduction (Chapter 1) and my literature review (Chapter 2), this thesis was motivated by my dissatisfaction with the present answers, both lay and academic, I was given to my questions about this messy ethical thing that seemed to burgeon in all spheres of contemporary commercial life. I commented on the proliferation of ethical things that have appeared, yet noted the lack of clarity in understanding this situation. Rather, when literature was examined, I found prescriptions of what ethical realities should be. Even more frustratingly, I found discussions of ethics pertaining to this ‘new’ commercial setting that hinted at the multiplicity but did not even try to explain how this could be and rather merely rated and ignored it. Authors just assumed clarity of the term and further assumed that what was meant by ethical was understood as a unified, solid, universally understood reality out there. But that sat in stark contrast with the contemporary messy ethical situation I encountered.

In questioning the universality of ethical reality, I was inspired to draw upon STS sensibilities to engage with the matter due to their capacity for questioning the taken-for-granted status quo and their desire to critique and move away from making grandiose statements about the world. In drawing upon STS sensibilities, I further wished to push the boundaries of STS areas of research and intertwine the boundaries of what can we do and know about (STS) knowledge. This is an initiative to answer Mike Lynch's (2001) call to action for STS researchers to engage in ethics, largely still underdeveloped within the field.

The whole field of 'ethics in commercial settings' could not be adequately addressed by one thesis and a further deep dive into both present relevant ethical literature and the potential use of STS highlighted more specific, yet just as pertinent, unaddressed areas of research that would aid my aim to understand ethical business and critique STS's utility. This deep dive as laid out in Chapter 2 found a huge imbalance in the literature. It critiqued neo-Foucauldian theorists' limited focus on the consumer and their reliance on ideas of taken-for-granted ethics, consumption, internalisation, and their concentration solely on the unjustified consumer-user of ethical business. All the while, leaving the (argued) heterogeneous key users of self-avowed ethical organisations unexplored (Toennesen 2009 being a rare exception). The review highlighted the present lack of focus on the non-consumer users of ethical business, specifically for want of a better grouping, self-avowed ethical organisations-users and the (heterogeneous) uses of this grouping. Hence a user-centred approach was selected. Also noted was the lack of explanation of how other terms describe realities of ethics, such as 'green' and 'fair trade' that were used synonymously yet also inexplicably disparately between theorists.

The literature review established an overall criticism that a much less prescriptive approach was needed to address the contemporary, ubiquitous yet ambiguous object of 'ethical'. It further supported the proposition that drawing on STS frameworks and sensibilities in a smorgasbord approach might elicit 'new' knowledge to be generated about ethical business whilst in turn bring a new knowledge to STS, generalised under the rubric of whether 'STS means ethical business?'

My motivations were thus addressed. Before the more specific questions and their key insights are discussed individually, I will make a few declarations to my more general aims. This thesis was planned to take an unexplored-user-centred, STS-sensibility-inspired, participant-observer approach to ethics in commercial settings to elicit new understandings, and it did. It wanted to do this without prescribing what ethics should and should not be and rather explore what they were and how they were enacted for its users. It did, albeit with a caveat about the modest ontological politics discussed in the previous chapter. It proposed to further our knowledge of the business of ethics whilst at the same time equally developing thoughts, frameworks, and knowledge possibilities in the field of STS and doctoral theses. It has. Lastly this thesis from the start wanted to be messy and it was, but before this particular achievement is addressed more fully, I will speak to some of the specific findings that were brought to light in this exploration.

9.3 Recap of my Key Findings

9.3.1 The Object of my Investigation

In Chapter 5, it was discovered through my ethnographies with self-avowed ethical organisations, Lux Choc and Good Business, that their 'ethical' appropriations could be

usefully analysed as an object. In particular I argued that it was a chimerical object having a multitude of ontologies, made as much of what it was as what it was not. It could flow as well as jump between realities. The object was one for which reality enactments were not context-specific but could overlap (albeit temporarily) and be present in a tension-less form in both geographical and temporal contexts. This was explained by the ethical object being a boundary object, by showing the enactments that were different even when overlapping — the object was *an* object, a one thing of many ontologies. This ambiguity, which had caused me to start my research (detailed in Chapter 1) was then celebrated as the object's greatest 'success', allowing the object to be as specific as the user enacted it, but vague enough to hold together as an apparently unified one. It was shown that this was a case of ontology, not different perspectives of the same object, because the object as detailed was shown not to be a homogeneous entity. The idea of perspectives implies the notion of the differing subjective observers who look and leave the untouched inherently homogeneous object at the centre of viewing alone. The ethical object was shown to not be an untouched, unused, inherent object, but rather a multiple one revealed in its multiple uses.

Chapter 5 showed the ethical object was a messy one by detailing the difficult processes of finding and framing the object as such when it was such. It was not methodological or technical error that the object appeared to be messy, it was the tribes themselves that validated that their seemingly solid ethical reality was rather one that 'could change every day' (Holly, Good Business, 18/10/2011) and was 'constantly evolving' (ibid. 19/10/2011). Even with the tribes' input, this argument took stubbornness to make and not just accept the messy findings were instead due to the easy and ready explanations

of methodological or technical failings. My stubbornness was not only spurred along the by tribes telling me of their messy ethical reality, but also by my finding that the ethical object across the research sites was enacted in multiple ways at least temporarily by: doing good, feeling good, looking good, engaging in fair trade practises, getting Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, recycling, creating a product line with particular yet various characteristics, buying these particular products, and even establishing a programme for working in Lombala and on the Island of Romona. This cemented my researcher's commitment to ontological radicalism and the chapter showed how it pushed the boundaries of what an object could and could not be, ending in a chimera heuristic. This chimera, not yet explored in the literature, was not only discovered in the first empirical framework but was found to fit all the multiple ethical objects investigated in the form they were to answer my other thesis questions in the subsequent empirical chapters.

