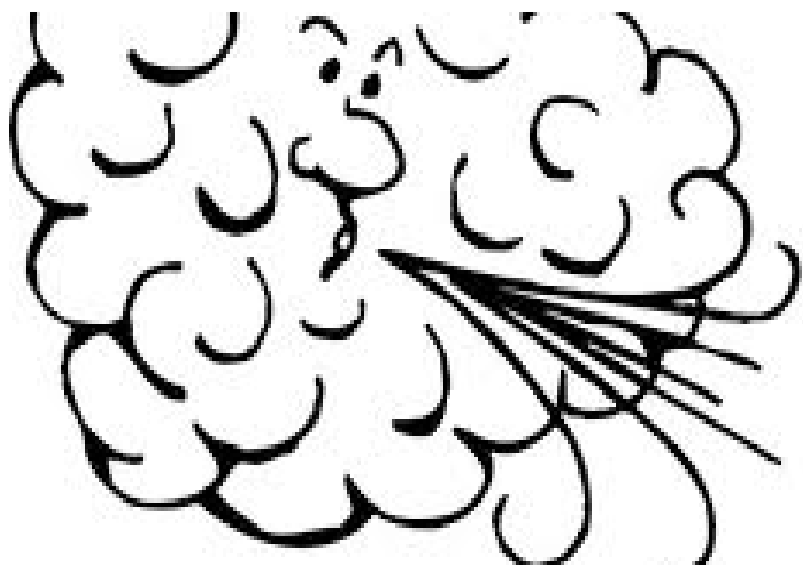


Beyond Entities: Challenges and Potentialities

Martha S. Feldman

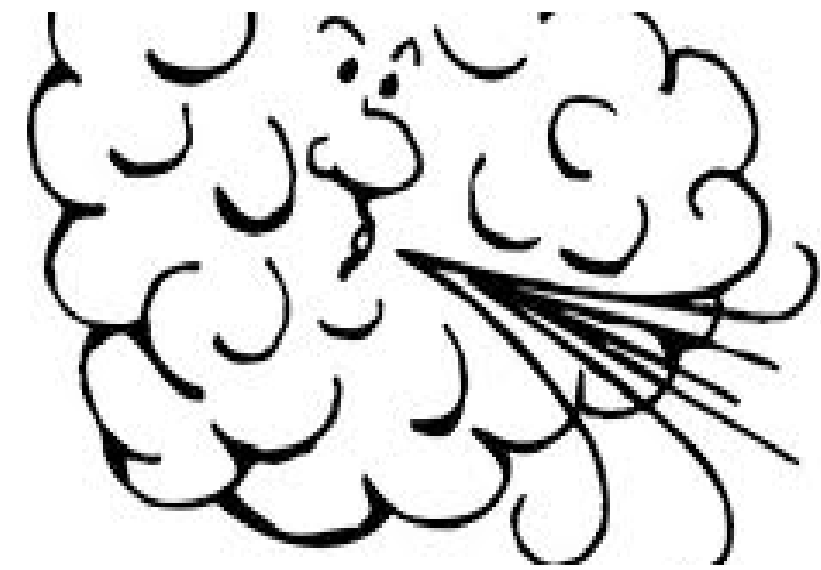
University of California, Irvine



We say the wind is blowing as if the wind were separate from its blowing, as if a wind could exist which did not blow.

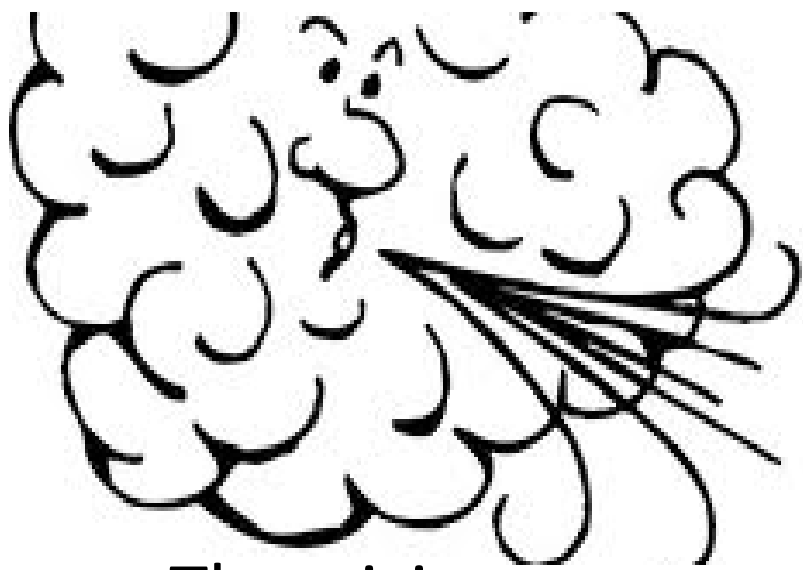
(Elias (1978: p. 112 *What is Sociology?* Cited in Emirbayer, 1997, *Manifesto for a Relational Sociology*)

- We do the same with many concepts of interest to organizational scholars:
 - Organization
 - Power
 - Identity
 - Knowledge
 - Routines
 - Resources



