PAPERLESS PROFESSORS:
A STUDY OF CHANGING ACADEMIC WORK AND WORKSPACES

KATHLEEN ANN STEPHENSON
PAPERLESS PROFESSORS:
A STUDY OF CHANGING ACADEMIC WORK AND WORKSPACES
PAPERLESS PROFESSORS:
A STUDY OF CHANGING
ACADEMIC WORK
AND WORKSPACES

KATHLEEN ANN STEPHENSON
VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

PAPERLESS PROFESSORS:
A Study of Changing Academic Work and Workspaces

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor of Philosophy
aan de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. V. Subramaniam,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de School of Business and Economics
op donderdag 28 maart 2019 om 13.45 uur
in de aula van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

by
Kathleen Ann Stephenson
geboren te Texas, Verenigde Staten
CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. 15

1.1 STUDying ORGANIZATIONAL SPACES............................................................... 17
  Studying organizational spaces with a constitutive approach........................................ 19
  Studying organizational spaces and identity work: a conceptual review.......................... 21
  Studying organizational spaces in relation to strategic change .................................... 22

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .................................................................................. 23
  How do spatial processes organize work and work organize spatial processes? .......... 24
  How are workspaces implicated in how individuals make sense of who they are and as a result shape how they work and vice versa? ........................................ 24
  How are organizational spaces implicated when enacting radical strategic change? ...... 25

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH .............................................................................. 25
  An ethnographic case ........................................................................................................ 25
  Reflections on ethnography ............................................................................................. 29

1.4 DISSERTATION OUTLINE ............................................................................ 30
  Chapter 2 ...................................................................................................................... 30
  Chapter 3 ...................................................................................................................... 31
  Chapter 4 ...................................................................................................................... 31

CHAPTER 2

SPACING AND ORGANIZING: PROCESS APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL SPACE ....................................................... 35
CHAPTER 3

STABLE FIGURES? IDENTITY WORK AND PROFESSIONAL FIGURATIONS IN A CHANGING WORK ENVIRONMENT .......... 69

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................................................... 70

3.1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................................... 70

3.2 MATERIALITY AND IDENTITY WORK ................................................................................................. 75
  Social constructionist perspectives ................................................................................................................ 75

CHAPTER 4

RESISTANCE IS IN THE RHYTHMS: FRAMING RADICAL STRATEGIC CHANGE AND INCORPORATING SPATIOTEMPORAL STRUCTURES .................................................................................. 105

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................................................... 106

4.1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................................... 106

4.2 A REVIEW OF THE CONUNDRUMS FROM STRATEGIC CHANGE LITERATURE ..................................... 109
  Change and continuity ..................................................................................................................................... 109
  Direction and type .......................................................................................................................................... 111
  Ambiguity and clarity ....................................................................................................................................... 112
# A Study of Changing Academic Work and Workspaces

## Abstract and concrete

- 113

## 4.3 Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research setting</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 4.4 Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAR’s early identity frame</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triggering strategic change</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic framing processes</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR members initial change acceptance</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR members individual sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR members continued keying</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 4.5 Discussion and Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A model encompassing the embodied elements of strategic change</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR member sensemaking and sensegiving</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical contributions, implications, and future research</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Chapter 5

## Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

- 166

### 5.2 Summary of Key Findings

- 166

  - How do spatial processes organize work and work organize spatial processes? | 170
  - How are workspaces implicated in how individuals make sense of who they are and as a result shape how they work and vice versa? | 171
  - How are organizational spaces implicated when enacting radical strategic change? | 173

## 5.3 Theoretical Implications and Related Future Research Directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space work</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional identity figurations</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythms</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 5.4 Limitations and Related Future Research Directions

- 181

## 5.5 Practical Implications

- 183

  - Arranging the workspace in a way that recognizes the present and orients to a desired future | 183
  - Continually maintain organizational spaces | 184
  - Attempt to arrange space to afford certain kinds of organizing | 184

## 5.6 Concluding Remarks

- 185

## References

- 187

## Summary

- 228

## Acknowledgements

- 231

## Abri Dissertation Series

- 237
FIGURES AND TABLES

CHAPTER 1

FIGURE 1.1 FOUR EMBEDDED CASES ................................................................. 27
TABLE 1.5 THESIS RESEARCH OUTPUT ............................................................. 33

CHAPTER 2

TABLE 2.1 KEY REFERENCES FOR REVIEW ............................................... 45
TABLE 2.2 A TYPOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONAL SPACINGS ......................... 51
FIGURE 2.1 VISUALIZING SPACING PROCESSES ........................................... 61

CHAPTER 3

TABLE 3.1 OVERVIEW PARTICIPANTS ................................................................. 85
FIGURE 3.1 MULTIPLE INTERSECTING WORLDS OF PROFESSIONAL FIGURATIONS ................................................................. 91

CHAPTER 4

TABLE 4.1 OVERVIEW OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ....................... 116
TABLE 4.2 OVERVIEW DOCUMENTS ................................................................. 117
TABLE 4.3 OVERVIEW FIELD NOTES ................................................................. 118
FIGURE 4.1 DATA STRUCTURE STAR’S STRATEGIC CHANGE .................... 120
TABLE 4.4 STAR’S PERVERSIVE FRAMES ........................................................ 123
TABLE 4.5 SPATIOTEMPORAL STRUCTURES OF FRAMES AS REPORTED BY STAR MEMBERS ................................................................. 125
TABLE 4.6 STRATEGIC FRAMING TACTICS ....................................................... 133
TABLE 4.7 EMBODIED, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE SENSEMAKINGSTAR MEMBERS ................................................................. 143
TABLE 4.8 DISCURSIFYING ARRHYTHMIA ....................................................... 151
TABLE 4.7 EMBODIED, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE SENSEMAKINGSTAR MEMBERS ................................................................. 152
FIGURE 4.3 EMBODIED SENSEMAKING AND SENSEGIVING OF STRATEGIC CHANGE ................................................................. 157

CHAPTER 5

TABLE 5.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND KEY FINDINGS ............................... 169
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
The changing nature of professional work and shifts in societal expectations with regard to how universities should be managed have resulted in significant changes in the way that academics do, and make sense of their work. Advanced information technologies have afforded academics additional mobility and connectivity, while demands for universities to be managed more efficiently, like businesses, have oriented academics to think strategically and work efficiently. Though many aspects of academic work endure, such shifts are not trivial. In fact, they have even materialized in universities’ physical environments, wherein the flexible open-plan office concept popular in industry (Kingma, 2018; Wilhoit, 2016) has been extended to universities (Baldry and Barnes, 2012; Berti et al., 2018; Lancione and Clegg, 2013; van Marrewijk and van Ende, 2018; Wilhoit et al., 2016).

Flexible open-plan offices are designed to afford flexibility and save costs (Duffy, 1997). In addition, they are often generic in the sense that they are “bland, pre-negotiated and accepted among a large group of people” (Muhr, 2012: 52) with aesthetic features of white or glass walls (Connellan, 2013; Gabriel, 2005), long wooden tables (Woldoff et al., 2013), and seating dissociated from work, such as couches and dining chairs (Jones et al., 2015). Such office arrangements are designed to foster mobility and operate more like meeting places for workers than spaces for concentrated work (Brown and O’Hara, 2003). Further, due to their pervasiveness, flexible open-plan office designs belong to no organization in particular (Chayka, 2016) and could equally be used in a coffee bar (Oldenburg, 1989), an airport (Costas, 2013), or a home (Richardson and McKenna, 2014), thus diminishing the distinctive markers between organizations, industries, and work and non-work spaces (Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Paulson and Hennes, 2003). Since spaces are deeply intertwined with particular socially shared practices, or ways of doing things (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2018), such office designs have implications for how work is accomplished.

Research has shown that the way in which buildings are arranged plays a role in maintaining certain institutions, such as universities, because they anchor how work is interpreted, order how work is organized, and influence how individuals experience their work (Gieryn, 2002; Siebert et al., 2017). Even though academics have deeply entrenched norms and practices for accomplishing their work (Lam, 2010), we know little about what happens to them in the absence of such a stabilizing structure. As Dutch universities are increasingly committing to transforming their offices into flexible open-plan designs, the days of an academic office as a retreat for private study, enchanting (Dale and Burrell, 2008) those who enter with dusty books, brass name plates, and antiquated furniture (Whyte, 2015), are over. As a result, questions around how academics are responding to such changes has become an increasingly relevant domain of study.

1.1 STUDYING ORGANIZATIONAL SPACES

Since the outset of the management discipline, management scholars have been interested in how organizational spaces impact work and organizing (e.g., Taylor, 1911, Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). This is not surprising as an organization’s physical environment is “the second largest financial overhead” for organizations (Davis et al., 2011: 192), design decisions are “usually expensive and relatively permanent” (Wilhoit, 2016: 254), and managers are presented with “a dizzying array of choices” from which they need to make decisions (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007: 182). As a result, the literature is infused with multiple approaches as to how organizational spaces should be studied with a wide range of advice for managers making decisions about their organization’s physical space.

One approach, a post-positivist approach, examines what features of the physical environment, or the material objects and their arrangements that people encounter and interact within organizational life (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007), influence specific organizational outcomes (Sundstrom et al., 1980). From this perspective, physical environments are assumed to be fixed, objectively knowable, and generalizable to multiple contexts (Taylor and Spicer, 2007). Scholars taking a
post-positivist approach tend to examine how variables such as structures, stimuli, and symbols (Davis, 1984) result in positive organizational outcomes such as productivity (Crouch and Nimran, 1989), job satisfaction (Sundstrom et al., 1980), and motivation (Oldham and Brass, 1979). What these findings indicate is that organizations’ physical environments are riddled with trade-offs and tensions (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007). The purpose of researchers writing from such an instrumental perspective is to help managers facilitate a suitable environment for their organizations.

A second approach, a constructionist approach, suggests that physical environments are not “fixed, dead and immobile” (Taylor and Spicer, 2007: 325), but rather socially produced. Instead of concentrating on the physical environments of organizations, these studies focus on organizational places, or “the social, lived, and constructed aspects of space” (Wilhoit, 2016: 256). From this perspective, places are assumed to be fluid, political, and multiple in the sense that individuals experience and give meaning to them differently. Scholars working from this approach tend to examine how individuals interpret and produce the symbols (Gagliardi, 1990) and aesthetics (Strati, 1992) of places in order to understand how power and social relations are reproduced (Kingma et al., 2018). This line of research tends to study organizational places as cultural artifacts focusing on its symbolic meaning often severing meaning (text) from context (Keenoy and Oswick, 2004).

A third approach, a constitutive approach, builds off of the advances of the constructionist approach—rendering space as produced, processual, and multiple—and clings on to an essential element of the post-positive approach that often gets overlooked: that space is still material (Wilhoit, 2016). Employing the concept of organizational space, or the various physical and virtual locales that operate as sites for organizational actions and interactions, scholars from this perspective argue that organizational spaces at once supply an infrastructure for organizing while simultaneously being influenced by organizing (Ashcraft et al., 2009). This conceptualization remedies what is seen as shortcomings to both the space as fixed and space as fluid perspectives because rather than cast physical environments as that which determine outcomes or organizational places as being constructed merely of fleeting social relations, it conceives of organizational spaces as “relations and practices made durable” (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2018: 8). With such a perspective we can better understand what happens to academic work when academics’ organizational spaces are replaced to resemble that of the commercial industry, and how and through what relations do these changes occur?

### 1.1.1 Studying organizational spaces with a constitutive approach

Before delving into this question further, I first unpack the constitutive approach in further detail because it is a promising yet nascent approach to studying organizational spaces and connected to a broader communication constitutes organizing (CCO) movement in management and organization studies in general. At the core of a constitutive approach is the notion that the world is enacted rather than given (Rorty, 1967), and that discourse is a means of “fixing the flux,” or put differently making what is inherently transient seem concrete (Chia, 2000). Discourse, though generally thought of as linguistic, refers more broadly to all the things that “create a path, a course, a pattern of regularities out of which human existence can be made more fixed, secure and workable” (Chia, 2000: 517). Organizational spaces do just that; they create patterns of regularities, thus are discursive (Hardy and Thomas, 2015) constituting and being constituted by organizing.

A constitutive approach is built on four main premises (Wilhoit et al., 2016) that organizational spaces are sociomaterial, relationally produced, multiple, and processual. The first premise, (1) that organizational spaces are sociomaterial suggests that spaces are simultaneously material (e.g., artifacts, buildings, people) and social (i.e., contingent upon social relations), or sociomaterial, a concept
“coined to perform their inseparability” (Kuhn et al., 2017: 35). This premise asserts: that which is material is already social in the sense that social relations shaped its very emergence, and that the social is always material in that it must manifest materially. The second premise, (2) that organizational spaces are relationally produced asserts that organizational spaces do not “exist as an entity in and of itself” (Jones, 2009: 491), but rather spaces are processes “generated by interactions and interrelations” (Murdoch, 2006: 20). Put differently, organizational spaces are constituted through the relations of actors of “varying ontological statuses” (Wilhoit, 2016:262), which means when relations change, the qualities of a spatial configuration including its heterogeneous actors embedded in them transform. The third premise, (3) that organizational spaces are multiple builds off the last premise. It asserts that because organizational spaces are relationally enacted and because there are “many ways to do something” (Kuhn et al., 2017:33) there are multiple co-existing organizational spaces that are emergent in interaction. The fourth premise, (4) that organizational spaces are processual, then is quite easy to digest. Since relations shift so do spatial configurations: spaces are processual.

Assuming that knowing where things happen is “critical to knowing how and why things happen” (Wilhoit, 2015: 252) scholars drawing on a constitutive approach have examined a wide range of managerial topics. These include: social movements (Callahan, 2013), institutional change (Hardy and Maguire, 2010), collective action (Wilhoit and Kisselburgh, 2015), governance (McNulty and Stewart, 2015), organizational emergence and maintenance (Cnossen and Bencherki, 2018), leadership (Crevani, 2018), teleworking (Richardson and McKenna, 2014), and coordination (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2004; Knox et al., 2008; Vásquez and Cooren, 2013). In this dissertation, I look at managerial themes classically wrapped up with post-positivist and constructionist approaches to organizational space, namely identity work and strategic change, in order to provide a constitutive rendering of them.