The mess was brought to the fore in the first empirical chapter to frame all the ensuing empirical chapters so that it remained framed throughout for the reader. This approach helped dispel the argument that research methods are inadequate to deal with or are devoid of the mess that was found and enacted. The novel framing of the chimera heuristic was arrived at after locating the multiple object in the organisations, sifting through other radical object frameworks, and showing none were suitable for my findings. The chimera's mythical sensibility also fit the finding that the multiple objects did not have to be separated by time or geography to be enacted, unlike the other objects. Importantly, it also was shown that my research object is both *and* neither what it is *and* what it is not. As was discovered in both organisations, non-present actants also

enacted multiples of the ethical object. For Good Business, the not present actants are at the base of why the ethical organisation was created and how its reality is enacted: not making its members travel in rush hour, not working 9 to 5, not living for the weekend. For some members at Lux Choc, their ethical reality was enacted by how they 'don't' — they don't do surprise sales to ensure their guests know exactly what to expect. It also was enacted through not wasting and not sending things to landfills and, similar to Good Business, it was about the don'ts of travel, specifically making sure people didn't have to go too far of a distance to accomplish certain tasks, because travel has negative environmental effects. However, for many Lux Choc members, it was about how they were not Fairtrade, but they were fair trade (the absence and presence overlapping and not necessarily negating one another).

The importance of both human and non-human actants in enactments was shown. These actants were shown not to be prop-like building blocks as other literature has suggested, but rather active actants in the enactments. By focusing on important actants of location, origin story, and values across the two organisations, it was also shown that the previous portrayal of these actants as seemingly homogeneous entities was an oversimplification. These actants were instead revealed to be just as messy and multiple as the ethical object they enacted.

9.3.2 Transferring and Configuration

Chapter 6 proved the utility of rejecting the terminology (and assumptions) of contemporary market literature and showed the use of moving away from ideas of homogeneous producers and consumers and instead focusing on users as they were

assumed or revealed. In using the sensibilities of configuration, it was argued that attempts of ethical-configuration to transfer the tribe's own self-avowed ethical *nature* were being sought by the tribes and enacted through various tools, mostly notably including a vast range of inscription devices, including internal and external facing documents, packaging, websites, doodles, and immersion courses.

First focusing on the internal users of the tribes and the documentation they interacted with, it was shown that by focusing on the content, structure, and active use of the documents, the texts both attempt to configure and enact the ideal persona of organisations' employees — the type of person that formed the overall tribe. The tribe had already been shown to be an important multiple of the ethical object for both Lux Choc and Good Business in Chapter 5. In 'What makes a Lux Choc Person', the importance of the tribe was again shown as this important document enacted the Lux Choc behaviours not as individualistic but rather described in terms of the 'we'. These behaviours were based on the Lux Choc competencies, while another document (Commercial Specific Competencies) was also based on the competencies, but listed and enacted them differently. My research found that, expressed by a tribe member, inscription was so important as it lead to *the real factual* reality of Lux Choc and its internal users' characteristics to be solidified, enacted, and told in the new brand guidelines.

Looking further at a combination of documents showed they were used actively to configure the users. The documents showed a multiplicity of *the* ideal internal-ethical-user that differed across the different members and had multitude forms for each member. This further supported the findings of the previous chapter — that the ethical

object is chimerical and multiple in its reality(s). One untitled document contained 'I' statements and when worked together with the Appraisal Form at internal users' reviews, it was found to actively act to grade the configuration of the member, with the grading expressed as 'exceedingly' or 'suitably' above bar or 'under' bar. In cases where correction was required, the form actively caused configuration correction to be put in place and be completed by a certain time.

In both organisations, the use of wall space and 'documents' of sorts (the wall displays) were found to also attempt to configure internal users. Images of Lux Choc's Engaged Ethics Programme, quotes from the Good Business tribe, and posters of their Good Week campaign all acted to include and remind internal users of their role in enacting their ethical reality, as they were the right sort of people. For Lux Choc, their displays enacted and built the internal ethical community to include the members in the Engaged Ethics Programme in Lombala and the Island of Romona. For Good Business, the displays not only enacted their ethical community but also portrayed the organisations as being ethical to their core, right down to the brick-and-mortar offices of the tribes — especially since location was found to be an important actant in enacting multiples of the ethical reality of the tribe.

