The spirit never dies

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I met Claudio as late as the year 2000. We had known one another by name for some time and we had had the occasional exchange of e-mails and a few telephone calls but did not happen to meet in person, as we operated in slightly different fields. I deeply regret that. Claudio will surely remain an important intellectual figure in the interdisciplinary field of administrative sciences in which IS, Organization Studies, Sociology and Economics are but major components. However, Claudio was, above all, an intensive personality, with a strong oral aura and numerous penetrating comments on all those minute details that compose the fabric of everyday life. These qualities made him both an exceptional and fascinating character. The vivid memory of his strong oral aura is certainly responsible for my feeling of unreality, which I every now and then get, when I think that he is gone forever. Forever? Till the end of time? So difficult for humans to grasp. 'Time is but the moving image of eternity', I had cited for him in English Plato's words, a couple of times. Once he asked me whether I could cite them in classic Greek. I did. He smiled and said: beautiful, although the only sound I seem to recognize is of the word 'chronos'.

Back in time, I came into contact with Claudio's work in the early and mid nineties when 'Teams, Markets and Systems' made its breakthrough. I also used the two other books he had edited during the same period (one on Strategy and ICT, the other on Groupware) in my teaching both at the graduate and postgraduate levels. While I was at Umea University, Sweden as a visiting professor in the second half of 1997, Kristo Ivanov handed me what I now judge to be an early version of Claudio's De Profundis paper, which I found very stimulating. Around that period, Claudio's thought shifted a bit away from his earlier concerns and showed an interest in Heideggerian philosophy. He gradually became seriously engaged with Heidegger's thought, sought to understand Heideggerian philosophy in all its depth and let that understanding bear upon the ways by which we approach key issues associated with how technologies of information and communication become integrated in contemporary institutional life. I often recall him during the days at LSE with the original, German version of one or another of Heidegger's books. We had discussions on how we understand and interpret Heidegger and one or another argument caused by my recurrent claim that its importance notwithstanding *Being and Time* could be misleading as the dominant signpost to Heidegger's thinking. I did not expect him to know my more than a decade old work on Heidegger and (re)presentation (vorstellung). He had. When I showed my surprise at this, he burst into laugher and said: Jannis, that's why you have been hired here. I do not think that he meant that literally but his reaction was so typical of Claudio's personality.

We read and got inspiration from Heidegger but we did not stay exclusively within the highly elegant and deep yet austere province of Heideggerian thought. Over the last 4 or 5 years of his life, Claudio (together with Ole Hanseth) was leading a group of scholars at LSE and the University of Oslo who studied the double-edged character of

integrating information infrastructures. The project drew on and expanded the ideas of previous engagements that have been documented in the collective volume *From Control to Drift* in the year 2000. A basic albeit counter-intuitive thought underlying this new project is that the quest for control may have implications that are much more elusive and contradictory than they may seem in the first place. Indeed, integration increases control only at the expense of a receding certainty that, prior to integration, was the outcome (mostly unintentional) of the local containment of separate techno-social zones. Integration unintentionally implies that lower level risks are compressed and handled at more generic level. The failure of these more comprehensive control mechanisms may cause the drift away from intended outcomes, bring one or the other negative consequence and occasionally cause devastating effects. There is in other words a trade-off between high frequency/low impact and low frequency/high impact risks whose detailed architecture needs specific attention. The duality-of-risk project, as it came to be known, drew on variety of ideas and authors including Tony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and also Niklas Luhmann. That book, which Ole Hanseth is now editing with the help of some colleagues (see his paper in this special issue), gives a flavour of the intellectual breadth of the project and is quite representative of some of the intellectual pathways Claudio was pursuing the last 5 years of his life.

There is specifically one paper that Claudio produced in connection with that project which I find as one of the most interesting among his writings. An early version of that paper, I think, was called 'The Duality of Risk: Digital Technologies and Risk', while a later version was intended to appear with the title 'Imbrications of Representations'. The underlying idea of the paper is simple yet highly evocative. It explores some of the effects that emerge, or could emerge, at the crossroads of two powerful and expanding technologies, those of risk calculation and management with computer-based information infrastructures. Claudio seems to suggest that what once was just the medium of risk calculation and assessment (computer-based technologies), that is, just a means to an end, tends to increasingly frame the perception and management of risk. As contemporary information and communication technologies expand their institutional involvement and instrumental capacity, they increasingly circumscribe the possible avenues along which the techniques of risk assessment and management are carried out from the well-bounded corporate world. The imbrications of risk management techniques and GRID technologies are bound to produce a techno-socio-economic assemblage that has the potential of becoming a pervasive technology for managing individuals' life prospects in ways that have not been possible before. Currently, most mass produced services (e.g., insurance, banking) will be tailor-made to a degree unfathomable today, by constantly monitoring and assessing the individuals' life prospects and needs against recorded information of individual life styles, available in a variety of compatible and interconnected data-bases. The implications of these developments are far reaching, promising and frightening at the same time. The core of this idea is very much taken from Robert J. Shiller's 'The New Financial Order' (Princeton University Press, 2003). However, Claudio manages to bring in some thoughts and reflections on technology, its duality and contradictory effects, which are largely missing from Shiller's very interesting yet somehow naively optimistic view.

The last time I saw Claudio was the 17th of September 2004 in the hospital of St Rafael in Milan. Despite his illness Claudio had secured finance and was leading another project to which I had been invited to participate. The project focused on the possible effects ICT may have for development, trust and ultimately democracy. The empirical investigation was planned to take place (and did) in Latin America. He wanted to have a meeting with us and exchange ideas on how to proceed to make the project as successful as possible. Chrisanthi Avgerou and Antonio Cordella and I travelled to Milan and visited him in the hospital. As we kept going up the stairs to his room, I felt my emotions being on the verge of over-whelming me. I did not know what to expect and painful memories of cancer-struck friends and relatives were resurfacing. However, on seeing him I felt somehow relieved. Despite the visible signs of his illness, Claudio looked physically strong and in good mood, just less than 5 months ahead of his death. He took us out in the hospital yard and related one or another of his latest experiences. Talked about his illness with amazing courage, the project on ICT, trust and development and other things. He told us with a strong interest about a Ph.D. thesis from Australia that he had agreed to become examiner and how much he was impressed by the thesis, whose author is Helmut Klaus. You are treated with reverence Jannis by the author, he told us laughing, but I, Antonio and others get some hard portions of critique. That's how Claudio was and that is my major impression of him: self-critical, open, curious, generous. He was certainly demanding as colleague and leader. However, he applied his demanding criteria first to himself. Having had enough experience of some of the most miserable aspects of academia (e.g., ego-driven micropolitics, petti-ness, unrestrained narcissism, etc.), Claudio's attitude struck me as remarkably open and generous. Antonio stayed there. I and Chrisanthi left the hospital devastated. Despite Claudio's strong spirit, we feared the worst. In the taxi to the airport, a vast sadness came over me.

Perhaps the spirit never dies, as Van Morison sings. Memory may well be a form of life and people perhaps pass definitively away only at the very moment in which the memories that the living keep of them fade and vanish. For some time, Claudio will go on living in the disembodied yet vivid memories that his strong oral presence sculpted in our minds.

About the author

Jannis Kallinikos is Reader and Ph.D. Programme Director at the Department of Information Systems at LSE. He has published widely in academic journals and collective volumes and is the author of *Technology and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies in Formal Organization*, Munich: Accedo, 1996 and *In the Age of Flexibility: Managing Organizations and Technology*, Lund: Academia Adacta, 2001. A new book with the title *Information, Institutions and Networks* is to be published by Elgar in 2006.