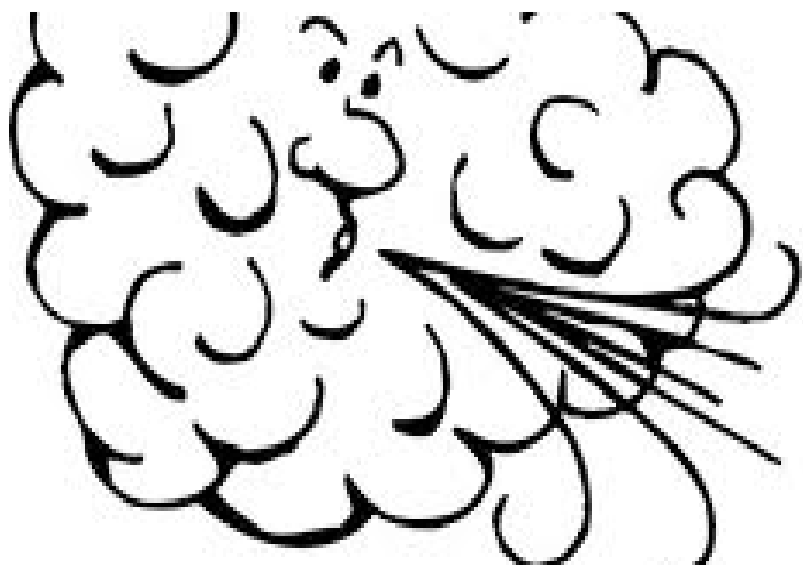
Why?





Entities make some things easier

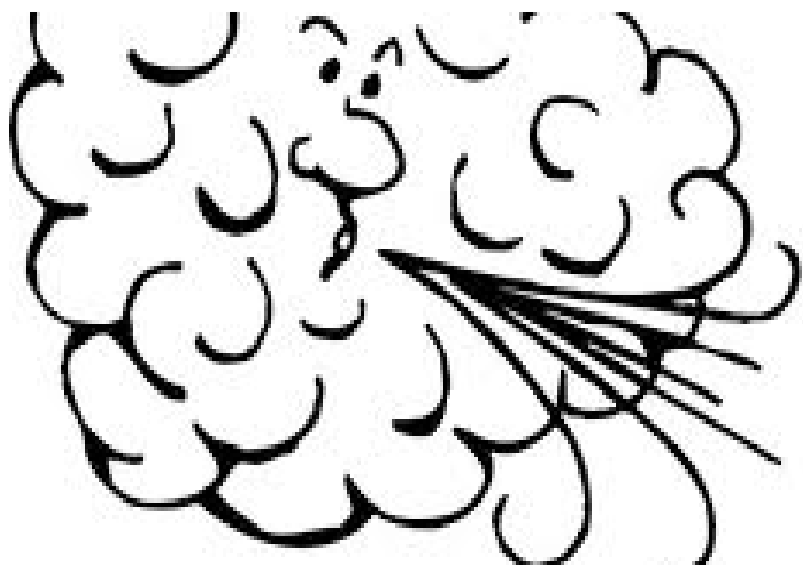
- Theorizing
 - entities allow us to ask questions about cause and effect (questions that entail separation of things and of time)
 - entities help us make predictions (if I do this, what will happen to that?)
- Analyzing: entities can be counted and correlated
- Representing: entities can be easily identified (named) and visualized



But what
do we
miss?

- Theorizing
 - The effort involved in creating stability/entity
 - The provisional nature of stability/entity
 - Multiplicity (e.g., same action, many practices; same identifier, different patterns)
 - Relationality and entanglement (mutual constitution and intra-action)

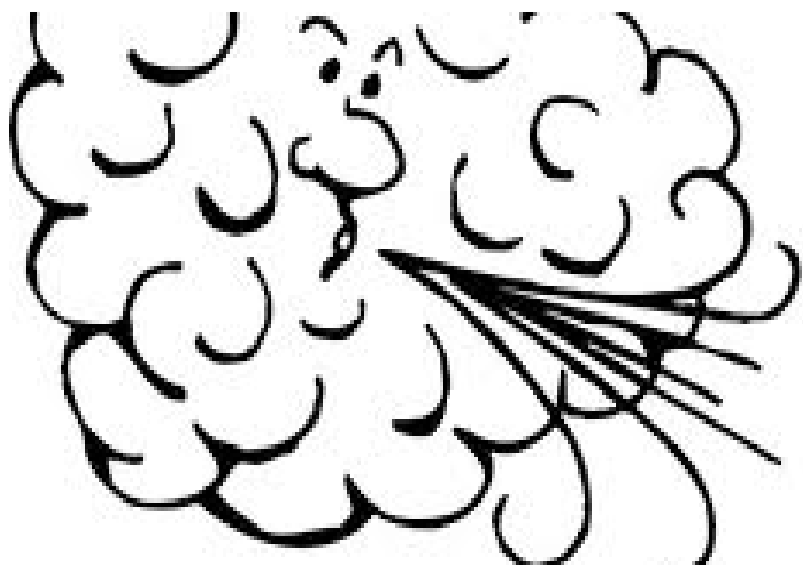




Analytical Challenges

- Orienting to action, temporality, relationality and multiplicity
 - “Live” coding – that fixes for a moment as a way enabling new ways of seeing*
 - Narratives
 - Plurivocality
 - Tracing

* Locke, Feldman & Golden Biddle. 2015. Discovery, Validation and Live Coding. In Elsbach & Kramer (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Organizational Research: Innovative Pathways and Methods*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.



Representational challenges

- Noun oriented language (e.g., how to talk about organizational phenomena)
- Identifying “what” we are studying
- Representation as boxes and arrows
 - Label the arrows
 - Find new ways of representing (e.g., actor-networks, action nets, narrative networks)*

* See Feldman. Forthcoming. Making Action Visible. In Langley & Tsoukas (eds) The SAGE Handbook of Process Organization Studies, Sage Publishing.