Focusing next on exploring the external promotional texts and external assumed users discovered during my ethnographies, the chapter analysed the presented ethical reality of the organisation as bounded and enacted through their 'ethical story' and the 'characters' invoked. All the documents portrayed the ethical *nature* of the organisations, as well as showing the technologies and literary devices used within the

texts to attempt to configure the users reading them. In all the organisations' external materials, it was found that there was some form of wink to the savvy reader to build them into the ethical community of the ethical reality being enacted. They were not just having to believe some marketing spiel — they knew and read it because they were part of it. There was a nod to their actions of buying chocolate as being part of the enactment for Lux Choc and part of their people that Lux Choc worked with. And for Good Business, in the most clear example of this, with interactive cards, the users actually physically became part of the good enactment by sharing a doodle, thought, or statement. For all the material analysed, it was also shown that the use of having privilege of definition was drawn to help enact a wider ethical community. All the stories brought in third-party characters to speak for their ethical nature, so the user was not just to rely on the word of the organisations themselves — farmers of the struggling cocoa plantations who were saved by Lux Choc, readers brought in through the wink, and third parties the partners Good Business worked with or the FSC certification Lux Choc proudly showed off. They all built allies into their stories to help cement the factuality of the ethical reality they were writing and the reader was reading. The Lux Choc report 'Cocoa Story' also used a second storyteller, the eye-witness voice of the founder, to bring a first-hand, trusted story to the readers' attention. The social organisation of the pieces was shown repeatedly to add to the reading of these being factual accounts of the ethical reality, not just opinions.

Seemingly equally important to writing *the* factuality, and found to be of great importance in Chapter 5, all the marketing materials emphasised that the organisations'

ethical reality was not just a fad to the company but instead was truly part of their being and at the core of everything they do.

Finally, it was found and revealed by the organisations' internal members that placement of all types of elements of the story were crucial for building the reality and configuring the reader to the story. Images like those found with the internal wall displays, specifically photos of external examples, were carefully sifted through to pick the right ones to tell the ethical reality of the cocoa farmers. Although all photos were real, most did not tell the right story and were not selected. The actant of the catalogue piece was placed on the recto page so it would be seen even if a user just flicked through the catalogue. Contrast language — but, instead, however — was used to show how Lux Choc was different from the norm, not deviant but rather extra good and going above and beyond what was necessary to achieve their ethical reality. They also carefully used the placement of a type of literature puzzle, so that the reader was given the conclusion of a story or the answer to a question before it was posed. Then the reader had the answer as well and the answer was the ethical organisation. These placements carefully told the story and thematically unified the ethical reality. It is also worth noting that all the ethical stories internally and externally written and attempted to be configured presented a written, seemingly factual and *real* ethical reality, but all presented different multiples of the story. The ethical reality further bolstered Chapter 5's finding of the ethical object being most adequately framed as a chimerical object of multiple ontologies.

After focusing on the tools of attempted configuration, the chapter then showed the answer to whether configuration of a user was possible to determine. In short, it was complicated and dependent of your position as researcher in relation to the user involved.

As a participant-observer within the ethical organisation, the chapter showed this internal configuration question was an easier one to answer. Configuration had appeared to occur for internal users, as at neither organisation was it ever found that a user was unable to explain to me how their organisation lived its ethics. Neither was I unable to do so, when I interacted with other external users as more a participant than an observer. However, it was shown not to be unidirectional as previously assumed in the literature. Within both organisations, what constituted their ethics was shown to be multi-directional from *the* organisation to *the* internal users and vice versa. In Good Business, when Eve joined the team, she configured to their ethical reality(s) and became a full member of the tribe following the tribe rules. But she also configured through work on Good Week and the Good Business, enacting a new ethical reality and telling the ethical story differently. The chapter finally concluded that the question of external user configuration remains somewhat of a mystery that cannot be absolutely or even adequately answered by a participant-observer within *the internal* tribe.

9.3.3 Genesis

Chapter 7 showed the apparent genesis of a novel ethical object that was enacted through a partnership of the two organisations, Agro-tech and Right World, through a temporal and assumed consensus of needing to work together to tackle the issue of

Women Small Holders. This happened at a workshop facilitated by Ethicentre, the ethical consultancy I worked with and observed as part of my third research site. The novel ethical object was the taken-for-granted ethical status of Agro-tech, which had been notably absent prior to the workshop. The novel ethical object was shown to be enacted through the work of the workshop that was choreographed by the facilitators. The event ended with an apparent outcome and with what appeared to be a surprise to delegates (even though they had received an agenda that laid out the intended outcomes). It was as if the outcome had always been there but the right questions just hadn't been asked. This ethical object was *cemented* through an inscribed plan detailing the consensus.

The work of the workshop was shown to involve several steps that started before the workshop and led to the apparent consensus. The in-workshop processes worked to allow identity boundaries of the delegates to shift. Two distinct organisations, with individual experts representing their organisations, became a workshop 'we' and various subgroups. However, to meet consensus, the members had to again represent and speak for their disparate organisations. The unquestioned assumed ability to speak on behalf of their greater organisations was shown to be crucial for the participants in enacting a new ethical object. As the chapter showed, when this ability was questioned, it questioned the reality of the ethical object, showing that reality to be temporal and contingent.

The chapter showed not only that the identities of the members were mobile, but also that equally important was the mobility of the sticky notes used to share temporally *key* and *real* knowledge. Sticky notes let the ownership of an idea move from an individual

or subgroup to the collective 'we' knowledge. The move also meant a change in definition of meaning and an ability to move some knowledge to become key, prioritised, real, whilst other sticky notes and their inscriptions became peripheral and forgotten or a reification of a prioritised piece of knowledge. Each step in the workshop processes eliminated the chains of inference before as a small subset of 'results' was selected and prioritised over others. Other data were subsequently seemingly forgotten. In the end, this led to the inscribed plan, the production of *the fact* of consensus, which erased all the work of the workshop. *The fact* of Agro-tech's taken-for-granted ethical reality became isolated from its relationship to the larger and historical context of its creation.