1.1.2 Studying organizational spaces and identity work: a conceptual review

One of the central organizational themes that organizational space scholars have addressed historically is how space relates to workplace identities. This is because the answer of “who am I” is deeply implicated with answers of “where I am” (Grey and O’Toole, 2018) and “what I do” (Pratt et al., 2006). Specifically scholars assert that organizational spaces are bound up with workplace identities because spaces afford certain practices that make up what people do, they offer symbolic resources for individuals to construct an understanding of who they are, and their aesthetics shape feelings and emotions around identities (Elsbach and Bechky, 2007; Elsbach and Pratt, 2007; Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012; Vilnai-Yavetz et al. 2005). As a result, scholars from a variety of perspectives have addressed space and identity with different purposes. These include explaining: how managers can share preferred workplace identities through buildings, office arrangements, and décor (e.g., Schein, 1985), how individuals construct work identities in relation to their workspace and in turn how they construct their workspace in relation to their identities (e.g., Elsbach, 2003), and how these identities and identity construction processes are filled with power relations (e.g., Wasserman and Frenkel, 2011).

Early work on organizational space and identity focused on how managers could implement architectural features, color schemes, furniture, barriers, and their arrangements in order to put forward preferred workplace identities (Davis, 1984; Peters, 1978; Schein, 1985). Rendering this approach as too prescriptive, too focused on a managerial perspective, and ultimately misleading as to how both space and identities are produced and understood, identity scholars turned to explain how both organizational identities and organizational spaces are related, processual, and performative (Dale and Burrell, 2008; Decker, 2014; Liu and Grey, 2018). They have demonstrated how organizational space and work identities are experienced differently by different stakeholders (Hatch, 1997), and
that individuals shape organizational spaces and their identities through identity work, or the processes, strategies, and practices that individuals enact in order to create a relatively coherent and distinct notion of self (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). They have shown that spaces and identities maintain and transform through activities such as internalizing the values that the office design conveys, reappropriating the office design to mean something else, or physically manipulating the space to mean and do something else (de Vaujany and Vaast, 2014; Elsbach, 2003; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2011). Even still, we know little about the relations that constitute organizational spaces and workplace identities. This is a significant oversight because it is the relations of individuals with human and non-human others that constitute both organizational spaces and workplace identities.

1.1.3 Studying organizational spaces in relation to strategic change

A second theme that organizational space scholars have addressed is how transformations of physical environments help foster strategic organizational change (Higgins et al., 2007; Higgins and McAllaster, 2004; van Marrewijk, 2009; Skogland, 2017). These authors assert that strategic change, or a planned shift in key activities or structures of an organization (Mantere, Schild, and Sillince, 2012), require a shift in meanings, goals, and priorities of an organization (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) that can be supported by “aligning relevant parts of the organization’s culture...with the new strategy” (Higgins and McAllastar, 2004: 64). Identifying organizational space as a relevant part of an organization’s culture, these scholars recommend that managers change their organizations’ interior design, physical arrangement, or even building itself when possible in order to help support change acceptance from various organizational stakeholders (van Marrewijk, 2009). Higgins and Mallastar (2004) go as far as to warn managers that if they retain old cultural artifacts that reinforce elements of the old culture they want to change, they are “leaving in barriers to their success” (64).

This framing of organizational space mediating strategic change takes Lewin’s (1951) model of change of freeze, change, refreeze quite literally by recommending that physical artifacts—that which is concrete—be removed and replaced with new artifacts that align with the change in order to facilitate and stabilize it (Higgins and Mallastar, 2004). Even though many of the scholars who argue changes to organizational space can support strategic change acknowledge that a physical environment is constructed and thus processual, they tend to (1) report the ways organizational stakeholders interpret the meanings of a new design, arrangement, or building homogenously, and (2) present the strategic change as relatively stable once it takes place. However, in order to understand the complexities of strategic change, more work that acknowledges the heterogeneity and the continuous unfolding of change needs to be developed as I begin to do so in this dissertation.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As I outline above, a general thesis of this dissertation is that organizational spaces are deeply implicated with organizational processes, so much so that we often neglect them despite their constitutive nature. I constructed my dissertation with three research questions to illustrate how space and organizing constitute one another. By addressing the following three questions from a burgeoning perspective, I hope to provide further insights to some of the most complex puzzles that management and organizational scholars need to address such as organizing in the face of globalization, virtualization, and digitalization; identity in a fluid world; and why strategic changes fail. I begin addressing these challenges by directing my first a question toward all of the empirical work that has conceptualized organizational space as a process over the past fifteen years and ask:
1.2.1 How do spatial processes organize work and work organize spatial processes?

Scholars generally accept that organizing influences spaces and that spaces influence organizing, but rarely do scholars zoom in closely to explain how spatial processes unfold and continue to do so. In some instances, scholars do recognize that space is produced and processual, but continue to describe it as an entity (Beyes and Steayart, 2012). By glossing over spatial processes, scholars also neglect variation in spatial processes and how different kinds of processes do different things with varying sets of implications (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). This leaves us with many questions: what kinds of spatial processes, or spacings, does the literature describe? In what circumstances and contexts do these processes unfold? How do they unfold? What do these spatial processes do? What are some of the implications that different spatial processes have for organizing? By answering these questions, we can begin to address other processes central to organizing such as what kinds of spacings are necessary to foster different types of organizational aims such as creativity, innovation, coordination, socialization, resistance, collaboration, concentration, and identity work to name a few. With these organizational phenomena in mind, I crafted my second and third questions.

1.2.2 How are workplaces implicated in how individuals make sense of who they are and as a result shape how they work and vice versa?

With the assertion that organizational spaces constitute organizational processes, a new work environment is likely to shape and be shaped by the identities of those embedded in it. This is important to address because identities guide how we perceive and what we do, and ultimately how we work. Extant explanations in the literature that suggest that space changes an individual, an individual changes a space, or they both change each other only provides a partial explanation of what is going on. What kinds of relationships constitute certain identities?

1.2.3 How are organizational spaces implicated when enacting radical strategic change?

The final question I ask relates space with organizational change. Management scholars generally understand physical arrangements to shape how individual employees make sense of a strategic change cognitively because it primes them with meanings to interpret a context. In addition, the aesthetics of organizational spaces exude specific emotions sometimes supporting sensemaking or disrupting it. However, management scholars know little about how organizational spaces shape an individual’s embodied experience and how a new physical environment might disrupt how an individual makes sense of the world at the level of movements, orientation, and mood. Thus we ask, how is a strategic change made sense of on an embodied level, and what might managers do to help facilitate embodied sensemaking in order to accept a strategic change?

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

1.3.1 An ethnographic case

To answer these questions I used a method that is considered to be the most appropriate approach when addressing questions of how space is enacted, how identities are figured, and how strategic change unfolds (Vesa and Vaara, 2014; Watson, 2011)—ethnography. Ethnography is considered the most appropriate method because it sticks with the every day (Golden-Biddle and Lock, 2007), describes phenomena with rich thick description (Geertz, 1973), and allows scholars to examine not only what informants say, but what they do—something fre-
QUICKLY DISCREPANT (JEROLMACK AND KHAN, 2014). ETHNOGRAPHERS DO THIS BECAUSE THEY AIM TO “EXPLICATE THE WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE IN PARTICULAR WORK SETTINGS COME TO UNDERSTAND, ACCOUNT FOR, TAKE ACTION, AND OTHERWISE MANAGE THEIR DAY-TO-DAY SITUATION” (VAN MAANEN, 1979, 540) BY ENGAGING IN “CLOSE OBSERVATION AND INVOLVEMENT WITH PEOPLE” (WATSON, 2011: 205). I WAS MOTIVATED TO OBSERVE AND WRITE UP THE MUNDANE ENACTMENT OF ACADEMIC WORK IN A FLEXIBLE OPEN-PLAN OFFICE BECAUSE OF THE DESIGN’S PERVERSIVENESS ACROSS UNIVERSITIES AS WELL AS THE SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTORY NATURE OF TENETS UNDERLYING THE DESIGN AND TENETS CORE TO ACADEMIC WORK.

TO DO THIS, I ENTERED INTO A FACULTY OF BUSINESS THAT WAS IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE OPEN-PLAN OFFICES FOR ITS ACADEMIC STAFF. LIKE MANY OTHER UNIVERSITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT THE UNIVERSITY IN WHICH THIS FACULTY WAS SITUATED DECIDED TO UPGRADE ITS OFFICES AND CLASSROOMS, WHAT THEY REFERRED TO AS A “FACELIFT” OR RENOVATION TO THEIR PRESENT OFFICES. THIS RENOVATION WAS MANAGED BY AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANCY THAT EMBRACED THE TENETS OF THE DESIGN, E.G., COLLABORATION, FLEXIBILITY, AND COST-SAVING, WHILE TOP MANAGERS IN THE FACULTY RECOGNIZED AND COMMUNICATED TO EMPLOYEES THAT THE OFFICE DESIGN WAS SELECTED SOLELY FOR ITS COST SAVINGS.


FIGURE 1.1 FOUR EMBEDDED CASES
To observe how these groups worked and how they enacted the space, their identities, and the change, I joined the departments and began creating an “ethnographic record” (Watson and Watson, 2012). This ethnographic record is comprised of my own accounts and sometimes transcriptions of conversations recorded at department meetings, research seminars, reading groups, coffee breaks, early evening drinks, informal lunches, dinners, and everyday work practices amongst the Faculty. To supplement these observations, I interviewed 45 people sometimes up to three times to account for shifts in their sensemaking over time. I collected flyers, PowerPoints, tweets, emails, photographs, and archival material about the building as well as made pictures of my own. With such a sea of data, I chose to focus on professional identity work and strategic change—a deliberate choice that would influence what I would pay attention to, what I would be reading alongside my ethnographic fieldwork, and how I would come to analyze my research.

With a “bank of conceptual resources” in my head and a grounding in the Faculty as an organizational setting (Watson and Watson, 2012), I relied on abductive reasoning: a type of reasoning “at the heart of ethnography” (Agar, 2010). This form of reasoning, expounded by pragmatist Charles Peirce (1906; 1966), is a way to “generate inventive solutions, new ideas, explanatory propositions, and theoretical elements” (Locke et al., 2008: 908-909). It can be described as a mix of inductive and deductive reasoning in which a researcher begins with an “unmet expectation” (Van Maanen et al., 2007:1149) in relation to “an established interpretive rule” (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007: 1269) in which a researcher “works backward to invent a plausible world or a theory that would make the surprise meaningful” (Van Maanen et al., 2007:1149) thus to offer an “articulation of a new interpretive rule” (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007: 1269). With such an approach I can “explore discovery in theorizing” (Locke et al., 2008: 916) by staying close to what I experience and what I know.

1.3.2 Reflections on ethnography

The purpose of my ethnography is to make sense of how academics do and give meaning to their work in the context of a flexible open-plan office. Much like any sociomaterial ethnography of a new technology introduced to an organization, my study does not report generalizable causal relationships (e.g., implement a flexible open-plan office and academics will be happier, healthier, more collaborative, and publish more), but rather it allows a deep understanding of the local contextualized processes that unfolded at the event of a renovation (Hallet, 2010). With an ethnographic research strategy and sensibility (Yanow et al., 2012) I do this by creating quality and ongoing contact with the academics of these departments (Spradley, 1979) by living and working among them and interviewing them repeatedly because I assume “without close and detailed studies of these worlds” my “conceptions of them would be pitifully inadequate” (Van Maanen, 2011: 229).

When it came to writing up my ethnography, I had an additional purpose: to be published in mainstream management and organization journals (Cornelissen, 2017; Watson, 2011). This meant that many of the choices I made (e.g., the type of voice I write with, the jargon I use, my theoretical emphasis, and my layout of the piece) were made with a specific journals’ audiences in mind. One of the most difficult and not unproblematic elements missing from the chapters themselves is the thick description from my fieldnotes. This is a known conundrum facing every organizational ethnographer who wants to publish in mainstream journals. How can an ethnographer cater to a 30-page page limit of a journal? What can an ethnographer do with thick description? Although thick description informed my theorizing (Cornelissen, 2017), I followed ethnographers before me who used thick description in their analyses and aimed to display the richness of their data in tabular form (Leonardi, 2015).

My decision to write up my dissertation in this way is one that is pragmatic and idealistic. It is idealistic in the sense that I hope that by slowly slipping ethno-
graphic sensibilities into mainstream journals, they might accommodate more traditional forms of ethnographic work in them in the future. This being said, much like Van Maanen (2011) I think it is not likely that ethnography, such a marginal sub-field, will be accommodated in mainstream management journals in the foreseeable future. Still, one can try.

1.4 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. Following this first introductory chapter, the second chapter of this dissertation is a systematic review on space as a process literature, the third and fourth chapters are empirical pieces derived from my ethnography, and the fifth chapter is a discussion of the questions I posed above. Below I outline chapters two through four.

Chapter 2

The second chapter of this dissertation addresses the processes and practices of organizational spaces. Although a significant stream of research has begun to examine the performative and processual aspects of organizational space by focusing on what organizational spaces are doing and becoming rather than what they contain, there has yet to be a comprehensive overview of this literature siloing important conversations to respective journals with little cross-over. Although there are a number of amassing reviews on organizational space, they generally highlight spatial turns (Marrewijk and Yanow, 2010), waves (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012), and paradigmatic distinctions (Ropo et al., 2013; Taylor and Spicer, 2007; Wilhoit, 2016) orienting the literature in certain directions with little insight as to how organizational spaces are doing and how they are processual. In order to reorient conversations on organizational space, my co-authors and I provide a review that examines what spaces are doing and becoming as reported in empirical work. This review encompasses 114 empirical studies found in over forty management journals over the past 16 years. It puts forward a typology of five organizational spacings that the literature describes. Such a typology is important because these spatial processes are deeply entwined with organizing and will help the field make significant theoretical advances to organizational space literature and theorizing organizing more generally.

Chapter 3

The third chapter of this dissertation examines how flexible open-plan work environments constitute academic professional identity. Following the push for identity work scholars to bring “the material back into the equation” I examine how and through what relations with others (human and non-human) professional identities are constituted. By drawing on the ethnographic data of 89 interviews with forty-one academics and 312 hours of observations, I delineate three relational practices in which things in academics’ flexible open-plan offices come to co-constitute academic professional identities.

