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Testimonies, manifestos and motivational hymns: uses of narrative devices in the organization of entrepreneurship in current neoliberal Chilean society.

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Introduction

The narratives I analyse here were collected in a research project, entitled: “Individuals and pragmatic regimes in Chile: towards a pragmatic and moral sociology of the individual”. The research studies how certain subject or individuals are brought to life or enacted by particular modes of activity. Issues of subjectivity, self and individuals compose my main area of study for the past 12 years. But this particular research joins recent calls for studying these matters in action.

Two regimes of the individual in current Chilean society called our attention: entrepreneurship and the ecological or environmental movement. We call them regimes because we contend that they are not purely about business or a sustainability, they are much larger, they promote models of society and of the subject, we have studied these co-enactments through daily practices.

Which brings me to the methodology: we carried out extensive multisited ethnographic fieldwork. And in 2 senses, 1. we followed the actors through their activities. 2. because we did a number of case studies in each regime, so we distribute our gaze.

Entrepreneurship activity in Chile and the study of narrative devices

I'll live aside the ecological regime, and will stick to the entrepreneurial. In Chile, entrepreneurship was ideologically conceived under Dictatorship in the 80s, initially implemented through public programmes under the democratic government of the Concertación Coalition in the 90s and since then reinforced and expanded systematically, and allegedly, uncritically. Thirty-five years later, entrepreneurship is the key economic policy for the enhancement of productivity and innovation,¹ and also a main strategy for poverty reduction. Today Chile has entrepreneurship programmes across its social spectrum: for prisoners, the poor, scientists, engineers, artists, youth, sportspeople, corporations, Ngo's, politicians. Indeed, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, in 2011 31% of the Chilean population aging 18 to 65 considers themselves as

¹ Investment on I+D in Chile corresponds to 0,4% of the GDP, while in OECD countries it is 2,3%.

entrepreneurs in early or established stages.² This proportion represents almost 10% more than in the previous 2009 survey. Additionally, 46% of the population manifests the intention of starting a new business, much over other societies such as the Brazilian (28%), United States (10%), India (32%) or China (42%).³

Following Foucault's wake, a series of governmentality studies have approached the enterprise form as a regime of governance, offering a general mode of life and encompassing subjectivity itself. Retaining that entrepreneurship is not only a way of conducting business, but mainly a regime promoting models of society and of subjectivation, my research joins recent calls for studying entrepreneurship in action. Using a post-anthropocentric, relational, pragmatic and moral approach, I aim at dissecting (or unbracketing) the many practices that make entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur real in this society, narrative practices included.⁴ Through one year of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork I have studied how entrepreneurship is enacted in multiple locales such as high tech start-ups under incubation, social entrepreneurship ventures, NGO's 'bare foot' entrepreneurship programmes for tackling economic inactivity, the genealogy of entrepreneurship public policy, or the recent formation of the association of Chilean entrepreneurs.

Among the many financial, commercial, technological, domestic devices we found operating in the Chilean entrepreneurship ecosystem, we encounter not only an intensive exchange of stories but also a diversified use of narrative devices. This extensive use of stories in entrepreneurship, I argue, has a reason: narratives are used to stabilize the regime, in other words, they help to keep it together and active, they help to enrol new agents, to disseminate what this is about, and what are the reasons or motives or justifications behind this activity. Narratives do a lot of work in the production and reproduction of the entrepreneurial regime.

In this paper I focus on three of these narrative devices: the testimonio, the manifesto and the motivational hymn, to show how and in which ways do they participate in the enactment of this regime.

² Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report 2011.

³ Google Public Data: Global Entrepreneurship Research Association (GERA).

⁴ The research (Fondecyt n° 11110459) is entitled "Individuals and pragmatic regimes in Chile: towards a pragmatic and moral sociology of the individual" and is funded by the National Commission of Scientific and Technological innovation (CONICYT) for the period 2011-2014.

Entrepreneurial narratives in the Chilean regime

Entrepreneurship by necessity: solidarity among vulnerable micro-credit debtors

The Solstice Foundation, based in Santiago de Chile, is a private non-profit organization that provides microfinance services to "entrepreneurial men and women in the most vulnerable sectors of our country, thus promoting a social and economic development that lasts over time."⁵ The foundation provides micro-credit loans throughout much of the country, on average to groups of about 18 neighbours (the amount of the loan can vary between 80 and 650 EUR). In 2012, the Solstice Foundation provided funding to 21,000 beneficiaries, distributed through 1,170 entrepreneurial centres throughout Chile.