This erasing did reduce the mess of the realities that were temporarily enacted through the use of multiple sticky notes in various configurations and presentations, but this was found not to be a process of simplification. It remained a complicated position that built in complexity as each stage of the workshop process left some knowledge at the periphery and forgot it, but also distilled other knowledge into a "simple" next stage. This next-stage *truth* represented a complex web of taken-for-granted work that was done in order to achieve the end result. The stabilisation of the fact occurred not because the complexity was stripped, but rather because it was distilled into it.

The sticky notes did not, however, move on their own and rather took further work, that of the actant facilitators. The facilitators' work was shown to be most adequately explored, not just described, through the idea of bricolage and the role of the facilitator as that of a bricoleur as they made do with whatever sticky notes and ideas were at hand to create an improvised collage of knowledge at each process of the workshop.

This bricoleur role involved moving the sticky notes and re-enacting the reality of their meaning. The facilitators chose only some of these, those that went on to enact the key knowledge. Other sticky notes were forgotten or became part of the new reality assemblages. The artefacts at hand were actant-enablers to enact emergent meanings in the artefact combinations within an agenda-planned contextual use.

The chapter showed that all the “tools” were trusted actants of the workshop and were not passive props but rather worked to enact the genesis. Like the previous empirical chapters, these important actants were both human and non-human and included facilitators, workshop delegates, sticky notes, felt tip pens, and inscriptions. The mobility of these tools allowed for trouble-free movement of identities, concepts, and meanings.

The chapter ended by showing that the question of whether a genesis of ethical reality can be enacted is not a straightforward question. Rather, it appears to depend on readers’ interpretations; in this particular workshop, this referred to interpretations of whether complete consensus was achieved. Adding to the complexity of this conclusion, the answer of whether a genesis of ethical can be enacted is not a question with a finite and absolute answer. This was even the case for those delegates of the workshop for whom consensus, and so a new ethical attribution, was seemingly achieved and expressed by them and written in a *cemented* plan. The plan was never realised and the enactment of Agro-tech’s ethical reality through collaborative work was forgotten, much like the work of the workshop. It was thus argued that acts such as the making of the ‘sticky-note plan’ seem to be a type of deferral of an *absolute* resolution for the workshop and thus an adequate end for the social group.

This temporal, messy, consensus-based ethical object was discussed to fit the chimerical heuristic. It was shown that the ethical object observed could not only have multiple reality(s) in different spaces and times, but could also have a multiple reality within the same space and time and was dependent on whether achievement of consensus was read to have occurred fully, partially, or not at all.

The chapter again showed that STS sensibilities can be usefully drawn upon to explore the messy, chimerical ethical genesis. However, what was not explained through STS theories was the ‘work’ of the workshop facilitators (my participant and observer role), necessitating a move into ideas found in anthropology and the framing of bricolage. The borrowed concept further bolstered the argument for the similarities between science and ethics and between scientists and ethicists that helped to inspire this research. It appeared scientists could be framed as a bricoleur, just like the facilitators of the ethical workshop.

9.3.4 Reflexivity and Does STS Mean Ethical Business?

The final empirical chapter showed how taking a reflexive and reflexive-reflexive approach to your work can be very useful. I introduced what I labelled and considered to be my fourth ‘research site’ — my own doctoral experience and my ethnography of my ethnography. Taking reflexivity to mean symmetry, the text was able to analyse and show my thesis, my own ethical object, was also explained by the frameworks found in the other empirical chapters, thus adding additional context to my previous arguments. My own ethical object was messy, multiple in its ongoing temporal ontologies, actant-enacted, and made as much by what it was as what it wasn’t. I showed the literary devices and tools of attempted configuration I had used throughout to bring in third-

party voices, well-placed images, contrast structures and privilege definition of the author-ity position. I discussed my user — you, the reader — and my thoughts on whether I achieved successful configuration. My object also was shown to be created by bricolage and, drawing on knowledge at hand and distilling the mess into a small collection, presented as my novel object in an inscribed report form.

However, to be true to my symmetrical-reflexive claims, I had one further chapter to review and this was Chapter 8 itself and the discussions it presented. This, my reflexive-reflexivity, was my radical reflexivity and was shown to be difficult to write into the text, but was introduced after reviewing my own object and was injected to be as close-to-real-time reflexive voice as can be achieved in a linear coherent text. This radical constitutive reflexive step showed how throughout my research, even my reflexive thoughts, I had enacted myself as a distant researcher in a privileged spot. As such, I worked to capture the data, or capta, that I initially thought to be there in some untouched and raw form until I collected it. This was shown not to be the case, as I was as much as part of the enactments and data as any other actant. Thus, it was shown that my capta was more aptly thought of as enacta. I was part of the realities I reported in all my research sites. In Good Business, I was the guiding voice and ethical checkpoint of their work. In Lux Choc, I was viewed as a resource the organisation could draw on to help write its Ethics Diploma. In the Ethicentre, I was a participant and member first, then became observer, and in my own research, I was the author-ity behind the writing.

I showed that no social methods are innocent, including my own, and that they enact into reality whatever they describe into reality, and are thus not ontologically superior or ontologically different to the contingent realities they report. This showed then that,

though throughout my research I have approach the ethical object with no predetermined framework, the reality I enacted showed my ontological politics. As it was shown, if realities are multiple, then the multiples are selected rather than entirely comprehensive, because at every stage I chose to sustain some and let others fade away. At all stages of research, my research was shown to be political — never raw and always shot-through with some level of interpretation, partiality, and filtering. I also was political in the choices of allies I added to my ethical object. I chose to build in specific third-party voices to make my arguments and presentations of *the fact of the* ethical object harder to unpick or quibble. This all showed that taking a reflexive and a symmetrical approach is useful in expanding what can be *done* and *discovered* about knowledge production. Also, employing a reflexive approach to my own knowledge creation is an STS-style sensibility.