Chapter 4

The fourth chapter of this dissertation examines how the physical environment of an organization might help or hinder strategic organizational change through the contextually specific practices leaders and followers employ. It suggests that leaders need to account not only for cognitive and emotional sensemaking and sensegiving but also embodied sensemaking and sensegiving. By drawing on a strategic change employed by a department head at a university that targets the group’s organizational identity, we expound how leaders need to attend to the spatial-temporally specific embodied rhythms that employees enact. Failure to attend to embodied rhythms could ultimately lead to the failure of a strategic change.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Sample/Data</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Theoretical Contribution</th>
<th>Thesis Research Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2: Spacing and organizing: Process approaches to the study of organizational space</td>
<td>How do spaces organize work and work organize spaces as described by process studies of space over the past sixteen years?</td>
<td>114 empirical studies on spacing from 42 management and organization journals</td>
<td>Spacing</td>
<td>A typology of five spacing processes: developing, transitioning, imbricating, becoming, constituting</td>
<td>By constructing this typology and examining how spacings order and disorder social interactions, we provide an overview of what space is doing and becoming, not just how it is theorized in the extant literature.</td>
<td>Presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-written with Linda Putnam, Ari Kuismin, and Anu Sivunen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal Accepted with the Academy of Management Annals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Stable figures?: Identity work and professional figurations in a changing work environment</td>
<td>How in the context of a changing work environment are different and conflicting figurations of business school academics enacted, assembled, and conjured up through material-semiotic practices with heterogeneous others? And how, once produced, do these figurations relate to one another?</td>
<td>Interviews with 41 academics over three periods of time (before the move, just after the move, and a year after the move).</td>
<td>Identity work, Figurations</td>
<td>Identity figurations are enacted through practices of connecting, resembling, and corresponding; frictional events dealt with selecting, oscillating, opening</td>
<td>The concept of figurations helps attend to relations beyond oppositions that constitute professional identity; helps render materiality as more than a semiotic resource; and captures the performative and processual nature of professional identity and how a professional can inhabit more than one identity at any one time.</td>
<td>Presented at the EGOS Colloquium 2015; APROS Conference 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-written with Joep Cornelissen and Svetlana Khapova</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Under Review with Human Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Resistance is in the rhythms: Framing radical strategic change and incorporating spatiotemporal structures</td>
<td>How can leaders communicate and direct a successful strategic change?</td>
<td>30 interviews with academics in one research group; 53 department meeting minutes; 140 emails; 117 hours of participant observations.</td>
<td>Strategic change, framing, embodied sensemaking, spatiotemporal structure, rhythms</td>
<td>Frames shared through keying, incarnating, and prototyping; resistance manifest viscerally through processes of syncing, tuning and discursifying ultimately rekeying the frames of change.</td>
<td>In addition to cognitive and emotional sensemaking, leaders need to account for employees embodied sensemaking. Specifically employees have established rhythms, and changes require employees to incorporate new spatio-temporal structures or face difficult embodied consequences.</td>
<td>Early version presented at EGOS Colloquium 2016; Finalist for Best Student Paper Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-written with Joep Cornelissen and Svetlana Khapova</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Submitted to Human Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 2

SPACING AND ORGANIZING: PROCESS APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL SPACE
ABSTRACT

In the past several decades, the research on space in management studies has moved from being an implicit idea to becoming an important generative force in organizational theory. Through this turn, space no longer surfaces as a stable container in which organizing occurs; rather it is a process for enacting organizing. Even with the growth of studies on organizational space, only a modicum of work exists that aims to distill and theorize the notion of space as organizing. This paper sets forth a typology of process studies on organizational space linked to two dimensions and five approaches for conceiving of space as organizing. In offering this typology, it not only provides an overview of recent advances in management literature but also links the research on organizational spacing to conceptions of order and disorder.

Keywords:
spacing, organizing, process studies, performing, becoming, constituting

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the spatial turn in management and organization studies (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004), space has evolved from an “implicit concern” (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004: 1096) to a feature that has become “tightly entangled” (Mengis et al., 2016: 2) with organizing. This turn that crosses domains of management scholarship has ushered in conceptualizations of space “as both social product and generative force” (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 48) as opposed to a neutral, stable container (Dale and Burrell, 2008; Taylor and Spicer, 2007). This work incorporates theorizing; for example, examining how space interfaces with strategic work and change (Hydle, 2015; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Lancione and Clegg, 2013; Mair and Hehenberger, 2014), how physical arrangements play a role in maintaining institutions (Siebert et al., 2017), and how certain types of spacing seed industry (Hardy and Maguire, 2010) and organizational changes (Kellogg, 2009).

Moreover, space plays a role in defining, sharing, and performing organizational identity (de Vaujany and Vaast, 2014; Decker, 2014; Liu and Grey, 2017), role (Halford and Leonard, 2005), and gender identities (Tyler and Cohen, 2010; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2011) as well as produces different constructions of leadership (Crevani, 2015; Ropo et al., 2013), entrepreneurship (Hjorth, 2005), and innovation (Furnari, 2014). Research on organizational space further reveals how it influences and is influenced by interaction (Fayard and Weeks, 2007; Hirst, 2011); fosters the development of trust (Nilsson and Mattes, 2015; Sturdy et al., 2006); shapes positions in the performance of governing (McNulty and Stewart, 2015); embodies power relations (Hirst and Humphreys, 2013; Zhang and Spicer, 2014); and controls workers while offering opportunities for resistance (Barnes, 2007; Courpasson, and Delbridge, 2017; Iedema, Rhodes, and Scheers, 2006; Rao and Dutta, 2012).

What is distinct about the treatment of space since the spatial turn is conceptualizing it as “processual and performative” (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 48) rather than “fixed, dead and immobile” (Taylor and Spicer, 2007: 325). This change results from an embroiled history that parallels debates in the management discipline itself. Existing reviews situate the work on space in three distinct camps: space as distance (a post-positivist approach), space as lived experience (a constructionist approach), and space as power relations (a critical poststructuralist approach) (Taylor and Spicer, 2007; Ropo, Sauer, and Salovaara, 2013). Yet, scholars have yet to synthesize or theorize from work in this “second wave of spatio-organizational analysis” (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 57) that focuses on organizational spacing or the processes in which space emerges. This absence of such theoretical work poses a challenge to future research. Without such an overview, it is likely that scholars will (1) continue to situate organizational space in a container-like blackbox (Vásquez, 2016), (2) fail to make explicit links to process theories in organizations, and (3) engage in “quick categorizations and debates
around commensurability” or similarities (Deetz, 1996: 191) rather than focusing on different approaches to the study of organizational spacing.

We respond to this need in examining how management scholars have conceptualized space as a process over the past sixteen years. In particular, we focus on the assumptions that underlie this research and their implications for organizational theory. In doing so, we develop a typology of approaches to the study of space as an organizational process. To construct this typology, we identify two dimensions of variation that result in five approaches. The first dimension, ontology, focuses on how researchers frame what organizational space is. The second dimension, epistemology, centers on what researchers claim to know about space and how they know it. These dimensions, when arrayed onto intersecting spectrums, reveal five different approaches to process studies of organizational space.

In developing this typology, this paper offers four primary contributions. First, it provides an up-to-date review of research that examines space as a process. Since the second wave of studies on space (after Taylor and Spicer in 2007), no scholar has pulled together the literature on this process approach; hence, this update is overdue. Second, in reviewing the literature, we distinguish among different ways that scholars approach organizational spacing as a process. Third, we guide scholars who want to pursue alternative research perspectives. Fourth, in reflecting on this work, we propose new concepts for future research, ones that tie space to critical notions of order and disorder in organizational studies.

This paper is organized in the following manner. First, we provide a brief historical overview of how scholars have conceived of space in the management and organization literature. In this overview, we trace research on organizational spaces since the early studies on the physical environment, often regarded as the first wave of research. We then describe how we conducted our literature review on the second wave of organizational space research during the past fifteen years. Then, we discuss the two dimensions we use to analyze the literature and how we access the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this work. Finally, we close the article by unpacking the implications of these approaches for developing management knowledge and future research in organizational studies.

2.2 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL SPACE

Beginning with Frederick Taylor (1911), who measured, calculated, and arranged factory floorplans for optimal efficiency, space was first conceptualized as a container that organizational members could manage and control. This view ebbed and flowed over time and declined in interest after the Hawthorne experiments (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939), only to resurge again in the 1960s and 1970s when open-office plans surfaced as ways to improve creativity and knowledge sharing (Duffy, 1997) and as a result triggered the first wave of spatial research. At this time, management scholars returned to studying the physical environment and focused primarily on features that had “important outcomes” for organizing (Sundstrom and Sundstrom, 1986: 3). In particular, researchers examined such features as structure (building design, furniture, barriers), physical stimuli (noise, lighting, smells), and symbolic artifacts (Davis, 1984) as they influenced interaction patterns (Allen and Gerstberger, 1973), productivity (Crouch and Nimran, 1989), and psychological outcomes, e.g., job satisfaction (Sundstrom et al., 1980) and motivation (Oldham and Brass, 1979). Even though the findings of these studies were often inconsistent, this work had a lasting impact on the field (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007: 206). Known as the objective approach (Ropo et al., 2013), this work remains “the most widespread approach to understanding space and organizing” (Taylor and Spicer, 2007: 327).

Growing weary of the objective view of space, an increasing number of scholars in the late 1980s and 1990s began to examine the aesthetic, symbolic, and subjective qualities of organizational space (Gagliardi, 1990; Strati, 1992). Working from the assumption that organizational space is “produced and manifest in
the experiences of those who inhabited them” (Taylor and Spicer, 2007: 333), these scholars focused on how space is intertwined with sensory properties and cultural meanings that were “unique, ephemeral, and ambiguous organizational facts” (Strati, 1992: 577). These studies centered on “bodily sensations such as hearing, feeling, and smelling” (Marrewijk, 2011: 63) and ways that organizational stakeholders experienced architecture, office design, and decor as “symbols of corporate virtues and managerial intentions” (Berg and Kreiner, 1990: 43). Accordingly, these studies utilized interpretivist methods to understand members’ subjective experiences, with particular attention to how individuals made sense of the built environment, including ways that the design of a headquarters building conveyed corporate goals and purposes (Alvesson and Berg, 1992; Berg and Kreiner, 1990), ways that office decor communicated values and organizational identity (Yanow, 1998), and how sights and smells shaped the emotional climate of an office (Marrewijk, 2011; Martin, 2002). Although often treated as “unconventional or unscientific” (Taylor and Spicer, 2007: 333), this subjective approach gradually gained legitimacy and even disrupted the notion of organizational space as a singular, fixed entity.

Not only did scholars grow weary of treating space as a fixed, objective concept, but in the early 2000s, scholars drew on labor process, critical, and poststructural theories to question for whom and for what purposes organizational spaces are managed (Baldry, 1997; Dale and Burrell, 2008; Kornberger and Clegg, 2004). Treating space as a materialization of power relationships (Taylor and Spicer, 2007), these studies incorporated “both the objective...and subjective mechanisms of control and subordination” (Baldry, 1999: 536), particularly ones concealed within the logic of organizational spaces.

Studies from critical orientations focused on how buildings and spatial arrangements facilitated control over the labor process (Baldry et al., 1998), often in terms of surveillance (Baldry, 1999; Barnes, 2007), masking ideologies of consumption (Benjamin, 2000; Dale and Burrell, 2008), or targeting subjectivity through shaping organization members’ “sense of self, including their emotions and identities” in relation to entrepreneurial and managerial discourses (Fleming and Spicer, 2014: 244; Halford and Leonard, 2006). Even though organizational spaces materialized power relations, they were also arenas where “power [could] be contested” (Courpasson et al., 2017: 239) through tactics and strategies (Barnes, 2007); hence, “the intentions of managers and capital holders” did not fully circumscribe organizational members’ actions (Taylor and Spicer, 2007: 333). In effect, ambiguity, contradiction, and struggle often typified symbolic meanings and the uses of spatial arrangements (Harvey, 1990).

As this overview suggests, research on organizational space continued to develop, both theoretically and empirically. In this work, scholars drew on Henri Lefebvre (1991), a French sociologist who conceived of space as a triad of production that exerted both freedom and control (Cairns, McInnes, and Roberts, 2003; Watkins, 2005). Researchers began to conceptualize space in complex, multifaceted ways—as a dialectical interplay among conceived (planned), practiced (routinely used), and lived (embodied) spaces. For example, Dale and Burrell (2008) analyzed the power effects of organizational space as surfacing through emplacing or assigning members to places (planned), enchanting or encoding the meaning of these spaces (practiced), and enacting or influencing the embodied experiences of space (lived). In like manner, Siebert and colleagues (2017) observed that the buildings of the Parliament House and the Advocates Library aided in reproducing the status order of the Scottish legal system through emplacing, enchanting, and enacting space. Using this triad, Liu and Grey (2017) showed how the identity of a now co-ed British university embodied the conceived, practiced, and lived notions of space that was once an all-women’s college.

In Lefebvre’s (1991) original work, the production of space stemmed from a triadic interplay of the qualities, attributes, and modes of spatial production in a historical period; hence, as Soja (1996) pointed out, the triad was a holistic conception rather than a combination of separate parts. Yet, except the studies cited above,
most organizational scholars employed this framework in a piecemeal way or as a heuristic to make sense of research (Taylor and Spicer, 2007). No doubt, the reliance on Lefebvre’s (1991) triad of space ushered in a second wave of scholarship that treated space as emerging, evolving, and transforming in recursive processes of social production and reproduction (Hernes, Bakken, and Olsen, 2006). Yet, the ways in which scholars drew on this spatial triad often resulted in a number of problems, including separating physical and virtual spaces, emphasizing human-centric aspects of space, and reifying “becomingness” into static descriptions of planned and lived spaces (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Vásquez, 2016).

In post-Lefebvrian approaches, scholars now privilege performative relations of both human and nonhuman elements in producing organizational space. Beyes and Steyaert (2012: 57) refer to this turn as the “second wave of spatio-organizational analysis,” one that emphasizes spatial processes and spacing. The rapid growth of scholarship on work transformations, such as project-based work, teleworking, distributed work arrangements, collaborative entrepreneurship, and third or collaborative practices, also contributes to the growth of the process approach to organizational spacing. Open office plans in the past have evolved into new forms, such as “coworking spaces, maker spaces, and innovation labs” and have raised new questions regarding how organizational spacing operates (de Vaujany et al., 2017: 2). These shifts call for a comprehensive review of research that adopts this process view and treats organizational space as spacing; that is, changing over time, shifting boundaries, performing, and becoming. Rather than collapse these studies into one category, we examine the ontology and epistemology of each article to develop a typology of process work for the second spatio-organizational wave in organizational research. To begin this classification, we describe how we conducted our literature review on process studies of organizational space.