Each loan must be repaid in 20 weekly instalments, a period of time called a 'cycle'. Each group is responsible for reimbursing the total amount of money requested for each loan. Each cycle involves a weekly meeting at the micro-entrepreneurial centres, where with the support of a social worker, training is provided and the loans are accounted for. The clients are people who do not have access to the financial market, mostly women. Solstice promotes this activity as a form of "social and economic training of the poor through their inclusion in the labour market as independent workers". This is called 'entrepreneurship by necessity'.

11 A.M., October 10, 2012. Private home, El Peumo Neighbourhood, Municipality of La Pintana, Southern sector of Santiago. The research team attended a meeting of the "Spiders" Centre, made up of 16 people including 13 women and 3 men, whose micro-enterprises correspond to the sale of consumer herbs, shoemaking, tailoring, selling groceries at the fair, among other activities. The centre meets at the home of one of the beneficiaries. The social worker for the Solstice Foundation greeted the team at the door of this home. The meeting begins; Today is a special session: the group will receive a new loan, moving on to a more advanced cycle. After crossing the front yard the team entered the house to find a living room of about 10 by 2.5 meters. In it the members of the centre were already sitting in attendance throughout the room. The social worker takes a seat at a table that was crammed with food: cake, chips of various kinds, coffee, tea, and beverages. Quickly the ceremony begins. The social worker invites the participants to recite the "poem" (referring to the statement of principles of the Foundation, which is read aloud at meetings of micro-lending centres). In silence, the group repeats the text all together:

⁵ Mission statement of the Solstice organization, as stated on its web page.

Narrative 1: Motivational anthem or declaration of principles of the Solstice Foundation

1. We are here because we are entrepreneurial women and men, things don't happen to us, we make them happen.
2. We are here because we believe in the value of a job well done, and we are responsible with our commitments.
3. We are here because we believe in our abilities and in our partners' abilities.
4. We are here because we are in solidarity and we want to support each other in order to grow.
5. We are here because we want personal development, the development of our families, and that of our entire business and of Chile.
6. We are here because we can achieve our dreams. We are here because we believe in our centre and in the micro-lending institution to make progress.

The entrepreneurial option for young employed professionals

13.30, December 12, 2011. Chimkowe Municipal Event Centre, Municipality of Peñalolen, east of Santiago.

This is the first on site visitation by the research team. It is a one-day event for the dissemination of the venture, called "Masters Class: entrepreneurial attitude." The aim at this stage is to become familiarized with the regime, and how it is disseminated and practiced by actors in different places around the city, through activities that are open to the public. The program of this event includes a series of interventions throughout the day in the form of presentations by various successful entrepreneurs. Surprisingly, the "masters classes" were not imparted in an academic fashion, but rather the various presenters took to the stage one by one in order to share their entrepreneurial experiences. The event was organized by RASU.ORG, a new Chilean NGO that promotes entrepreneurship among young professionals in the areas of communication, design and new technologies.

The event centre, a recently inaugurated concrete structure with modern architectural motifs and furnishings, is populated by about 100 people, mostly young men, dressed casually: jeans, sneakers, sweatshirts, several with the printed logo of individual ventures. Among these, logos for, "www.sonidosocultos.con"; "Arqdaily"; "arriego.cl"; and "Rasu" catch the eye. In the large main auditorium there is a technological and dynamic atmosphere: Among the audience near the stage laptops, tablets and mobile computers abound. English Pop serenades the breaks from the speakers

installed on the pillars of the hall. On the big stage, presenters speak while standing, using a wireless microphone that allows them to move through the space and interact with the audience, while their presentations are projected behind them.

The research team was received for registration by a young woman named Marcela, one of the event organizers and daughter of the founder of RASU. "Many young people from different regions of the country as well as foreigners have showed up so far," she says. Through training, networking, conferences and tutorials, RASU aims to support young, new entrepreneurs who do not have the money for training and networking at traditional events: a ticket to this event costs 10,000 pesos (EUR 13,5), whereas the events organized by ICARE (Chilean Institute for Rational Corporate Management) cost 350,000 pesos (EUR 473). In addition, RASU attempts to recruit a population with a high potential for entrepreneurial activity: "The younger you are when you start to entrepreneur, the less you have to lose," states Marcela.