In further reviewing my whole thesis knowledge production processes and my ethnography of my ethnography, the chapter went on the answer the thesis's underlying question of 'does STS means ethical business.' Just as with the any sort of writing, the reality is left to the reader and this question was found to fit that case. The question was not homogeneous and rather shown to have several answers. To help keep neat coherency to the text, messy, multiple answers were parsed out into two readings of the question: the intuitive and the enacted inquiry. Both answers were messy, but it was shown that, intuitively, 'yes', I appropriated STS sensibilities and applied them to explore ethical business, showing where I had built on others' work and where I had made new knowledge and added to the STS debate that these sensibilities can fruitfully be applied to broadening areas of research. Counterintuitively, reading the

question as one of whether STS means and enacts ethical business, it was shown to be even more messy, and the answer was 'yes' and 'no'. It was shown that 'no', there was not one form of STS that made this thesis, or one STS framework that was adequate to explain all I found. This was explored through borrowing multiple bits of ideas and even ideas from other fields and creating new frameworks for things not explained. However, I would bundle this new ethical object up and label it as an STS piece of work that does explain these examples of ethical business I researched. More investigation would be needed to explore if my framing works beyond my encountered ethical objects. I showed then I cannot absolutely answer this question for all ethical business, but I can suggest that the answer to this question could be addressed by the further question of whose ontological lens and what they understand the reality of STS and ethical businesses to be.

9.4 Embracing Mess

This thesis, as mentioned, wants to be messy. It wanted to be so in order to adequately represent the messy object it was studying and to adequately bring back the 'mess into method' used to study it (Law & Urry 2004). It did not want to achieve clarity at the expense of specificity (Law 2004), but at the same time, the thesis wants to be coherent enough to make sense and stay within the conventions of what is deemed appropriate for a doctoral thesis. The thesis tried to frame the mess around the text in hope that this framing would result in being read throughout.

It may seem easy to write of messiness, but it was not. I struggle with words, and I am inclined to have messy writing, but not to write of mess. This thesis has tried to remain neat in its messiness and even had to abandon the inscription device of dual narrative,

smooth and rough, in Chapter 8 to not add too much mess. Photographs were used at various points to try and help bring the mess back in. However, to follow up on the idea presented that other sociological tools are not well equipped for mess, I am inclined to invoke the cliché that a poor workman blames his tools. I do so with considerable audacity, aware of the pot calling the kettle black. What I found was that the tools of ethnographic research I deployed were fine to deal with and capture (so to speak) the mess with which I was confronted. The tool I found that let me down was that I was the poor workman of inscription and nerve. As noted in Chapter 8, I tried different forms of textual devices to bring the mess back in, but none of these enabled me to be clear in my mess. For example, I was unable to emulate Mol's (2002) double text, because I could not clearly separate one text from the other on my page and found myself lost in the parallel narratives. Even in reading Mol's (2002) text, my eyes often wandered to the wrong part of the page, distracted by something that caught my attention, and I would lose track of the arguments being made. I originally toyed with making the whole thesis an exercise in pushing the boundaries of literary devices to see whether I could avoid my reflexivity becoming a chapter at the end. I could not. I also failed to suitably represent my reflexive mess in the abandoned smooth and rough dual narratives.

I am not an expert in word craft by any stretch of the imagination, and as my supervisor and I often discussed, pushing people to look beyond the taken-for-granted *normal* assumptions of things, requires convincing wordsmithing. Counterintuitive arguments need pithy, sharp, and difficult-to-unpick explanations. Being very counterintuitive, mess ironically requires neat text to bring it to the fore. The reader needs to find herself reading writing about mess rather than reading messy writing. The mess also was very

limited by my 'tool' of being a doctorate student. In the two examinations in the lead up to final submission and viva examination, I discussed using more 'radical' inscription tools to bring back the mess to my research. I was warned on both occasions that it was a risky strategy, and in the end I decided I could not pursue it. I wimped out. I was concerned about making a 'radical' risky move which might jeopardise a student's entry into the realms of post-doc academia and onwards.

9.5 The Status of my Description

As noted in Chapter 5, what I present here, now encompassing my whole thesis, not just the first empirical chapter, is not an absolute answer, but more of a "discussing". This thesis, this conclusion, this paragraph is as much a part of the subject under enactment as is its reading. This description can do things, it has agency, it can convince the reader of my author-ity, but it cannot do it alone. It is always down to the interaction, the inter-enactment, with its reader.

I am not daunted by 'the endeavour' of the 'goal of descriptive adequacy' that has been theorised to be impossible yet haunting (Maurer 2005). I have disclosed my politics and revealed my inscription tricks in the previous chapter, all of which, ironically, further bring back the mess of method and make my thesis closer to the adequate representation of what I believe I found. I have tried to make this text multi-vocal, wherever possible drawing on the narratives of the tribes rather than on my own, and dedicating a whole chapter to reflexivity in the hopes to 'disrupt the apprehension of [my] texts as "objective" accounts' (Woolgar 1988). I do not wish my description to be 'naively believed by [my] reader as in some way relating to a referent out there' (Latour

1988: 168). I have tried to keep, I, the author, absent when I am not the one in the limelight, but I have admitted my presence throughout as chief narrator.