### 2.3 REVIEW METHOD

**Sampling**

To conduct this review, we followed two complementary procedures. First, we used the terms space, spacing, process, and organization to conduct an EBSCO database search for articles published from 2002 until August 2018 on the topic of organizational space. This search produced a list of 308 articles from fifty-one different management and organizational journals. After creating this list, we read each abstract to make sure that organizational space was the central phenomenon of the study and then we selected the articles that embraced a process perspective (see Table 2.1).

We defined a process perspective as any study that examined space “dynamically – in terms of movement, activity, events, change and temporal evolution” (Langley, 2007: 271). These changes could accompany variations in objects, arrangements, and other material features, but the study itself needed to focus on space as changed or in the process of changing. Thus, the research project needed to treat organizational space as movement, activity, changing events, or as produced, changed or generated. If we were unsure whether space was the central phenomenon or whether the study embraced a process orientation, two or more co-authors examined the article and reached a consensus on inclusion or exclusion, based on the criteria noted above. We complemented this database search with a second sampling approach, a snowball technique (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005) in which we scanned the references of each process study on organizational space to ensure that our list was comprehensive. These two steps produced 122 articles of which 114 of them were empirical studies.
To review the literature, we read each article and identified how the author(s) defined space, incorporated concepts, posed research question(s), relied on particular theorist(s), selected research setting(s), employed method(s) and paradigms, reported finding(s), and drew conclusion(s). Second, we clustered the kinds of spatial processes that the authors highlighted based on differences in the ontology and epistemology of space that the scholars embraced. This analysis revealed five categories or approaches in how process researchers framed organizational spacing. Once the five approaches surfaced, we reviewed each article and categorized them into one of the approaches. For articles that overlapped in multiple approaches, we selected the one that seemed most central to the orientation of the study and the research findings.

### Dimensions for categorizing studies
In conducting this analysis, we identified two dimensions that distinguished features of both theoretical and empirical studies. The first one centered on spatial ontology or the assumptions that underlie how researchers conceived of what space is (Schatzki, 1991). Often taken for granted, the debates on the ontology of space traced back to Newton (1934) who contended that space was an absolute entity that existed independently from what it contained (also known as a substantive view) and to Leibniz (1991) who argued that space was relational: "comprehensible only with reference to specific frames of interpretation," (Warf, 2010: 2403) (also known as a relational view).

### Analysis

To review the literature, we read each article and identified how the author(s) defined space, incorporated concepts, posed research question(s), relied on particular theorist(s), selected research setting(s), employed method(s) and paradigms, reported finding(s), and drew conclusion(s). Second, we clustered the kinds of spatial processes that the authors highlighted based on differences in the ontology and epistemology of space that the scholars embraced. This analysis revealed five categories or approaches in how process researchers framed organizational spacing. Once the five approaches surfaced, we reviewed each article and categorized them into one of the approaches. For articles that overlapped in multiple approaches, we selected the one that seemed most central to the orientation of the study and the research findings.

Dimensions for categorizing studies. In conducting this analysis, we identified two dimensions that distinguished features of both theoretical and empirical studies. The first one centered on spatial ontology or the assumptions that underlie how researchers conceived of what space is (Schatzki, 1991). Often taken for granted, the debates on the ontology of space traced back to Newton (1934) who argued that space was relational: "comprehensible only with reference to specific frames of interpretation," (Warf, 2010: 2403) (also known as a relational view). The second dimension focused on the epistemology that each study adopted or the assumption of how space could be known and why it should be known in a particular way (Cunliffe, 2011). These two dimensions influenced the problems that researchers investigated, the techniques that they used, the theories they selected, and the political stances they took (Fleetwood, 2005).

**Dimension 1: Ontological stance.** Rather than treating it as a dichotomy, we arrayed the ontological commitments of each study onto a spectrum that ranged from a strong substantive to a strong relational view. In studies that adopted a
strong substantive approach, space surfaced as “a discrete and autonomous container” that existed independent of objects or relations (Jones, 2009: 489). The perspectives that fell between the substantive and relational stances we called weak views in which scholars treated space as a noun that changed but only as different arrangements of intact entities.

Inspired by Euclidian geometry and Newtonian philosophy, researchers who espoused a strong substantive approach conceptualized space as analytically fixed in which scholars focused on distance and scale (Callon and Law, 2004: 3). With a strong substantive view, scholars pursued causal outcomes of spatial arrangements, such as identifying territories, proximity, and design as they related to organizational phenomena. For example, studies on the ways that changes in workplace designs influenced behaviors, social interactions, or particular organizational affordances typically adopted this strong substantive approach.

In contrast, scholars who embraced a relational stance contended that space did “not exist as an entity in and of itself” (Jones, 2009: 491), but rather as processes “generated by interactions and interrelations” (Murdoch, 2006: 20). This strong relational view, inspired by non-Euclidian geometry (Leibniz, 1991), cast space as a product of relationships and a sphere of possibility and multiplicity—one that was never closed or finished (Massey, 1998).

With a relational view, scholars aimed “to identify the key practices that...allow[ed] organizations to minimally cohere in space and minimally reproduce in time” (Thrift, 2004: 875). Accordingly, much of the research centered on practices, relationships, temporalities, and heterogeneity. The types of problems that scholars addressed included: how did spaces come into being? What practices, tactics, and processes enabled certain spacing? How did various spacings emerge and relate to one another? What were the consequences of certain spatial assemblages? Researchers who held weak ontological views conceived of space as process, but treated space as a change in “things.” Weak views were distinct from strong ones in treating space as subject to change but as rendering it an intact entity rather than actions or interactions. This weak approach became more prevalent in management studies when scholars imported Lefebvre’s work on the production of space (Lefebvre, 2011). However, even then, scholars continued to blackbox or mask the activities in which organizational space was produced (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 47; Vásquez, 2016). For example, in studies that focused on liminal and free spaces, researchers identified specific types of spaces (e.g., corridors, lounges, homes) that “surround us” (Sturdy et al., 2006) and had “inherently ambiguous” qualities (Lucas, 2014), but investigators often ignored how these spaces were produced as transitional. Moreover, researchers who adopted weak ontological views often took an anthropocentric slant, ignored the impact of other material features on space, and treated even transient and liminal spaces as “things” (Vásquez 2017).

Dimension 2: Epistemological stance. As noted above, an epistemological stance referred to the researcher’s assumption of how space could be known and why it should be known in a particular way. We also arrayed the epistemological stance on a continuum with a strong representational stance on one end and a strong performative approach on the other. Researchers who embraced a strong representational approach cast space as being known objectively through facts and theories (Rorty, 1979) while scholars who adopted a strong performative view focused on how space was enacted (Pickering, 1994). In a strong representational position, space could be observed, recorded, marked, and measured by an independent scientist who conducted a rigorous, systematic, and precise rendering of spatial patterns.

In contrast, scholars who espoused a strong performative approach treated knowledge as surfacing in its making or production (Barad, 2003; Pickering, 1994). Research that adopted this perspective aimed to create insights and understandings about organizational space by generating non-totalizing, situated knowledge (Shotter, 2006). With such a purpose, scholars studied space in a way that recognized its temporality, multiplicity, contextual-embeddedness,
and elusivity from meaning as well as acknowledged a researcher’s involvement in the constitution of the phenomena. They did this in multiple ways, such as avoiding the use of grand narratives and refraining from a tendency to totalize their understandings.

What distinguished the weak epistemological approaches on space from the strong ones (either representational or performative) was that the weak ones embraced goals that were similar to a representational approach; that is, they aimed to depict organizational spaces as they existed. In effect, even though scholars recognized the limits of measurement tools, the shortcomings of language, and acknowledged that space is performed, they still functioned with an objective representation of space. They aimed to the best of their abilities to represent the world as it “was.” Although scholars recognized that they could not ‘mirror’ the world, they wanted to provide snapshots of it that could be generalizable to other contexts.

The intersection of these two dimensions began to define alternative perspectives to the study of organizational spacing. Developing was defined by a strong substantive ontology and strong representational epistemology as scholars examined shifting boundaries and different types of organizational affordances. In this way, they cast change as episodic, as evident in studies of renovation, repurposing, redesign, or rearrangement. Research categorized as transitioning embraced a weak substantive approach and a weak performative notion of organizational space. Studies focused on concrete spaces that changed in non-generalizable ways. Scholars focusing on imbricating adopted a strong relational and a weak performative view in which space surfaced from different arrangements that came together through relationships but changed only through iterations and appropriations. Constituting and becoming, two different process perspectives espoused a strong relational ontology and a strong performative epistemology in conceptualizing organizational space. Researchers who worked in both of these perspectives viewed space as relationally constituted through interconnec-

2.4 A TYPOLOGY OF SPATIAL PROCESSES

These five orientations to process studies reveal important differences in assumptions; theorists cited methods and types of findings. Moreover, as Table 2.2 notes, differences in key concepts subsumed under each orientation offer promise for advancing theory in the study of organizational space, particularly in moving away from objectifying space (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spacing Process</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Transitioning</th>
<th>Imbricating</th>
<th>Becoming</th>
<th>Constituting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>Space is absolute; physical environments afford organizational outcomes. Spaces change only episodically.</td>
<td>Pre-existent spaces that are transitory (always in flux) because they are on borders, outside, or in-between.</td>
<td>Space as enacted through social practices with other entities; overlapping and interlocking, over time.</td>
<td>Spacing as performative embodied, fleeting, and constantly unfolding.</td>
<td>Spacing as ongoing choreographed actions and interactions of heterogeneous constituents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Surveys, interviews</td>
<td>Interviews, observations</td>
<td>Ethnography focused on practices</td>
<td>Ethnography, diary</td>
<td>Ethnography, conversation analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of findings</td>
<td>Variance findings focused on behaviors and outcomes.</td>
<td>Description of the types of space that resist order, and the types of activities that can be enacted there.</td>
<td>Descriptions of human and non-human practices enacted to create space, ways they become entangled and change over time.</td>
<td>Event-like descriptions of spacing, materiality, embodiments, affects, rhythms, multiplicities, and practices.</td>
<td>Narrative style descriptions of space-timings, how interactions of constituents make spacing, the relationships among interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related concepts</td>
<td>Boundary, proximity, distance, territory, workplace design</td>
<td>Liminal spaces, non-spaces, interspaces, free spaces, borders</td>
<td>Appropriations, resistings, creating tactics and strategies</td>
<td>Practices, atmospheres, affects, multiplicity, speed, rhythm</td>
<td>Modes of ordering, spatial enunciations, spatial grammars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational phenomena</td>
<td>Communication patterns, job satisfaction, knowledge management, productivity, project management</td>
<td>Consulting, entrepreneurship, innovation, institutional change &amp; maintenance, professionals, resistance</td>
<td>Flexible work arrangements, organizational culture, identity &amp; legitimacy, strategy, technology</td>
<td>Coordination, co-working spaces; flexible work arrangements, gender in organizations, professionals</td>
<td>Alternative organizing, coordination, leadership, management &amp; organizational learning, organizational emergence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Process I: Developing

A developing view of process parallels historical views of organizational space that focus on the physical environment. Yet, unlike early research, these studies are developmental and focus on space as episodic change. Research that explicates this perspective fits a strong substantive approach in which space as an object changes over time, often in controlled ways. It also fits a strong representative stance in that researchers assume that space can be quantified, generalized, and represented. In particular, renovations, repurposing, and rearrangements are types of processes in which space changes. Inspired by environmental psychologists (Oldham and Brass, 1979; Sundstrom et al., 1980; Zalesny and Farace, 1987), scholars who embrace the developing approach treat space as separate from, yet influencing, patterns of organizing.

With a concern for how space influence organizing, researchers who adopt this approach examine the proximity of objects and people, the effects of redesigned workspaces, and the impact of changed floorplans on interactional patterns (Coradi, Heinzen and Boutellier, 2015), communication practices (Brennan, Chugh, Kline, 2002), and employees’ perceptions and attitudes (McElroy and Marrow, 2010). To illustrate, McElroy and Morrow (2010) showed how a redesign in a large Midwestern financial organization that moved from a 1970s-style cubicle office to a modern open-plan arrangement altered employee perceptions. Even though the renovation led to workplace disturbances and offered employees less overall workspace, it improved employees’ perceptions of organizational culture, increased their commitment to the firm, and fit the expectations of the millennial generation better than the cubicle-style office. As this study demonstrates, research classified in the developing approach often focused on variance between past and current spatial designs, or the effects of stages and phases of spatial development on organizational practices. The key concepts that typified this line of research were workplace design, boundary changes, differences in proximity, and modifying territory.

Process II: Transitioning

Transitioning refers to inhabiting new spaces in which the general rules or norms of the organization are temporarily suspended. Inspired by anthropologists such as Victor Turner (1974) and Marc Augé (1995) and sociologists Evans and Boyte (1986), transitioning spaces are present in every organization. Scholars who study transitional spaces typically adopt weak substantive and weak performative stances through treating space as concrete and examining the features that make it transitional, such as fluid boundaries, being in-between, being isolated, or being situated outside traditional space. This work is weakly performative because scholars treat the process of transitioning as unique and uncertain; that is, “each dinner” “meeting,” or “commute” differs from other similar spaces (Wilhoit, 2017). In effect, researchers who embrace this approach depart from the developing perspective in examining empirical transitory spaces, moving away from substantive views of space, and moving toward performative analyses.

Within the management literature, scholars focus on multiple types of transitioning, including liminal, free, and interstitial spaces as well as non-places. Liminal spaces are in-between places in which actors suspend their norms, behaviors, and social positions to provide individuals with feelings of freedom to relax, or even to resist (Turner, 1974; 1982). Similarly, free spaces are small-scale settings outside a dominant group’s control that offer opportunities for organizational members to come together and to mobilize collective action (Polletta, 1999). Interstitial spaces are “small-scale settings where individuals from different fields interact occasionally and informally” through allowing individuals to break free of institutions temporarily and to explore new activities and ideas (Furnari, 2014: 440). Non-places are transient and interchangeable spaces, such as airports or supermarkets, that depend on an individual’s lived experiences (Augé, 1995) and paradoxically offer a sense of safety and familiarity because they are similar anywhere in the world (Muhr, 2012).

In studies of transitioning, researchers focused on the conditions necessary to
develop these spaces, how actors demarcate the boundaries of them, and the activities that distinguish them from other organizational spaces. Specifically, in overall conditions, Courpasson and colleagues (2017) observed that the absence of dominant individuals and the existence of physical areas such as dark, messy basements in buildings or the home of a factory boss helped resisters develop free spaces that gave them energy and enthusiasm and made them feel secure in resisting managerial decisions. Shortt (2015) noted in a study of hairdressers across five different United Kingdom salons that actors demarcated boundaries for liminal spaces through using such physical features as corridors, stairwells, and toilets to obtain a sense of privacy and get inspiration from these spaces. Moreover, activities such as business meals allowed consultants to form liminal spaces away from traditional organizational settings and get to know their clients on a personal level, make judgments about their trustworthiness, and test out ideas in front of managers (Sturdy et al., 2006). Thus, as a process perspective, transitioning focuses on the flux that exists in developing spaces that are in-between, outside, or on the border of traditional organizational sites.