Narrative 2: Manifesto of the NGO RASU (RESET & START UP)

Before leaving to the Master Class, we wanted to learn about RASU and turned to the internet. We found the following manifesto on its webpage:

1. We will provoke entrepreneurial hunger and forge talent among all of those who detest the concept of the average salary!
2. We know that the entrepreneurial talent is not inherited, it is built. It requires a cause, an attitude, focus, and a lot of time. For this we have proposed the generation of spaces where together we can build a massive and uncontrollable entrepreneurial culture.
3. With all respect, we rebel against mediocre job stability that the system proposes, and we invite you to consider the act of entrepreneurship as a liberating act that provides you with the reins of your own intellectual, social and spiritual development.
4. THE SYSTEM HAS ALREADY CONDEMNED YOU TO WORK THE NEXT 45 YEARS; IT'S UP TO YOU WHETHER IT'S TO BE A PLEASURE OR TORTURE...!
5. READY!⁶

⁶ <http://www.rasu.org/2012/manifesto>. Downloaded 11/12/2012.

Enterprise for opportunity: the search for innovation

3pm, March 29, 2012. Event Centre at the Literary Café, Municipality of Providencia, eastern sector of Santiago. The research team continues to attend public events at which entrepreneurship is the primary theme. The second experience (free of charge) was organized by the 'Emprendoverde' Network, which includes over 300 companies and sustainable enterprises in Chile. This network was formed in 2011 in order to, "make a call to people, enterprises and existing companies seeking to integrate sustainability variables into their business models", and to, "promote entrepreneurship and support high-impact development strategies, and connect entrepreneurs with investors to raise financing."⁷ This type of venture is known as "opportunity entrepreneurship". The event is sponsored by two central agencies that promote innovative entrepreneurship: the Development Corporation of the State of Chile (CORFO), and the Association of Entrepreneurs of Chile (AEC). In typical form, the event is organized as a series of talks by managers, promoters and entrepreneurs, ending up with a cocktail in order to facilitate a networking session. The conference room is filled to capacity: there are over a hundred people in the audience, mainly made up of early-stage green entrepreneurs.

Narrative 3: Testimony of a serial entrepreneur

Fernanda Vicente, serial entrepreneur and member of the Board of Directors of the Entrepreneurs Association of Chile (ASECH), is an upper middle class journalist in her thirties. She delivers her testimony following a speech by Adrián, a manager at CORFO (the primary state agency supporting innovative entrepreneurship in Chile). The testimony is divided into two parts, separated by a video clip promoting ASECH. The following transcript is a reduced version of her 26:47" length speech. Edited sections are marked with parenthesis, the content of the segments that have been left out is provided in parentheses⁸.

1. Hello, thanks. The truth is that while watching Adrián's presentation it was a bit funny, because I am the counterpart, I am like you.
2. And the things that Adrián says, I don't agree with all of it.
3. Because it's the reality of an entrepreneur, and that's different from how the State sees it, the government, government programs in which very few entrepreneurs are involved.
4. Sorry Adrián, sorry, you were very good, but its so academic,
5. And the truth is that we live day to day, we make our own work. We know what we need (...)

⁷ www.emprendoverde.cl

⁸ Transcript of the video which is available on youtube (downloaded on 04/23/2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sw_NOIhXFvo;

6. The issue is that many of us maybe, I'm a journalist by education, one, I say because I've studied many other things, and am always involved in a million things.
7. Maybe we aren't business majors with business models, but we learn as we go.
8. In truth, I am a serial entrepreneur, the name makes me laugh,
9. It's like a serial killer really, but in truth, serial suicide might make more sense.
10. Because I recognize that I originally started out with no parachute
11. I did whatever I had to do, I didn't measure any risks...
12. I had an idea, let's do it, it doesn't matter how much we need, all right, four-thousand dollars, in those days that was a whole lot of money.
13. All right, how do we get it, let's throw a party, I went all in, I lost the four thousand, oh well, but I did it, and I learned as I did (speaks about her current business)
14. And it's not even an issue of money, it's about being interested in doing things (speaks about government and academia's approach to entrepreneurship)
15. I think that you don't have to reinvent the wheel.
16. For example, '*Water Latte*': filtered water is nothing new; the business model is different because all earnings go to foundations.
17. They didn't reinvent the wheel, what's different is the vision, that's the innovation.
18. I hope someone invents the wheel, genius; I'd applaud him,
19. I don't know how to invent the wheel. I'm no scientist or technician,
20. But I am nosy. I like to watch the world. I even read the pizza flyers that get dropped off at my house. I get ideas from everywhere...
21. I wear myself out, but I need to do things. That's what it's about.
22. The point of my talk today is that we all get super motivated, like Rocky when he was training and ran up the steps in Washington... That's what we are.
23. Nobody is going to do the job for us (... talks about funds for entrepreneurship)
24. Entrepreneurs work from here [touches her heart], we have fire and that fire is pure passion,
25. And we work hard 365 days a year, we don't sleep. The entrepreneur that wants a vacation is not an entrepreneur, why should we fool ourselves, that's the truth.
26. People say, 'I want to be independent', (...) I don't want to have a boss'. If that is your motivation, you're not going to do very well, no way.
27. Or because I want to be a millionaire, that won't work either, because most don't get to be millionaires.
28. I want to change the world, fantastic, that doesn't work either (...)
29. But it's not necessary to be embarrassed to say that you want to make money, I mean that's what we're all about at the end of the day.