What then do I claim my description should speak about, what of the politics of scale and comparison? I have followed the STS vogue vocabulary of speaking of 'events' (Mol 2002), 'situatedness', 'stories', 'locality' (Law 1994). Like Mol (2002), who thoroughly inspired my openness to multiple ontologies, I make no claims that my descriptions can speak to a general system or domain. But, I note, ironically, that I am one of many who have taken up and found utility in moving Mol's ideas of multiple ontology beyond her 'events'. I still hesitate to make grander claims of generalisability and instead suggest this is for further research. I allow (indeed encourage) my reader to enact the scalability of my work.

Now I move on to the related point of the geographical-situatedness, for want of a better word, of my description. Whilst in the process of writing this description, it seems strange, somewhat incorrect, to suggest the status of this description has been written 'at a distance', separate from the fields of study. I agree that a lot of my work was produced at my DPhil desk in the Said Business School, or my changing homes around the world in the process, but much like Webmoor's (2006) reflections on 'fielding', or rather the dispersed and distributed style of 'fieldwork' and how it is not over when you exit the field, I continue(d) to rework and generate information anew long after I have/had *left* my sites. I have already suggested the agency of this text and how it remains a discussion. I, like Witmore (cited in Webmoor 2006), question where my research starts and stops. Does it stop with this *finished*-status of my description, or is this description a part of the uncontained, heterogeneous, 'nature of multiple fields' of

production (Witmore, cited in Webmoor 2006)? As I wrote in Chapter 4, I jested in-field, 'You never really leave Good Business.' Arguably, you never really exit the field. You never really finish enacting the potential knowledge to be gleaned from your research, or can know what may be read. The status then of this thesis is less of a definite object written at a distance and rather more indefinable and part of the ongoing 'fielding' of my work (Webmoor 2006).

We then should think not of this thesis as a 'closed book', but rather an ongoing object awaiting enactment. I can offer some of the pertinent areas for further research that deserve more exploration. However, I admit I cannot know all the potentials this thesis holds. That is up to you, the reader. Before I move onto my suggestions of future utility, I first want to make one more note relating to my thesis's temporal reality(s).

I noted at the beginning of the thesis that one of my personal motivations, as a self-confessed ethical shopper, was to study and understand the ethical object better and to provide a better understanding for those who wanted to stop an ethical backlash — a backlash to an ethical 'trend'. I have explored the ethical object more and hope this thesis provides utilities in observations of the way 'success' has been achieved. However, as I noted, this topic may be somewhat of a fad and my suggested areas of further research may no longer be important many years down the line when the next commercial fad hits and the ethical commercial object no longer becomes enacted. Equally, it may also be an academic fad soon to pass, with ethics again falling into the hands of the moral philosophers. I say all this, however, with a wink to my reader, as in the truest ironic fashion. As, whilst I pondered on the potential longevity of my work, I was sitting in a coffee shop, not dissimilar to the one the initial conversation between

myself and a barista took place, though this time 5,315 miles away and about four years on. I was interested to hear the barista lamenting about their newly added ethical coffee beans. It was the first in their line to be 'fair trade and organic' (16/6/2013), but not the first ethical coffee. What had enacted the ethical object before? How was there 'more than one but less than many' ethical coffees available for purchase that seemed to line up without tension (Mol 2002)? I then spotted the 'ethical guide' available for reading and (secretly and delightedly) started to read and analyse the words. The characters portrayed, the translation attempted, and the enactments of ethical were detailed. Although this may be a fad, it seems to be a very pertinent part of Western commercial culture still.

9.6 Areas of Further Research

This thesis was a snippet, a slice in time, an explanatory quality of the potential research that could be conducted in the areas of ethical business, using STS sensibilities in new areas, or further synergy of the two. As was noted in the literature review, only four questions were selected to be answered from the numerous gaps identified. Further, as indicated in Chapter 8, many findings worthy of exploration were discovered in my field time that did not make it into this multiple of the thesis reality.

I cannot even attempt to write out all the possible further lines of research that could be gleaned from this work. As I discussed, this thesis is not finished, but ready to be read and enacted, as are the further questions and insights of my research. However, I will propose some of the most interesting and relevant lines of enquiry to further the discussion presented here. There are some 'obvious' questions that arose from the key

findings. These were noted as the chapters proceeded and the most pertinent are recapped and developed now.

It was found that object frameworks available did not fully explain my chimerical ethical object. It was noted in Chapter 5 that perhaps there is no 'one size fits all' description for objects, but it would be interesting to follow whether the chimera heuristic was found adequately to explain further ethical objects and in turn other less tangible objects (other social phenomena). The next step in the direction of radicalism is perhaps to explore whether the multiple realities of 'objects' could itself be chimerical.

Could we ever adequately postulate for the mythical [external] user (Shove & Rip 2000)? Can research methods be developed that mean we can claim legitimacy *into* the user group and thus put forward answers of whether realities are transferred and thus users are configured? Could these methods, if developed, be used to explore the transferability and configuration of other objects, beyond ethical business, and their users? Thinking of methods, what are the methods and tools to make handling mess *easier*? As noted earlier in Chapter 7 of this thesis, 'realities are not flat' (Law 2003). So why, thus far, are we left trying to represent them in flat linear text, and collecting our capta (reframed in this thesis as enacta) in mostly one-dimensional forms? What tools can we develop that are both accepted within the academic tradition and make mess coherent and clear?