Process III: Imbricating

Imbricating as a process approach focuses on organizational practices that become interwoven with space in interlocking material-relational bundles (Leonardi, 2011). Inspired by practice theories (Bourdieu, 1977; de Certeau, 1984; Giddens, 1984) and sociomaterial thinking (Leonardi and Barley, 2010; Orlikowski, 2007), imbricating occurs in the everyday enactment of organizing as practices develop, intertwine with human and nonhuman others, and change over time.

Scholars who work from this approach embrace a strong relational and a weak performative view of space. In a strong relational view, research study how imbrication occurs through interrelationships among human and nonhuman others. Space is no longer seen as a pre-existing entity or a concrete empirical place, but as a set of developing arrangements and relationships. Researchers also frame organizational space as weakly performative, open to change, but only iteratively evolving or changing through the production of different human-material arrangements.

Within the management literature, scholars have adopted two distinct lenses, affordances (Gibson, 1986) and appropriations (Graumann, 1976), to examine spacing as imbricating practices. Affordances refer to individual perceptions of what a given physical or social setting permits while constraints entail perceptions of what a location disallows. Studies of spatial affordances and constraints examine organizational practices and actors’ perceptions while enacting space. For example, in Hislop and Axtell’s (2009) study, consultants encountered constraints in spacing because they could only accomplish some tasks in specific locations (e.g., driving in cars afforded phone calls, but constrained other tasks) rather than being able to “work anytime, anywhere.” Moreover, they had to invest time in creating temporary workspaces (e.g., working from home required clearing tables and making use of home phone systems). In this study, particular organizational practices and human-nonhuman relationships enacted affordances and constraints that, in turn, imbricated spacing.

In another study, Fayard and Weeks (2007) illustrated how affordances became imbricated with space in the use of photocopy rooms. Through comparing different rooms, they showed how one room became the space for informal interactions through affordances perceived as balancing privacy and propinquity. They explained that “even though people would go into the kitchen first thing in the morning to get their coffee, they would not stop there to talk. Instead, they would come into the photocopier room” (Fayard and Weeks, 2007: 623).

The second lens, appropriation, refers to how people enact practices to make space their own by transforming it into something useful (Graumann, 1976). These studies examine how actors appropriate, re-appropriate, or even dis-appropriate spaces through imbricating them in organizational practices that evolve over time. Specifically, de Vaujany and Vaast (2014) demonstrated how
stakeholders at a French university used spatial legacies over forty-five years to maintain legitimacy through emphasizing the university’s traits (appropriate), diverting the use of the building in another direction (re-appropriate), and stripping the space from its previous use (dis-appropriate). In this same vein, scholars who work from this lens focused on specific tactics that people used for appropriation (de Certeau, 1984). For example, Munro and Jordan (2013) described how street dancers appropriated public spaces for performances through using such tactics as warming pitches, forming an edge, and gaining height.

Research that treats space as enacted through organizational practices and imbricated with overlapping and interlocking relationships moves away from the substantive stance evident in developing and transitioning notions of process. Thus, even though scholars who work from these approaches lapse into normalizing prescriptive sets of relations (Murdoch, 2006) or draw generalizable conclusions about imbricated spaces (Fayard and Weeks, 2007), they undertake the journey to study spacing rather than assess organizational spaces. Yet, the focus on affordances, constraints, and appropriations often limit a researcher’s attention on spacing.

**Process IV: Becoming**

Becoming as a process-oriented approach to spacing focuses on the “continuous production of the new” (Massey, 2005: 23). Inspired by non-representational views (Thrift, 2008), actor-network theory (Latour, 2005), and Deleuze and Guattarian’s (1987) thinking, this approach treats spacing as “situated” rather than as pre-existent (Knox et al., 2015). Scholars who embrace this approach adopt both strong relational and strong performative stances to research. Relationally, spacing is an ongoing, continuous process in which the noun “space” exists only as an abstraction rather than an entity. In this approach, then, spacing consists of multiple, fleeting interrelationships of human and non-human others and organizational actors are “slap bang in the middle of co-constructing” spacing in the midst of these relationships (Thrift, 1999: 296–7). Epistemologically, scholars who adopt this approach write and produce knowledge through narrative styles that incorporate reflexivity (Vásquez, 2016), offer multiple interpretations and pluralities of understanding (Beyes and Michels, 2011), and use concepts that resonate with embodied spatial experiences (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). Scholars who conduct research from this orientation move away from representational views of space by incorporating one or more of five sets of features; namely, everyday practices and materiality, multiplicity and minor politics, embodiment, and the body, affect and sensation, and speed and rhythms (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). Everyday practices and materiality, the first set, refers to the arrangements or different assemblages of practices, people, and materiality that perform new spacing. For instance, Knox and colleagues (2015) demonstrated how an Asian-looking man who threw a bag and cellphone onto the apron of a British airport became “a spatial happening.” The norms for practices since 9/11, the integration of activities with material objects (potential bomb and detonator), and the restrictions on airport space pointed to a potential terrorist attack. Over time, however, as spacing began to resemble an airport again, these objects and practices reverted to being ‘just’ a bag and a mobile phone and no longer a potential triggering device (Knox et al., 2015: 1011).

Research that adopts the becoming approach also incorporates a second feature, multiplicity, and minor politics. In effect, spaces within this perspective are considered multiple, and often form “a sphere of...contemporaneous plurality...in which distinct [elements] coexist in heterogeneity” (Massey, 2005: 9). As an example, in a study of first-year students who attended Freshman Week at a German-speaking university, Beyes and Michels (2011) showed how a unique assignment of “assembling a future city” offered room for experimentation with multiples and led to the emergence of spaces that disrupted existing organizational orders.

Another multiple, bodies and embodiment, is the third feature that becoming
Bodies and embodied practices are material elements that connect with practices, actions, and movements in the emergence of spacing (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 52). Specifically, Biehl-Missal (2016: 8-10) illustrated how bodies performed spacings in a techno-club in Berlin through enacting reverberations to the music, moving in sparsely illuminated spaces, and creating a sense of mind and body for “interpersonal, sexual and drug-related” activities.

Closely related, affect and sensation, the fourth feature, refers to embodied experiences that “emerge from...the mutual capacities of human and nonhumans to affect and be affected by one another” (Michels and Steyaert, 2017: 82). To illustrate, Michels and Steyaert (2017) described how affective atmospheres, or spatial spheres, emerged from a music ensemble’s engagement with the sites in which they were performed; including the unpredictable weather; the mood of musicians; the audience’s experience; and the unexpected encounters with urban life.

The fifth feature that researchers who adopt the becoming approach address is speed and rhythm. Speed refers to the duration of movements while rhythm encompasses temporalities, durations, flow, cadence, and patterns of spacings. In a study of a house construction project located in the middle of a frog-breeding area, Sage and colleagues (2016) demonstrated how rhythm and speed of spacing emerged. Since the moor frogs were a protected species, European regulations required the contractors to alter their work rhythms and tempos that, in turn, necessitated different organizational spacing and ended up slowing down the project to fit the frogs’ breeding patterns.

As these studies suggest, research that espouses a becoming approach treats spacing as performative, emergent, embodied, and fleeting. It centers on the multiplicities of features of space that become interwoven in these performances. In this way, becoming is similar to the imbricating perspective on spacing. However, unlike imbricating, it privileges features linked to ongoing practices and performances that produce spacing, including intensities, rhythms, cycles, encounters, events, movements and flows that become intertwined with affect, atmospheres and other multiples (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012).

**Process V: Constituting**

Constituting as a process approach moves beyond emergence in becoming to focus on the making, framing, and forming of space. Similar to becoming, scholars adopt strong relational and performative stances in doing research, and they examine generative movements through flows, relationships, multiplicity, and assemblages. With a strong performative epistemology, scholars who embrace a constitutive view offer tales of the dynamic flow in situated organizational spacings. What distinguishes becoming and constituting perspectives, however, is the way that the later approach highlights the continual structuring and restructuring, arranging, shaping, and composing of spacing (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005: 1380). Inspired by postmodern geographers (Massey, 2005; Thrift, 2008), actor-network theorists (Latour, 2005), and communication as constituting organization (CCO) (Cooren, 2006), scholars seek to understand how interactions in spacing bring organizing and organization into being.

To emphasize distinctions between approaches, we highlight three concepts that scholars employ to focus on configurations in constituting. The first one, modes of ordering (Law, 1994), centers on the ways that objects, subjects, and artifacts become arrayed in a logic or a complex hybrid that constitutes spacing (Knox, O’Doherty, Vurdubakis, and Westrup, 2008). To illustrate, Knox and colleagues (2008) demonstrated how conflicting modes of ordering at an international airport constituted emergent spacing. Notably, during times when passenger check-in queues were long, staff often forced bags onto the system which conflicted with the logic of processing luggage. Ironically, conflicting modes of ordering constituted new spacing that produced stoppages, led to blockages and slowed down the check-in process even further.

Spatial enunciations (de Certeau, 1984), the second concept that scholars em-
ploy, refers to the repetition of particular movements in communicating, aggregating, and constituting spacing. For example, Wilhoit and Kisselburgh (2015) showed how the spatial movements of bicycle commuters constituted a collective, even if the cyclists did not see themselves in this way. Drivers and city planners drew on the aggregation of their movements in space to align them as a collective of cycling (Wilhoit and Kisselburgh, 2015). Movements then can enunciate or “speak” in constituting space.

Spatial grammars of organizing, the third concept (Amin et al., 2003), refers to images, metaphors, or recipes that emerge through arrangements during the collective experiencing of space. Grammars consist of recipes for getting things done, interpreting what has been done, and helping actors make sense of actions. In her study of a Chilean outreach organization, Vásquez (2016) demonstrated how the dominant spatial images of a network, a region, and a trajectory constituted spacing through directing members how to get more people involved (network), delineating boundaries for conducting outreach and materializing space (region), and developing stories of inclusion/exclusion as trajectories for embracing heterogeneity of actions in the future.

As this review shows, studies on the constituting of space advance process research through focusing on spatial configurations, as evident in modes of ordering, spatial enunciations, and spatial grammars. Space not only emerges from the ongoing flow of actions and interactions but also appears in particular arrangements that define and characterize the very nature of an organization. In this approach, then, spacing constitutes organizing through examining the arrangements that form collectives, analyzing the grammars that order them, and deciphering how others recognize them as organizations.

2.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY OF SPACINGS FOR ORGANIZING

One of the major implications of this second wave of spatial studies comes together around how each process describes the dialectics of order and disorder and absence and presence: dynamics key to organizing. Order refers to moments of stability, predictability, and routine that result in closure of meaning or decidability of action while disorder refers to flux, uncertainty, and unpredictability that result from opening up meanings and accepting instabilities (Knox et al., 2015; Kornberger and Clegg, 2004; Vásquez, Schoeneborn, and Sergi, 2015). Presence refers to what is here, what is proximate, what is tangible, what is empirically real, while absence what is there, what is distant, what is empirically virtual (Giovanonni and Quattrone, 2018). For an overview see Figure 2.1

FIGURE 2.1 VISUALIZING SPACING PROCESSES
Order and disorder

Studies of organizational space have historically focused on ordering and reordering, specifically, how to ‘keep ties in place’ through reordering physical arrangements and respacing boundaries, as evident in the developing approach. Spacing then is a hybrid agency for ordering through setting boundaries and positioning what is inside and outside of the organization (Vásquez and Cooren, 2013).

The five approaches to spacing account for different ways that order and disorder surface. Unlike the developing approach, scholars who embrace the transitioning perspective cast space as on the edge, in between, or outside of the normal, thus, begin to explore disorder through introducing the potential for new orders, ideas, and innovations. Furnari (2014: 439) illustrated how small clubs and informal gatherings, such as the Homebrew Computer Club in Silicon Valley, functioned as interstitial spaces that disrupted stabilities offered opportunities for “innovative hybrid practices.” This perspective then suggests that transitioning spaces are crucial for innovation because they facilitate the disorder in which new orderings emerge.

In the imbricating perspective, scholars focus on ordering and reordering through aligning new orders with past ones (Hernes et al., 2006). Orders then become layered on each other and reordered through their entanglements. In her study of a British multinational firm’s architecture during decolonization and early independence in Ghana and Nigeria, Decker (2014) showed how new buildings, constructed in a tropical modernist style, created disorder through disrupting narratives of the colonial past and then forming new orders directed to the future. Even though these efforts were only partially successful in erasing the past, they ushered in new business practices and standards for managerial decision-making. In this way, imbricating processes aid in developing new orders, even though they do not entirely replace existing ones.

In the constituting and becoming perspectives, order and disorder exist in a mutually constitutive relationship in which one gives rise to the other; thus disordering is simultaneously induced from ordering (Vásquez et al., 2015). For example, in Richardson and McKenna’s (2014) study of flexible workspaces, employees who worked from home constructed distinct patterns of ordering and disordering for work and non-work activities (for example, putting aside work to help children with their homework). In doing this, other aspects of work became disordered and required reordering (e.g., connections in the office started to dissipate, and managers required employees to come in for meetings). In this perspective, the mutuality between ordering and disordering in organizational spacing propels organizing. In effect, studies in the becoming and constituting approaches suggest that researchers capture the mutuality of order and disorder in how spacing contributes to organizing. However, even with this shared assumption, becoming approaches tend to focus on the disordering aspects of the dialectic while constituting focuses on the ordering aspects of the dialectic.

Given this second wave of research, future studies need to investigate organizational spacing as a process of ordering and disordering. Clegg et al. (2005: 152) point out, “too much order, rule, and harmony, and a system implodes; too much chaos, disorder and noise, and the system explodes.” Put differently, order and disorder need to exist in a dialectical relationship or an ongoing struggle in which one gives rise to and enfolds the other (Putnam et al., 2016). Spacing then captures unexpected happenings in which order is temporary and easily overturned and disorder surfaces to (de)stabilize organizing. In this interplay, spacing is a never-ending accomplishment between ordering and disordering.