30. We all want everyone to do well, to change the world, to give people better quality jobs. (Speaks about how all businesses today should be green, sustainable, use social responsibility, local)
31. This was supposed to be a brief, sorry Adrián if I bothered you, but our reality is so different.

(A promotional video of ASECH is shown, after which she goes back to her presentation, “to analyze the characteristics of an entrepreneur”, she explains. Turning toward the big screen, this image appears:



32. This is Golum, this is us, strange birds:
33. To be an entrepreneur you have to be a dreamer, if you don't have dreams, nothing moves you.
34. Today there are emerging conditions so that dream can be a big one, let's not think only of Chile, let's think of Latin America (...) think where you dream to be, because that dream is the goal that you're after.
35. Reality hits hard, but the dream is what moves you. It's important not to lose the dream, those who don't dream don't have what it takes to be an entrepreneur.
36. A little bit crazy, you have to be a little crazy, because you move at another rhythm. While everybody thinks about one thing, you're thinking of another,
37. You have to have that craziness so people think you're a bit of a strange bird, break the mould, make the system change, and change the model. Generate innovations that don't mean reinventing the wheel, but a vision, a different vision.
38. You've got to have a hard head, because the headaches are strong. Headache at the end of the day, headache at the end of the month, headache when people tell you that nobody's going to buy your product, that it's terrible (...)
39. I disagree with the people who say that you don't have to be passionate, I get angry when people say 'oh she's so passionate about her business, she loves it so much she doesn't see anything wrong with it'. If you're not passionate, how are you going to get it off the ground? (...)
40. Steve Jobs, what he had was a hard head, and he didn't listen to anybody.

41. And he had the capacity to see something that was already there, because he didn't invent anything new, (..) but he did have the vision to join two existing things and turn them around and see where it was going...(criticizes the CORFO funds).
42. Careful, you have to be deaf but not dumb, you have to know when to stop.
43. Why deaf? For all of the people that try to put you down, that tell you no, that it's a terrible idea, there aren't that many people concerned about the environment, that's too expensive, no, ohhh, this guy went broke trying to do the same thing, don't do that.
44. But at one point, you have to recognize and think that maybe, this way that I'm doing it isn't working out.
45. But you have to have your eyes wide open, because that same idea could be super good if done another way. You have to know how to adapt (...)
46. Really you have to be a roly-poly doll, that they hit you and you stand right back up, you get hit, and you get back up (talks about difficulties for getting early money)
47. Nobody believes in you, but you know that it will work, and that conviction is what moves you. (Recommends doing ethnography to get to know the clients)
48. This is us, but we're happy because now we are not alone.
49. Until only very recently it was a very lonely job, not just in Chile (talks of loneliness of previous entrepreneurs)
50. And forget about it if you went broke before, because you can't innovate, failure in Chile is death, death in DICOM, death in credit, death in the family and with friends, who tell you, 'what were you thinking, you idiot, get a job with a monthly salary, it didn't work out, you failed'.
51. He who has fallen knows much more than he who has never fallen. My theory is that you graduate as an entrepreneur with war wounds.
52. The rate of successful entrepreneurs is very low; don't be afraid to fall because you can get right back up (...). We're not alone anymore. (Shows ASECH's achievements)
52. When we get together and associate, we can discuss the idea. Don't be afraid to talk about the idea, people get afraid that someone's going to steal their idea,
53. But don't be afraid because at the end of the day, you're the one who makes the difference, not the idea.
54. If you're able to get that idea off the ground in that way, the idea is unique (She is asked to finish up)
55. Ok, bye. (Applause)

Comparative analysis

I want to show how these three narratives although different in genre and situation of use, structure and contribute to the stabilization of the entrepreneurial regime by mobilizing action through fictional stories, by disseminating the pragmatic requirements needed to take hold of this specific environment and by propagating normative orientations or the moral motives by which to commit to this activity. After showing this communality, I try to delineate some of the differences in the way these devices operate in their respective arrangements, and in doing so, I problematize the meritocratic claims of Chilean entrepreneurship.