If we can assume *objects* exist, can we find where they started? This speaks to further investigations into the notions of genesis through collaboration, such as the work of a workshop, or similar consumer testing arenas. It also speaks to a need for further investigation on the historical, time-specific contingencies that have culminated in the

relatively recent establishment of the ethical object within commercial settings. A historical account would not be a first within the literature, nor would the suggestion that the contemporary situation is different from previous timeframes. As discussed in the literature review, many of the authors described time-framed variation in the character of the term 'ethical'. Further investigation based upon this dissertation's approach would provide new insights to history. It need not use large time frames like Foucault's and would focus specifically on the commercial setting. It would not suggest that the past *was* this, as some other literature has. Instead it would illuminate why it *was* like it was and what the contingent factors were that enabled the route taken by ethical to make it such an important aspect of contemporary commerce.

This thesis was written in time of a 'turn to ontology' (Woolgar & Lezaun 2013) and questioned the context specific requirements of previous ontological ideas. But what will come of openness, questioning, and analysis in ontologies? Nothing? Something radical? What about a turn to reflexivity? How can reflexivity be further used to push the boundaries of what knowledge production can be done?

What of the other STS-frameworks available? Which of these can shed further light on the ethical object? What other objects (phenomena) might be better understood by taking a smorgasbord and open approach to enacta (capta)? How far can we push our knowledge of knowing? What is the radical topic and research in the future that could make my exercise in pushing boundaries one of the many mundane frameworks available?

9.7 Closing Remarks

Presented here is my ethical object: a doctorate story, one could say, even an exercise in pushing the boundaries of the storytelling of ethical. It is a story never finished in its interpretations, a reality as temporal as the use made of it by its users. It is a chimerical object just as its objects of discussion. I trust that my awareness of all these features of my object means that the appropriate resources, empirically based questioning, answering and reasoning, together with what can be considered a strong actor network, have been built in such a way to wholly configure and convince my readers.

Appendices

Appendix A: Fuller transcript of Lux Choc Ethics Video

Video was presented by Nicola, Lux Choc, and was viewed on 20/7/2011

For us engaged ethics. We have to go back to about 2001 and that is around the time I joined the business and I had the privilege [of] a word I use a lot about my job of starting our engaged ethics program in Ghana. So why did we decide to do it. Well, first of all, it started with our brand values, so for Lux Choc we knew originality was a really important part of what we do: design, develop, as we make and design. So what you see is made and designed by us and everything is invented here. We are a pioneering company so we knew everything we did we wanted to own and drive it. And, also authenticity. There is a lot of rubbish chocolate out there and we don't believe in that. We believe in knowing about every part of our project and making sure it is all authentic and going back to our cocoa beans. Erm so it is quite interesting at the same time our chocolate tasting club member were starting to ask questions and we talk about our customers as being stakeholders in the business and our tasting club members really are a part of business. Every month they give us feedback on what we do and comment on everything we do. They tell us what we are doing wrong, they really let us know and around about 2001 there was a documentary coming out and a lot of coverage of cocoa farms and talk of child labour, slave labour on so on and our customers started to say to us you have a lovely product, but what are you doing about making sure that your supply chain is ethical and you are looking after all the people all the way through the line. So we knew we needed to do something and at that time we could have perhaps become FairTrade ...

So why didn't we go Fairtrade? For 2 reasons originally, first the scope of FairTrade is very narrow. We pride ourselves of bringing a wide range of chocolate from different origins etc, and it is not feasible for us to do that with Fairtrade. And second, the quality of Fairtrade chocolate is quite poor and we feel that is a feature of FairTrade we didn't want to carry on and model ourselves on what they do. So what were we going to do? So we decided we would work with Ghana as they are the 2nd largest cocoa producer. Cote d'Ivoire is the biggest, but because of the instability there we couldn't work with them as effectively. So we thought simple, we will sort ourselves with a few products, work with some cocoa farms.. simple. Yeah, not so simple. It was very difficult to give our money away. So the first thing we did was talk to charities: we talked to Oxfam, to Action Aid, and World Vision and we said we would like to give a regular amount of money and we would like it to go to the benefit of cocoa farmers, but we would like to know what happens with it so we can tell our Tasting club members and customers, and charities said sorry, you don't have enough money to give, you'd need more to be a partner. Ok, so the next idea we will talk to the Ghanaian embassy, they have charitable organisations and like support from developed actions, so I phoned up the embassy and they told us to