Presence and absence

Another dialectic core to the discussion of organizational spacing is presence and absence. Organization scholars tend to privilege what is present (Knox et al., 2015), and historically have used organizational spaces, such as buildings, offices, and corporate headquarters to stand in for the organization itself. This
is because buildings are tangible, graspable, present things being able to stand in for the organization itself even though “there is no Being behind the signifier ‘organization’” (Ford and Harding, 2004: 827). As a result, much organizational space literature—especially before the second wave—tends to treat organizational space as that which is present as emphasized by the developing approach.

The transitioning approach does not tread far from the developing approach with regards to the absence-presence dialectic. Although transitioning spaces are ones where order can be suspended, it requires specific presences such as hallways, stairwells (Shortt, 2015), basements (Courpasson et al., 2017), garages (Furnari, 2014), commutes (Wilhoit, 2017), and restaurants “outside” of the organization (Sturdy et al., 2006). Transitioning spacings, thus, focus on certain presences in order to facilitate disorder.

By focusing solely on what is present, developing and transitioning approaches are unable to explain some of the most pressing problematics in organizational spacing literature such as globalization, digitalization, and virtualization. Imbricating, becoming, and constituting approaches consider not only what is absent or present, but also absent presences (c.f., presentification), or something made present though not physically here, and present absences (c.f. abentification), or something made absent and physically here, (Cooren et al., 2008; Knox et al., 2015). Absent presences are quite commonplace in contemporary organizations. For example members of a virtual team who work together across the globe (e.g., Wilson, O’Leary, Metiu and Jett, 2008) are absent presences for one another, and are made present with the help of communication technologies. Present absences, though equally important to organizing, are generally neglected because they are hidden and hard to observe empirically. For example, Scholl et al. (2014) explain that in a city park there are many present absences such as traffic, noise, industry, and crowding that is so typical of an urban space. Present absences are necessary to organize but require much more empirical and theoretical development. We think this can be accomplished with a relational theory of organizational space.

Towards a relational theory of organizational space

This review of these five approaches uncovers the seeds of a relational theory of organizational space. Even though the containing and transitioning approaches continue to treat space as a pre-existent entity, all five orientations underscore the vital role and dynamic connections among multiple human and material factors in shaping spacing. The latter three approaches, imbricating, becoming, and constituting, break from past research that focuses on physical environments. In doing so, they examine the dialectical relationships of order and disorder, and absence and presence in a way that sees both necessary for organizing to occur. In addition, they point to the development of new constructs, ones grounded in a strong relational ontology and a strong performative epistemology. These new constructs cross approaches and offer researchers the opportunity to move away from traditional phenomena such as distance, measurement, physical artifacts, symbols, aesthetic experiences, and materialized power relations (Taylor and Spicer, 2007; Ropo, Sauer, and Salovaara, 2013; Van Marrewijk and Yanow, 2010). The three concepts, hybridity, assemblage, and rhythm, appear in studies across different perspectives and show how views of relationality come together in the study of organizational space.

The first two concepts, hybridity and assemblage, remind scholars that spatial arrangements are complex “protean and polymorphous [array of] phenomena” (eg. material, discursive) (Cooren, Brummans, and Charrieras, 2008; Meunier and Vásquez, 2008) that emerge from a multiplicity of heterogeneous, intermingling bodies that are both human and non-human (Thanem, 2010). Taken together, hybrid assemblage suggests that organizational spacings are configurations of various social and material elements that have the capacity to do things. They can hide (Courpasson et al., 2017), align (Vásquez, 2016), enchant (Siebert et al., 2017), link (Hydle, 2015), mobilize (Rao and Dutta, 2012), memorialize (Decker,
An organizational spacing, however, does not only do just one kind of activity. This becomes clear with the third concept, rhythm, which refers to the movements, flows, speeds, frequencies, and intensities of organizational spacings. Spacings are continually reconfiguring and doing different things. Thus future research that studies spacings from a relational approach must attend to the movement, flow, and speeds of spacings. As the concepts of hybridity, assemblage, and rhythm cross imbricating, becoming, and constituting perspectives, further development of these constructs could lead to a full-fledged relational theory of organizational spacing—one that aligns different process approaches.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The second wave of the spatial turn in organizational studies focuses on spacing as processes as opposed to spaces as physical environments. This paper sets forth a typology of five process approaches to organizational space, ones linked to the ontology and epistemology of research to guide scholars working in this area. In offering this typology, we not only provide an overview of recent advances in management literature but also examine the implications of these perspectives for studying order and disorder in organizational studies. This review also plants the seeds for developing new constructs and developing a strong relational theory to the study of organizational space.
CHAPTER 3

STABLE FIGURES? IDENTITY WORK AND PROFESSIONAL FIGURATIONS IN A CHANGING WORK ENVIRONMENT
ABSTRACT

Flexible office arrangements in corporate settings continue to flood into other domains, such as universities. Existing research suggests that such changes to office environments impact professional identities, yet we know little about how they are impacted and what kind of identity work academics enact in response to such changes. This lack in our understanding can be attributed to a general neglect of materiality in the organizational literature and how it is involved in identity work. Through a longitudinal qualitative study of a business school transitioning from a traditional office to an open plan office with a flexwork policy, we adopt a material-semiotic lens and elaborate the concept of professional identity figurations to theorize how the professional identity of academics is an ongoing, relational and performative process of figuring out one’s identity at work. We show how professional identity is constituted through various associative relations with heterogeneous characters, including material objects, and how such associations provide shifting understandings of one’s identity over time and in relation to others. We unpack how materiality is more than just an additional semiotic sign and develop theory on the basic contours of identity work as a performative and ongoing process of figuration.

Keywords: Identity work, professionals, open-plan offices, flexible working, figurations, material-semiotics, relational approach, materiality, academics

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The question of how individuals construct a professional identity at work is at the center of organizational theory (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, Brown 2015). This is because identity plays an integral role in nearly every aspect of organizing and organizational life (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas, 2008; Brown 2015; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009), and because of an increasing salience of professionals, or members of an elite occupational group with valued esoteric knowledge, status, and prestige (MacDonald, 1995), in work-life dynamics (Anteby et al., 2016; Barley et al., 2017). As a result, scholars from a variety of theoretical traditions have put forward a wide range of concepts, ideas, and metaphors (Haslam et al., 2017) to conceptualize this process, including identity construction (Pratt et al., 2006), identity play (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010), identity experimenting (Ibarra, 1999), identity work (Snow and Anderson, 1987), and even identity jujitsu (Kreiner and Sheep, 2009) to guide our understanding of what the main processes of identity construction are and how these unfold.

At present, identity work is a favored metaphor for conceptualizing identity formation processes (Brown, 2015), and is built on the assumption that identity is an ongoing performative project—akin to engaging in a project of work itself (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994)—that individuals enact in order to create a relatively coherent and distinct notion of self (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Reflecting various research approaches (Brown, 2017), identity work has been described as entailing different activities such as ‘boundary work’ (Ashforth et al., 2000), ‘articulation work’ (Fine, 1996), ‘narrative work’ (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), ‘dramaturgical work’ (Down and Reveley, 2009), and ‘discursive work’ (Brown and Coupland, 2015).

In virtually all of these instances, identity work is understood to involve processes in which individuals engage in “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising” (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003: 1165) their identities through using cognitive, symbolic, or linguistic resources (Bardon, 2012). As of late, however, an increasing number of scholars have become concerned with how materiality relates to work identities and their potential (re)formation (Bardon et al., 2012; Bechky, 2008; Courpasson and Monties, 2017; Paring et al., 2017). These scholars argue that materiality is generally invisible and often implicit and that scholars need to bring “the material back into the equation” (Bardon et al., 2012: 353). We build on this stream of work with our overall aim being not just to render materiality in identity work visible, but also to examine how it can be traced
and observed.

Part of the reason why materiality has been invisible in identity work scholarship is due to what Mumby calls a “wrongheaded” reading of the linguistic turn in which scholars assume that talk, text, communication, and language constitute the social world in its entirety (Mumby, 2011: 2). This “wrongheaded” reading has likewise been forceful in identity work scholarship by rendering material things as merely “additional semiotics” (Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009: 304) that enhance or stabilize existing symbolic relations established through discourse (Elsbach, 2003). Such a reading is considered as “wrongheaded” because by giving primacy to language, it neglects the main purpose of the linguistic turn: to challenge the dualism of subjective, or discursive, and the objective, or material. A broader genealogical reading of the linguistic turn suggests that the world (materiality) does not exist independent from experience (discourse), but rather that both are “inextricably entwined” (Mumby, 2011: 3). Nevertheless, many scholars continue to read the linguistic turn with a focus on “talk and text rather than looking through discourse to see the specific ways the world is produced” (Deetz, 2003: 425).

In this context, we similarly argue that research on identity work would benefit from shifting from representing what individuals do to generating multiple accounts of how heterogeneous others relationally constitute identities. By heterogeneous others, we are referring to all of the entities that compose and sustain a professional identity such as in our case: students, journal articles, universities, funding organizations, funding policies, rituals, ideas, status among many others. Conceived in this way, identity work is a material-semiotic process that does not conceptualize identity as nothing but text (Mumby, 2005), but foregrounds the intertwined role of materiality and talk in producing stable—though not static—textual figures of one’s identity (Bergström and Knights, 2006) and does so in ways that may explain and clarify how professional identities may come to be shared and relatively recognizable even though they are enacted heterogeneously across a wide range of contexts.

By proposing this material-semiotic account of identity work, we focus our analysis on identity-based figurations, defined as imaginations of one’s identity in a certain time and place, which offers a relational, decentered, and “more-than-human” performative account of identity work inspired by Donna Haraway and other feminist scholars (Castañeda, 2002; Haraway, 1988; 1997; 2004; Nielsen, 2015; Suchman, 2007). With the focus on figurations, we highlight that identity is a more-than-human composition of diverse elements that constitute each other through their relation by drawings boundaries, and affording certain capacities to individuals for acting. A figuration is at once a topos; a topic or a commonplace that locates a (con)figuration of heterogeneous things, and a trópos; a trope that through “associations across diverse realms of meaning and practice” turns and displaces what it figures (Suchman, 2007: 227). From this perspective, figurations are assemblages of stuff and meaning that are molded by and give form to, one another through material-semiotic practices, including our own research.

This material-semiotic perspective allows us to examine how professional identity figurations are constituted in changing material environments, such as the initiation of an open-plan flexwork arrangement in our empirical study. Such work arrangements have become a widely popular design (Wilhoit, 2016) because the open aesthetics and glass are in vogue (Gabriel, 2005) and because flexing, or the practice of employees only occupying workstations during a work session, cuts real estate costs (Vischer, 2005). This work arrangement has become so commonplace and widespread that its use has been extended beyond its original corporate settings and into non-corporate settings such as public agencies (Taskin and Edwards, 2007) and universities (Baldry and Barnes, 2012). Yet, we know very little regarding how these open-plan flexible offices in non-corporate settings impact an individual’s identity work, and specifically from our perspective how such a changed office environment might disrupt professional identity figurations. Existing accounts of similar changes in work environments that address
employees’ identities have argued that because personal artifacts personalize, symbolize, and mark boundaries; and because open-plan flexible offices prevent employees from being able to personalize their surroundings; employees suffer from a loss of identity. These accounts suggest employees may manipulate the environment or their behaviors to reestablish boundaries and personal markers (Elsbach, 2003; Millward et al., 2007). This common explanation, however, falls into the pitfalls we describe above in which materiality is rendered as a symbol, identity is understood as relatively stable and deliberately chosen, and identity and the physical environment are framed as discrete entities acting upon another (see Millward et al., 2007).

Instead, in this paper, we offer an account that aligns with a genealogical reading of the linguistic turn that adopts a broader account of materiality as semiotics (Cooren, 2000). From this perspective, we suggest that identity is generally a process that is enacted with material-semiotic practices in which materiality is more-than-just “additional semiotics.” To offer such an account we ask how in the context of a changing work environment are different and conflicting figurations of business school academics enacted, assembled, and conjured up through material-semiotic practices with heterogeneous others? Moreover, how, once produced, do these figurations relate to one another?

We present a longitudinal case study of business school academics’ evolving identity figurations over time and in response to changes in their work environment. Based on this study and with the introduction of a material-semiotic lens to identity work, we make two primary contributions. The first contribution is that the lens that we elaborate for identity work offers a way of theorizing that is relatively new to organization studies (Kuhn et al., 2017), one that transcends dualisms and offers a way of understanding material-semiotic things and their role in producing the world in a way that is not ex ante determined (Bardon et al., 2012). The second contribution is that we not only make materiality visible in identity work processes, but we suggest some ways in which it is implicated in identity work as a resource, actant, and outcome simultaneously.

In order to build towards these contributions, we first outline the existing renderings of materiality in identity work literature and follow this up with a short explanation of the concept of figurations. We then describe the method of our study in detail in order to convey our reflections on our methodology. After describing our method, we present our findings of figurations, figuring practices, and frictional patternings. We conclude our article with a discussion of the contributions that the concept of figuration makes to the identity work literature.

### 3.2 MATERIALITY AND IDENTITY WORK

**Social constructionist perspectives**

The first approach that we review, a social constructionist perspective, is actually a combination of a number of approaches—cognitive (Ashforth et al., 2000), rhetorical (Fine, 1996), narrative (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), and dramaturgical (Down and Reveley, 2009)—that fit together due to an affinity of their assumptions regarding identity work and materiality’s relation to it (Haslam et al., 2017). This perspective considers identity to be the meanings individuals negotiate with regards to the question “who am I” (Kreiner et al., 2006) through interaction (Down and Reveley, 2009) and by drawing on available discourses (Brown, 2015). Assuming that “language filters experienced realities” (Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009: 304), a social constructionist perspective does not see identity as essential, but as constructed and in a constant state of becoming (Anteby, 2008). Furthermore, although the approaches that make up this perspective describe different activities in which meanings are negotiated, such as framing, persuading, narrating, and performing (Brown, 2017), they recognize an individual as an “active, choice-making subject” (Kuhn, 2009: 682).

From a social constructionist perspective, materiality is cast as a contextual cue...
that triggers an identity frame (Rafaeli et al., 1997), a prop in a performance of a given repertoire (Snow and Anderson, 1987), or as a symbol in a storyline (Hoyer and Steyaert, 2015). In these renderings, material things are used to trigger or convey meanings of an identity, and also to fix, stabilize, and strengthen them. For example, surgical interns put on their “white pants” to help them distinguish themselves from all other medical interns (Pratt et al., 2006). This act strengthens their definition of self as a surgeon with all the tradition behind the suit as well as its associated meanings.