Narratives helping to inhabit fictional expectations- mobilizing action

These are motivational devices, to enroll newcomers they are meant to provoke the audience to undertake entrepreneurial activities or to secure the commitment of those already involved. My proposition is that among entrepreneurs-to-be these types of narrative devices and narrative work produce and help to inhabit what Beckert (2013) calls “fictional expectations” in the context of uncertain economic activity. The notion of fiction refers to the creation of a world of its own (p.224). Against other types of decision-making activity, fictional expectations are not bound to rational calculation. They refer to “imaginaries of future situations that provide orientation in decision making despite the uncertainty inherent in the situation” (p.222), imaginaries of some future state of affairs that is cognitively accessible in the present through mental representation and the discursive form of the narrative.

When fictional expectations are established what they foresee for the future influence the commitment of the audience in the present. A successful entrepreneurial narrative should convince that the state predicted will become the future present (Koselleck 1993) and should suspend disbelief associated to the high rates of failure that entrepreneurship has. These narratives construct future beneficial images with the power of minimizing or “overlooking” risk and failure.

To do this job, to persuade, narrators need to talk from a legitimate position. In the very genre of the testimony the narrator is chosen to share a story because he or she is a witness, and moreover, is an exemplar case of the experience under transmission. But additionally, Fernanda devotes the beginning of [hers](#) to ground this legitimate position of talk. First, she uses the testimony as a discursive platform to delineate groups and authority. This is a gesture of closure necessary for the conformation and stabilization of any group. Part of the work of a spokesperson is to define who belongs to a group and under which conditions: Fernanda’s testimony says that only those who have undertaken an entrepreneurial business can properly talk about it, not those who have only theoretical and academicists visions, as the former speaker has (Line 1-7). Second, she qualifies her

insider-ness: she is not a regular entrepreneur, she is as *serial* entrepreneur (Lines 12-13), this means that “she has made it” not once, but several times. Thus, she deserves to give testimony.

On their turn, to accomplish their aims the hymn and the manifesto use the “we” pronoun, a collective voice. The purpose of this hymn is to make each member of the group to see entrepreneurship as an aspect of himself or herself. A manifesto is a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives or views of its issuer. Usually, in them, there is a certain description of a state of affairs, a judgement of it, and a further call for action to provoke a change. In this case the target population corresponds to the average dependent worker, gaining an average salary in a mediocre stable job, seeking liberation and intellectual, social and spiritual development. A goal that, according to the manifesto, entrepreneurship can meet.

To motivate each narrative works with an uncontroversial and desirable target image. These images address the person in his or her individuality, and describe the actor far beyond the field of business and work. By being entrepreneurs Chileans will gain the “reins of their intellectual, social and even spiritual development” (M, stanza 3) and will “achieve their dreams (H, L6), (T, L4, part 2). Precisely, what all these narratives do is to present entrepreneurship not as a managerial, technical activity, but as an individual capacity that everybody can “build” (M, stanza 2), a way of appropriating one’s life destiny (“get the reins of life” (M, stanza 3), because at the end of the day entrepreneurship “is not even about money, it’s about being interested in doing things” (T, L18), and “*you*” are the one who makes the difference, not the (business) idea” (T, L37, part 2). The message in these fictional narratives is that entrepreneurial success is not about the *business* but about *oneself*.

Abilities needed for taking hold of the entrepreneurial environment: the pragmatic component

When this image is created, a second gesture of these narratives is to identify and communicate the abilities needed for taking hold of this environment, basically what is entrepreneurship and what an entrepreneur.

Throughout Fernanda’s story, for example, we can identify how she mobilizes a definition of entrepreneurship as innovation. Against the previous talk, innovation is not the “invention of the wheel”, of something completely new, but a different vision upon existing objects (T, L22-27).

In terms of the figure of the entrepreneur, the three narratives mobilize ideas of individual choice, agency and autonomy, prefiguring a proactive individual (“things don’t

happen to us, we make them happen” (H, L1), somebody even able of “rebellion” (M, Stanza 3). Moreover, Fernanda’s testimony offers a profile of the entrepreneur. Using her own features she talks about a daring profile, without risk aversion, a nosy, interested, versatile person, good observer, creative and action oriented (T, L28-29). Then, using the figure of Golum she adds that the entrepreneur should be a dreamer (a feature also mentioned in the hymn) because dreams creates future images and motivates present actions; should be a “little bit crazy”, to break the mold and innovate, have a “hard head” or be a “roly poly doll” to support critiques, discouragement, keep the passion intact and stand up after falls, but “without being dumb”, otherwise he or she may stop too late.