ring someone else, so we phoned up those people and they told us to talk to the first people and so we went round in the loop again again again. So we decided to google Ghana and charity and then spent three weeks searching through the millions of responses that we got. Eventually we found ourselves an NGO based in Ghana called Green Tropics group who worked in cocoa farmer company and needed financial support and were very welcoming to working in partnership with us and that was where the relationship was born. At first we thought we are here in the UK, how can we monitor what is happening in Ghana? We can't employ them, we are not big enough and it is very complicated. So how can we monitor what they are doing? So we started with a very simple contract with Steve, our coordinator there. He is the group president of the NGO, so when we met him we knew we would have to do something formal to make sure the seriousness was there. So we introduced this agreement: we would give you so much money and they would do certain projects. We bought them a computer and a camera and asked them to send us film reports every month. So we were up and running and we started off very simply. As I said before, we couldn't give our money away because we didn't have enough so it was really important we did something appropriate enough for the money we had. And our first project was school uniforms and some education materials for the local schools, and we got a lovely letter from the children that we shared with the CTC members and they said now we have uniforms we are not ashamed to go to school any more. So that was the start. But what happened next was a bottomless pit because once you start giving money for education material they get used up and then they need more, so the original pens, and for the cocoa farmers who we bought machetes and seedlings for their farms. So anyway the 1st year all very grateful, and by the 2nd year the flood gates had opened and I was meet on my visit by the whole village and was told we are very grateful you are here and here is the shopping list for next year. And, they wanted the roads paved, they wanted electricity to the villages, and hot and cold running water, a medic centre and the list was endless. That's where the benefit of being hands on paid off ... The fact we were there when the shopping list appeared [meant] we could say no, hang on, that is not what we are about. The programs are designed to help you and help yourself. What we wanted to do were that the programs became sustainable and that there was as much commitment from the cocoa growers as there was from us. OK, so we will continue to support this program, but we are not going to increase money, each time. From now on when you want a project, we want a proposal from you on what you want us to support and you need to tell us what you are going to do how much it will cost, what the deliverables will be, and how it will become sustainable when we stop funding it. So projects became more rational and real and the projects achieved more. And the engaged program started to take shape. So what you see there is cocoa seedlings ... (pointing to a PowerPoint slide of a cocoa seedling) ... so we said we would support cocoa seedling nurseries, we will look after them and you do some volunteering for us and we will sell you the seedlings at subsidised cost. There was also no outlets for buying seedlings close by and if they did travel to the cocoa research institute there was no guarantee they would even been sold to them, and also chances were by the time they got back along bumping old roads

the fragile seedlings would have died. So people weren't buying them and the yield was declining year on year as the old trees got older and they weren't replaced. So enter the Lux Choc satellite nurseries. In our first year we grew something like 8,000 seedling with 30% mortality rate. Over the years we have got better, we now grow about 100,000 seedlings with a mortality rate of about 4%. And I say we, with great pride and ownership, but what I really mean is the cocoa farmers. As they after the first few years, and after they saw the Lux Choc commitment, the cocoa farmers started to say I love what you are doing, but if I set up my own satellite in this village here then I can sell to these guys and make a bit of profit and if I have any leftover I can put them into my farm and so now we have something like 20 satellite nurseries in the different villages. The problem now we have is that the original managers are saying we have market saturation, so what can we do? Well the next step was new plants for old land. Cocoa growing is a tough job ... easy to let one area of the farm to not be maintained. The minute you do that the weeds spring up immediately. If you leave one area for one season, it is pretty much useless the next season and the weeds take up all the nutrients and the quality of the soil is lost. So the farmers said here is a project proposal for you. Provide us with Lacuna seeds... when you plant them they take over the land, overtake weeds and when you chop them down all the nutrients go back into soil. But, the seed are expensive so farmers asked us to fund the trials. And, it was a great success, so next year they asked us to support them to grow Lacuna seeds to sell on ...

Another initiative was planting plantain plants to provide the shade for the cocoa plants... but they expensive ... so we brought in an expert who showed them how to split and divide plantain and grow their own crops ... very successful ... train the trainers mode ... plantain growers started springing up in the communities ... Another project we have done was extension of planting ... our club members clubbed together to raise the money to buy our extension officer a motorbike so he could get to all the villages so he could teach the farmers better crop management techniques and sustainable soil management techniques ... very successful ... learned commitment means commitment. ...

What we get out of it: Powerful imagery... we can tell stories of our photos. News articles for Tasting club boxes. Attraction of right type of staff: they are stakeholders too and they like the fact we are ethical, and it also means more and more people come to us directly, not through agencies. ...

Next step... we could have a cocoa estate in St. Lucia... couple of months later we had a cocoa estate in St. Lucia and because we had some experience with cocoa farming and the problems we were ready to take the next step. ...

So first thing we did was spoke to the government because they were very keen to reinvigorate agriculture ... so we committed to work with the St. Lucia government to try to reinvigorate the cocoa industry there and one way we did this was sharing our knowledge. ... We didn't keep our knowledge to ourselves, we shared it with the other cocoa growers on the island and we also wanted to

buy cocoa from the cocoa farms there, at a fixed price. Difference is we are there. We are hands on and we can see and help develop the program. But our program is a formal one, which we have invited all cocoa partner growers on the island to join. First we promise to buy all the cocoa produced. We also fixed prices, so you know it will be bought and how much you are going to get paid for it. ... We also buy within 7 days, this is a really big thing. Typically a cocoa farmer might deal with an agent ... agents have no incentive to be honest ... "I will do my best to sell them"... it might be 6 months before you get your income or 6 months before you are told he can't sell them. We also offer to purchase the beans wet ... to them [beans] dry, it takes 2 or 3 weeks and involves a very particular skill set and it is very labour intensive, so we buy wet, we buy the pods and do drying and fermenting, but we pay the same price they would have got if they had sold them dry.. Advantage for us is we can control the fermentation of the beans as that is such an important part of the taste. And we grow our own seedlings and sell them on so farmers can increase their yields. Another feature of being a cocoa farmer is you have to travel to get beans to port, you may not be able to get there, [which] leaves you at the mercy of the agents and they determine the price, so with our scheme we have said we welcome and collect the beans and we have employed local agents who can also talk to the farmers: if there are issues, we can do something about it. Those are the key points of the program, there is a lot more to it and please ask me if you want to know more after ...

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