Rendering materiality as merely an additional semiotic sign (Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009) is problematic. It is problematic because it neglects the instrumental and aesthetic functions of materiality that can sometimes operate in contradiction to its symbolism (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004), ignores any agency that materiality might have in identity construction (Paring et al., 2017), and assumes that materiality is inherently stable and remains the same from one place to the other as opposed to becoming something different in itself (Law and Mol, 1995). Such a general treatment of how identity through and with the help of materiality is constructed plays into what Latour (2003) suggests has “gone wrong” with constructionism; that it has come to refer to the “kind of stuff” that constructs the world rather than a “complex collaboration” of relations (87). In addition, while the reflexivity of social constructionist approaches challenges the notion of an “objective observer” (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009: 7), at the same time this line of analysis does not seem to get beyond “self-vison as the cure for self-invisibility” (Haraway, 1988: 189).

Labor process theory

A second approach, labor process theory (LPT) (Braverman, 1974), is fundamental to many “control perspectives” of identity work (Alvesson et al., 2008), and stands in stark opposition to social constructionism because it figures identity as a “personification of economic categories” (Marx, 1976: 92). This rendering suggests that individuals’ identities are essential and “primarily [sic] determined by their structural position in capitalist relations of production” (Bardon et al., 2012: 352). From an LPT perspective, identity is an outcome of “lived experience” of labor processes, yet is “independent of the particular people who come to work” (Burawoy, 1985: 39). In addition, the identities that are derived from the labor process “obscure the politico-economic relations of exploitation that…comprise ‘the objective point’ of productive activity” (Willmott, 1994: 108–9).

From an orthodox LPT perspective, material conditions dictate identity. Identity, however, remains part of the labor process because it gives a sense of “prestige, self-accomplishment and pride” to workers, which leads them to consent to their own exploitation (Burawoy, 1979: 89). For example, a recent study reports how designers with “cool” and “alternative” social identities at a brand based clothing company are granted “too nice to work vouchers” to go kayaking, mounting biking and surfing (Land and Taylor, 2010). These vouchers not only made the designers proud of their hobbies but also generate value by making the brand seem more authentic. These vouchers—tied to certain positions—were not extended to everyone; employees in the main office and warehouse could never claim it was “too nice to work.” Such an understanding renders materiality and meaning as distinct and dissociated and gives primacy to materiality.

As we indicated above, LPT is fundamental to much identity work scholarship, yet it stands apart from the rest of the approaches we review. This is because try as they might to show that the “objectification of work...is very much a subjective process” (Burawoy, 1985: 10). LPT scholars continue to reiterate a subject-object dualism with their base-level commitments to Marxism which assumes “the ‘structures’ of social life are ontologically separable from...human agency” (Willmott, 1994: 110). Unable to circumvent this dilemma within their subsequent theorizing, critical scholars began drawing on non-Marxist work leading to alternative approaches to identity. We review one of these offshoots, a Foucauldian discursive approach, below.
Foucauldian discursive approach

Foucauldian discursive approaches to identity were developed as an attempt to “remedy a critical limitation” of labor process analysis, which Knights and Willmott (1989) identify as an “absence of an adequate theorization of the connectedness of power and subjectivity in the organization of social life” (535). Drawing on the notion of subjugation, Foucauldian discursive scholars argue that power is productive in that individuals actively engage in self-discipline through the enactment of subject positions offered by available discourses (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bergström and Knights, 2006). This stance is an immediate challenge to humanist conceptions of a sovereign subject suggesting instead that human agency is “a complex, contradictory, and shifting process that is open to many possible modes of being” (Willmott, 1994: 17).

With an understanding of subjectivity as decentered, it becomes possible to conceptualize how “organizations induce the construction of particular selves as a form of control” (Gagnon, 2008: 377) by offering employees “managerially inspired discourses about work and organization with which they may become more or less identified and committed” (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 620). These processes are ongoing through the everyday enactment of life with identities being discursively maintained through activities such as joking with colleagues (Huber and Brown, 2017), telling stories to colleagues (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009), selling products to clients (Whittle, 2005), and through the hours they keep (Kuhn, 2006). These discursive activities are directly material because, from a Foucauldian approach, materiality is embedded in and shaped by discursive practices (Hardy and Thomas, 2015). Telling examples of this are the electric clock that is part of a lawyer’s billing practices in which the constraints of the software are a part of the enactment of her professional identity (Brown and Lewis, 2011), or the police officer who goes to the gym for an hour or two each day in order to avoid becoming the “clumsy bureaucrat” (Courpasson and Monties, 2017: 40). In both cases, discursive practices are wrapped up with materiality be it tools, spatial arrangements or bodies (Hardy and Thomas, 2015).

Although Foucauldian discursive approaches recognize materiality as playing a part in identity work, most Foucauldian treatments of identity work at the same time render discourse as having precedence over materiality. This is generally due to singularly linguistic readings of Foucault (Hardy and Maguire, 2010; Putnam, 2015) for example, through statements such as that discourse “systematically forms the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972: 54). To avoid privileging discourse, scholars should instead focus on “how discourse and materiality emerge concomitantly in the ordering of events within a historically-constituted world” (Putnam, 2015: 4). Such a task requires scholars to not only decenter subjectivity but also to provide a more comprehensive analysis of discursive practices. This could be delivered with more-than-human descriptions of discursive practices (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015) in which “an ‘I’ is transformed into the ‘we’ of autonomous agents operating together to make a self” (Hayles, 1999: 6). This turn is what is suggested by sociomaterial approaches which we describe next.

Sociomaterial approaches

Sociomaterial approaches to identity work are fundamentally radical in that these do not “assert the primacy of human agency in social life” (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015: 698) and thus consider how “the ‘thingness of things’ (Kuhn et al., 2017: 31) are wrapped up in identity work. Sociomateriality is an umbrella term (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008) for a number of approaches, such as entanglement (Barad, 2007), mangle (Pickering, 1994a), assemblage (Law, 2009), and imbrication (Leonardi, 2011) that take up this premise. From this perspective, identity is considered as performative, as “reiterative and citational practices” (Butler, 1993: 2). Put differently, through repeated performances “particular subject positions become [the] norm” as they cite previous performances and can be cited in future performances (Symon and Pritchard, 2015: 244). With an understand-
In this tradition, materiality is understood as slightly different depending on the foundational assumptions of a particular approach. A critical realist foundation conceptualizes materiality and the social as “separate and self-contained entities that interact and affect each other” (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014: 809). While an agential realist foundation, however, renders material-discourse as “inherently inseparable” (Orlikowski and Scott 2008, 456). Something in-between—such as Pickering’s mangle—considers materiality and meaning to emerge together, but be distinct. Nonetheless, what unites these approaches are attention to “the complex set of characters” (Kuhn et al., 2017:54) that participate in identity work. For example, the emergence of a railway engineer-smartphone assemblage that constitutes the image of a “committed self” by enacting a continuous engagement to work (Symon and Pritchard, 2015).

Their variations, however, have significant implications for how we make (sense of) the world. For example, while critical realist scholars see matter as existing in and of itself, agential realists see matter “not a thing but a doing” (Barad, 2007: 151) that makes an “effect of boundary, fixity, and surface that we call ‘matter’” (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015: 699). While critical realism “rejects the idea of ‘multiple realities’” (Maxwell, 2012:9), agential realism contends that “the ‘nature’ of things is multiple” (Kuhn et al., 2017: 33). Moreover, while critical realists for their part do argue that there is “no unmediated access to the world” (Fleetwood, 2005: 199), their purpose is still to explain it (Fairclough, 2005: 923). Agential realists, however, see their work as “active interventions” as they make a difference (Orlikowski and Scott, 2015: 698). While sociomaterial approaches might be one of the few that are open to the more than human actors that participate in identity work, as of now only a few studies have examined identity work from a sociomaterial perspective (Harding et al., 2017; Paring et al., 2017; Symon and Pritchard, 2015). Because of this general lack of prior work, one of the many questions that have been largely unaddressed are how particular kinds of relations come to constitute workplace identities.

### 3.3 FIGURATIONS

To make headway in this direction, we draw on the work of Haraway (1988, 1997, 2004) and her concept of figurations as a way of recognizing identity as relational, decentered, more-than-human, and performative processes. The notion of figurations builds on poststructuralists’ work who in their efforts to decenter subjectivity, also “developed a concept of process subjectivity” (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002: 637). In this process, “the unity of the I is risked” because through interactions of “self/other/world configuration[s]” that are “produced out of and producing conflicting motives and structures” are transformed (Deetz, 1994: 30). Such a surfacing of identity is foundational to a relational ontological approach that suggests that “identities” are dynamic effects that emerge through the relations between entities in the everyday enactment of life. These relations need not be merely oppositions as “there is an element of over-simplification and distortion in definitions of sameness and otherness” (Ybema et al., 2009: 307), but can encompass a wider range of relations (Ashcraft, 2013).

Although the seeds for such a way of theorizing identity are present in the current literature, most identity work research continues to describe material things as “merely markers of identity” (Bechky, 2008: 101). The management and organizational literature in general could thus benefit from a better understanding of how identity is wrapped up in “routinized (re-)performance[s]” with material-semiotic things that constitute one another (Symon and Pritchard, 2015), especially as new tools, new work arrangements, and new settings alter these performances with broader implications for organizing (Wilhoit, 2016).

To take these convictions seriously, while setting out to examine “a seemingly
essentialist category – identity” could be what Bardon and colleagues call paradoxical (Bardon et al., 2012: 351). However, rather than throw out identity as a concept, the challenge instead is to think of it differently as “an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (Hayles, 1999: 3) and is constituted through a variety of relations. We argue that the concept of figurations is one that can do this.

Figurations are “distillations of shared meanings in forms or images” (Weber, 2016: 28) that are “neither complete nor static pictures” (Timeto, 2011: 160). They are instead “performative images” (Haraway 1997: 11) in the sense that they “do not simply figure, but ‘turn’ what they figure” (Haraway 2008: 159). Figurations can be understood as “knowable effects” (Harding et al., 2017: 1212) enacted “by virtue of the convergence of certain kinds of processes and practices that produce the ‘effect’ of the knowable and unified [entity]” (Butler as quoted in Harding et al., 2017). As a performed effect, the purpose of studying figurations is to “detail the process by which a concept or entity is given particular form—how it is figured—in ways that speak to the making of worlds” (Castañeda, 2002: 3).

This type research, what Nielsen (2015) calls figuration work, implicates researchers in “the making of worlds” because as they craft descriptions of figurations, they intervene with already existing assemblages, and enact new ones. That is, they are actively involved in the production of the world around them. This realization is also why Haraway understands figurations as political because they have potentialities for producing other worlds. Following Niellsson (2015), our study of figurations departs from Haraway and others to a degree because our purpose is not to provide imagined futures but rather to elaborate how academic professional figurations are (re)assembled in the daily enactment of life. Nonetheless, we still ascribe to the same underlying assumptions and recognize our own hand in identifying the figurations of the academics that we studied. Having clarified our overall theoretical approach to identity work and the concept of figuration, we next describe the research study and the methods we used before we unfold our analyses.

### 3.4 METHOD

In order to study identity work as a process of figuration, we decided to study a group of professionals, namely academics, undergoing a fundamental change to their work environment. Such a change, we argue, sets processes of figuration and the shifting nature of them over time in better relief, enabling our analyses and subsequent theory development. In addition, we were also guided by Haraway’s (2004) suggestion for a choice of study context where there is “a cathexis of some kind” (338); cathexis being “a deep connection between the writing subject and figure” being studied (Haraway, 2004: 38). As academics ourselves, we can directly relate to the subjects we studied, and are in that sense not only equipped to understand and imagine their figurations but also ourselves involved in the changing nature of their work environment and the effects it has on the academic profession.

#### Research context

Specifically, the context of our study is a Faculty of Business, part of a large Dutch university. The board of trustees of the university determined that the building in which the Faculty was housed would undergo renovations to its classrooms and office spaces with the aim of ensuring a more efficient use of space through a flexwork arrangement. The renovated offices were significantly different from the academics’ former cellular offices. Previously, individual academics had in each of their offices personal furniture, decorations, and could arrange their office to their liking. Academics also had their own desk, personal bookshelves, storage space, and their office supplies. Each office had a door that could be locked with the name of the academic listed alongside the door.
In comparison, the renovated offices are open, well lit, homogenous, and composed of five different working spaces: entirely open spaces, single person or two person enclosed offices, an open pantry, and an enclosed meeting room. The material that separates rooms from one another is in most instances made of glass, although in a few cases the former weight bearing wall of concrete has been painted white. The offices were designed to have fewer seats than employees that are actually employed, and each employee is therefore required to clean her desk after each work session. Each department was designated about half of a floor that is closed off to anyone that is not in the Faculty but is theoretically open to other departments to use. Academics are provided with a small locker in the common hallway where they can store their personal belongings including books. In addition, academics can store their books in a shared space open to the entire Faculty, which would mean that others can freely use their books. Staff must use a keycard to enter the floor.

Data collection

The primary investigator collected the data over a period of two years in which she was embedded in the organization for eight series of two weeks. Our main methods were interviewing and participant observation. We conducted interviews with forty-one different academics up to three times throughout our study. These interviews started before they moved into the renovated offices, a second time up to six months after the move, and a third time up to a year and a half after the move. The interviews were conducted across four departments to have a broad and varied sample across different units within the Faculty. We conducted interviews with twenty senior academics, and twenty-one junior, or early career academics attempting to hear from a diverse range of voices.

### Table 3.1 Overview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>Christopher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>Iain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>Ulysses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1, FN</td>
<td>Wallace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2, FN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the first round of interviews before the move, we asked participants first to give a tour of their office, and asked them to point out and explain the material artifacts found in it. This protocol changed for the second and third interviews in which we asked informants to describe their offices as though they were speaking to a colleague who had never been to the office before in order not to disturb the people working in the office. The purpose of this line of inquiry was to let informants pick the aspects of the space that were most important to them, see how they describe it in their own words and how in turn they give meaning to their world. The second part of each interview was semi-structured and focused on personal work-life history and career trajectory; knowledge and experience of their old and new offices; their perceived professional, organizational, and personal identity; roles and their tasks, routines, and work practices; where they see themselves in the coming years; and, finally, the group dynamics in their department.

Besides interview data, we also drew on observations extensively. Our observations involved twelve weeks of shadowing one department at a time. During the weeks at each department, the primary investigator would attend all meetings, social events, seminars, and social gatherings as she could. She would sit among the academics and aimed to participate as though she were a member of their department. Although we conducted interviews in three waves, the primary investigator was regarding the observational part of the study present continuously.