Thirdly, at this pragmatic level, the creation of a future present should not only say who to be but how to get there: Fernanda’s testimony like many other we heard, offers a *biographical roadmap*, delieanting stages and critical points in the entrepreneurial career : an uncertain begining, maybe associated to a certain discomfort with current work, then the sensation of uncertainty and the costs at personal, family and financial levels, the emerge o the ‘idea’, the transformation of the idea in a business with mission, objectives, schedules, a team; the search for early stages investors or angel money, the concretion of the business, the market entrance, self sustainability, scaling to other markers. In this trajectory the “fall” is a recurrent refrain. Narratively, it marks a point of inflection, the dramatic knot of the telling which also allows for morality to comes to the telling: the *good* entrepreneur is able to consider the falls as learnings, is able to reflect, of correcting, of improving and even of reinventing himself. The entrepreneur does not consider beforehand any situation as negative or detrimental. On the contrary, he is able to take profit out of adversity.

Dissemination of justifications –the moral component

Finally, stories of fictional expectations disseminate justifications for entrepreneurial activity and relatedly, protection against critiques – this is the moral component.

To Fernanda, the real justification is to make money, not “wanting to be my own boss”, “wanting to be millionaire” or “wanting to change the world”.

But as if wealth were not a legitimate motive, she encourages the audience not to feel “embarrassed” of acknowledging this motive. But if as she were not confident enough, then she adds other social, collective motives: give good jobs or move the country’s economy (T, L49).

The manifesto argues that entrepreneurship will conduct to the intellectual, social and spiritual emancipation of the individual. Again as if it were not enough, collateral benefits are mentioned in the text that accompany the manifesto in the web page:

“The message is clear, we won't stop ourselves because we are convinced that entrepreneurship is a fertilizer for social mobility and a straight blow against inequality”

Conversely, in the narratives there is little mention to the risks involved in entrepreneurial activity. Fernanda does mention some but only to reinterpret them as “war wounds” necessary to graduate as an entrepreneur (T, L33). This is a crucial gesture of these narratives: turn the downsides of the activity as a landmark in the career of the authentic entrepreneur.

Stratified option of individualized advancement

Notions of individual choice, agency and autonomy are mobilized in the three narratives, but why we have these narratives distributed in this regime, and in particular, why we have hymns only among the poor?, why to choose the manifesto to promote entrepreneurship as a liberating working alternative for professionals?

There is a clear gradient from the manifesto to the testimony and to the hymn in relation to the treatment of this autonomous subject. Unlike the others, the hymn refers to an ‘*autonomy under tutelage*’. This narrative begins by positioning micro-entrepreneurs as agentic men and women, capable of controlling the course of their lives (H, L1), but thereafter (H, L2-6) it turns them into the subjects of a series of public commitments as if these dispositions were not just part of their behavior and were in need of reinforcement: a job well done, responsibility with commitments, trust in their own and their partners’ abilities, etc. Indeed the choice of a hymn as a motivational discursive device comes precisely to reinforce publicly the bond of each member to the group, himself and the foundation. In consequence, we argue, that despite its democratic claims and according to the way it is communicated in these narratives, entrepreneurship is a stratified option of individualized advancement.

Final remarks

With this analytical exercise I have tried to highlight the importance of study narratives in action.

Narrative hints at the performative role of fictional expectations. By exercising influence on decisions, stories can create economy as a communicative field” (Holmes 2009, 384 in Beckert 2013: 229).

These narratives show that in neoliberal societies it is not simply that subjects are

governed, in ever more intimate ways, but that notions of choice, agency and autonomy have become central to that regulatory project (Gill 2008: 443)

If we put narrative along side other devices used to stabilised this regime such as metrics (statistics, scales, rankings) we can debunk the dichotomy between soft words and hard facts. Here allegedly solid objects such as metrics are not solely bound to rational calculation but also do fictional work. And as I tried to show allegedly soft object such as narratives have crucial performative effects.

In the narratives of low classes it is women who are specially called on to this regulatory project. Then, borrowing Rosalind Gill's (2008) question we may ask: Could it be that women are constructed as neoliberalism ideal subjects?

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