By interviewing and observing academics, we were able to compare how the academics of our study enacted the perceptions of their identities and performed their work. Table 1 provides an overview of the academics we interviewed. We assigned each academic a letter in this table, and references in our findings include this letter as well as a number associated with its corresponding interview or field note. In instances when we illustrate a figuring practice or frictional pattern we refer to academics with a pseudonym, which can also be found in this table.

**TABLE 3.1 (CONTINUED)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,3, FN</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,3, FN</td>
<td>Fredrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,3, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>2, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJ</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KK</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2,3, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2, FN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NN</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OO</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Junior Academic</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data analysis**

The analysis of our study involved three steps. In the first step we sought to make sense of what kinds of figurations were being made by individual academics with heterogeneous others; that is, what kinds of imagined selves were being conjured with material-symbols often in comparison to others including imagined others, envisioned past selves, and possible imagined selves. To answer this question we went through our data and started marking segments that encompassed our “process of interest” (Schadler, 2017: 10): when subject positions were generated in relation to elements of the work environment. This included moments when business school academics were figured with books, desks, laptops, personal computers, cellphones, name plates, badges, papers, personal artifacts, furniture, whiteboards, and doors among others.

After tagging these moments, we began to make sense of these segments by looking for resonating enactments of subject positions, or figurations that have an affinity with one another and started organizing their reverberations (Suchman, 2007). When organizing our resonating figures, we were inspired by material-semioticians (Haraway, 2004; Latour, 2005; Law and Mol, 1995) who draw on semiotics, or the study of signs (Peirce, 1955; Saussure, 1983), to trace “the webs of relations” from which “everything in the social and natural worlds” are “continuously generated” (Law, 2009: 141). Specifically, we use Greimas’s semiotic square (Greimas, 1987) to map the resonances of subject positions because it is a heuristic that organizes the relations of “multi-patterned interactions” (Haraway, 2004: 77) by complicating contrarieties and constructing “condensed maps of contestable worlds” (Haraway, 1997: 11). By expanding on books and laptops as our chosen contrariety and complicating these material-semiotic things as a contrariety, we were able to identify figurations that academics would relate to through their interactions. We must emphasize that each enactment of these figurations was varied: academics would traverse various figurations in different and evolving manners given different contextual circumstances, and sometimes academics were figured with elements of more than one figuration at a time. Thus, the figurations are not absolute entities; rather they are “relative to other figures and to its intrinsic components” (Nielsen, 2015: 48).

After crafting a map of the figurations that we animated with our data, we began the second step: an analysis directed at answering our question of how these figurations were enacted, assembled, and conjured. Again, relying on a relational logic, we were looking at the various ways the heterogeneous entities link with one another assuming that these relations have different effects. After going back and forth between our data and the material-semiotics literature, a conversation regarding prosthetics within the humanities (Sobchack, 2004) proved fruitful in examining how different kinds of relations with material-semiotic things can have various implications of doing-meaning-becoming. Specifically, Sobchack (2004) argues that she comes into relation with her prosthetic leg in different ways—metonymically, metaphorically, and synecdochally—depending on her engagements with others, environment, mood, and project. Each relation has implications for how she understands her “self” and her prosthetic leg. With this conversation in mind, we went back to each “process of interest” and to see if academics enacted one or more of these three types of relations with the things found in their physical environment, how they were being enacted, and the effects of their enactment.

After analyzing how figurations are relationally constituted, we conducted the third and final step of our analysis in which we aimed to make sense of how these figurations related to one another. To do this we went back to our data a final time, and marked moments of frictional events, or “moments of contestation” (Nielsen, 2015: 15) in which oppositional effects such as ironies, or incongruities “between what is expected and what occurs” (Putnam et al., 2016: 76); ambiguities, or “multiple and contradictory meanings at play concomitantly” (Oswick et al., 2004: 117); tensions or “competing directions and struggles between opposites” (Putnam et al., 2016: 68–69); and contradictions or “polar opposites that are
interdependent, define each other, and can potentially negate one another” (Putnam et al., 2016: 74) were produced. We then traced how academics responded to the oppositional effects through different patterns.

With the process laid out in this way, we went as an author team collectively through an interpretive process, moving back and forth between the data and the figurations that we produced. We cross-checked interpretations between ourselves and looked for corresponding findings across the forty-one individual cases. In all, with this three-step process, we also aim to offer a way of analyzing identity work from a material-semiotic perspective and specifically for the process of drawing out shifting identity figurations.

### 3.5 FINDINGS

Our findings section is divided into three parts. In the first section, we describe the professional identity figurations that came to life through our semiotic square. In the second section, we describe the topos, or figuring practices that bring heterogeneous entities together into professional identity figurations. In the third section, we identify the trópos, or turnings triggered by frictional events that reconfigure earlier figured performances.

#### Figurations of business school academics

The first figuration, the traditional professor, is derived from imagery used by an academic who described himself as “old school” because he “likes papers” and “likes books” (V-1). Academics who figured themselves as traditional professors framed the process of idea development as a journey elsewhere (deeper, higher, further) to “figure out how things work” as opposed to just “being paid” to “make things work” (V-1). The second figuration, the mobile consultant, operated as an imagined other who can “work at any time, anywhere, in any way” (C-1) is “money driven” (C-1), and able only to offer generalizable tools as they just “replace orga-
Figuring practices

Figurations are built out of a variety of relational practices, which are necessary in order to connect heterogeneous entities. In this section, we delineate how professional figurations come to be enacted, assembled and conjured through the relational practices of connecting, resembling, and corresponding.

Connecting practices. The first figuring practice that we observed were connecting practices or relational processes in which two entities are brought together to form an ensemble: a material–semiotic whole (Sobchack, 2004: 213). This relation emphasizes how material things are not just an extension of a body, but “the constitution of this body qua ‘human’” (Steigler, 1998: 152–3). We identified these relations when academics would describe material things as part of the embodied enactment of their work. For example, one academic describes throwing away his academic journals as something he could not do “as [they are] part of me” (P-1). Another academic after the move begins to take the “spirit of the set-up ...its openness, transparency and flexibility” as traits to describe herself as an “innovative academic” recognizing that she had become “a bit more open” and organizes her work differently with “a lot of collaborating...and helping [each other] out” (GG-2). The way in which an academic is entwined with other things, however, is not solely up to an individual. Andrew is a prime example of this. Before the move into the renovated offices, everyone—his colleagues, department head, the Faculty operations manager, and the consultant—worried about him. They all felt that an open-plan office with flexing would inhibit his work, and therefore also disrupt who he is as an academic (cf. Pratt et al., 2006). He recognized this as well explaining that he was “a kind of outlier or difficult case” for the Faculty because he has books which he “always keeps on hand.” Although he emphasized that he is “not such a purist that I never want to see anything digital,” the fact that “most of this [his book collection] hasn’t been digitized yet” constrained him. Given the necessary constraints of his books, Andrew is figured and figures himself as a specific kind of academic and one who will not fit into the newly renovated office. Even so, the “bookshelves, which wouldn’t fit the original concept anyway...has found a way into the arrangements” and were “transported more or less into the same set-up in one of the workspaces” in the new office.

In this instance, Andrew and his books become a figuration; “a physical [and] metaphysical whole, the existence [and] idea of one being included in the existence [and] idea of the other” (Sobchack, 2006: 26). Together the constraints of one becomes the constraints of both, making them together an influential force that shaped the planning process of the open-plan offices in which Andrew and his books (Andrew-books), resonating with the traditional professor figuration, become an exception. Thus, material things can be part of the body; transforming it in ways necessary to enact academic practices.

Resembling Practices. The second figuring practice that we observed were resembling practices, or relational processes in which one idea is presented under the sign of another that is more striking, or better known (Sobchack, 2004: 213). This relation encompasses how abstract ideas or processes can be linked to less complex and tangible things as a means to make sense and a basis to direct action. When talking about how they conduct their work, the academics of our study often relied on a resembling relationship with material things. Books were used to figure academic work as a journey to find knowledge. They described books as things that “just draw you...to dig deeper and look at it for yourself” (U-1). Laptops were used to figure consultant’s work as “shallow” (S-1) and “repetitive” (AA-1) as consultants just “need to be on the road and once they land in their organization they just need a temporary place where they can do their work and then in a couple of hours move again” (F-1). Whiteboards and flexing office designs rendered academic work as “generating ideas” (AA-3) as a whiteboard “builds a shared understanding” (N-3), and flexing designs allow academics to ‘experiment...just find a desk...sit with another person than they were sitting with the day before, and then you have different conversations and different ideas” (R-FN).

Aaron demonstrates how the environment shaped his understanding of his work
generally saw this relation when academics described the purpose of their work. For example, Iain explains how as a consultant he realized that “maybe this is not for me, a suit, a laptop and a lease car” to convey that he was motivated to do more than just “make money.” Or how Wallace describes books as triggering “a quest and it becomes fulfilling in itself” to describe how he was motivated to become an academic for personal understanding. This corresponding relationship suggests that instruments, such as suits and books, can dictate purposes, such as making money or understanding. Instruments, thus, can have agency in ventriloquizing the purposes and outcomes of academic work (Cooren et al., 2013). This could be why so many of the academics of our study were frustrated with the proposed office design. Although most of the academics that we spoke with “do not need that many books” (B-2) to do their work, they felt that “having [books] around you is part of who you are as a researcher” (Q-1), and that an office without books is “just not how it should be. You know we are academics, we should be able to consult our books” (G-2). These sentiments signaled that “something from the industry…that is copied and pasted from companies” (CC-1) might influence their purpose and the university’s purpose in a way that they do not approve.

Frictional patternings

The buildup of various figuring performances that the academics of our study enacted with a constellation of heterogeneous others, including material objects, resulted in opposite effects. This is expected when entities of seemingly separate orders, frames, or logics become linked together, and as a result, produce these effects. In fact, these opposite effects are inherent to identity figurations as “split and contradictory” things come to be “stitched together imperfectly” to construct figurations (Haraway, 1988: 586). Though many authors assume insecure identities result in crisis (Alvesson, 2010) and contend that a split and dynamic identity is anxiety-ridden, we instead align with others that see the merits of “holding incompatible things together” (Haraway, 2004:7) as it often fosters
connection through affinity and change.

When academics of our study faced frictional events, or events riddled with irony, ambiguity, or contradiction, how they (re)acted to these effects took on various patterns resulting in different enactments of professional identity figureations. Though the circumstances of every frictional event varied across contextually specific identity performances, the patterns of their enactment involved similar processes. We labeled these patterns as selecting, oscillating, and opening.

Selecting. The pattern of selecting refers to the process in which academics shape their professional identity figureation in a way that emphasizes or enables only one side of an oppositional effect: an either/or approach. The selecting pattern was mostly enacted in contextual situations in which academics were figured through connecting practices, and in which the new office design threatened to negate who they are by physically removing extensions of embodied activities. As we demonstrated above, for Andrew this meant selecting his books and negating the flexwork design. This selecting pattern, however, did not just result in a reaffirmation of already existing connecting relations, but also in a selection of the other side of the opposition.

Olivia, for example, who was notorious for her collection of things and papers faced the same contradiction as Andrew. Unlike Andrew, however, Olivia selected for flexing despite her previous identity performances connecting her to paper. She admitted before moving into the renovated office that throwing away most of her things is “is sort of terrifying” because as “a paper [user] I always need to get papers out, you know a printed version with the notes attached to them all around me” when writing. Much to everyone’s surprise even her own, Olivia pointed out after the move that “it’s really strange. I never use any things anymore.” Olivia selected to embrace the behaviors associated with flexwork, which ultimately stopped a connecting relationship with papers and figured Olivia in a way that resonates with the innovative academic figureation.

Here, it is important to note that the selection of one side of a contradiction did not exempt the academics of our study from experiencing oppositional effects. In fact, this process often triggered new oppositional effects. For example, Andrew experienced irony when the Faculty came into his office to “take pictures of [his] bookshelves” and “used a picture of [his] shelves in a report to introduce a chapter on research.” Olivia experienced ongoing bouts of tension in which she felt that she had to participate in all different kinds of activities (a corresponding relational practice associated with innovative academics) despite the demands to produce publications (a corresponding relational practice associated with traditional professors). Thus, in selecting one side of a contradiction, their identities were never settled.

Oscillating. The oscillating pattern refers to the process in which academics shape their professional identity figureation in a dynamic way that shifts back and forth from one opposition to another depending on the context: a both/and approach. The oscillating pattern was used predominantly by academics attending to tensions, particularly those that emerged from corresponding relations that dictate the purposes for which academics do their work. While academics almost always asserted that of course their work was driven by curiosity and to make an impact on the industry, these aims have contradictory elements to them (e.g., individual development versus the bottom line). Because time is limited, and there are different sets of products in relation to different aims, most academics took to oscillating between purposes depending on the contextual situation.

For example, before moving to the new offices, Elizabeth expressed that “At the end of the day, you have to publish. That’s more important than teaching, over anything else to be honest.” As a result, she put most of her energy into research and writing up publications. Two years later, when we talked with her again, she still emphasized that publishing was her main priority, but she acknowledges “a new season” for her department and herself with an additional purpose that she had not mentioned before. This additional purpose was an “expectation to valorize her research.” She explained
I can feel this as a tension already... I have this paper due on the fifteenth of December, for a top journal, and [a consultancy firm] wants me to write a case study on this project, which is for more of a practitioner’s kind of journal. I really have to do this, and they want to meet on Monday, and I’m like, I just want to finish this paper. If I don’t get this paper on my C.V. and get it published, then I’m screwed no matter what. So I always have to keep my eye on what is the thing. I still always keep publications central.

Elizabeth would later publish this case study, but she left it until after she made her publication deadline distinguishing certain times to produce what would be deemed as “valorized products.” In doing so, her professional identity figuration oscillates with temporal switches.

Iain also enacted the oscillating pattern but applied it in terms of location. After moving into the new offices, he emphasized how writing academic publications are the “standard academic thing.” He, however, motivated by the topic of the book which he describes as “needing to be written,” designates his home as a space for this project as it offers “creativity” with no “social interruptions” a “bookshelf, a desk, and window...the right kind of atmosphere.” During this period, when he is writing his book, he still comes into the office—albeit fewer days per week—to take care of his teaching and administrative responsibilities. After writing the book, he went back to his regular paper writing activities. Iain demonstrates that oppositional effects can emerge for periods of time yet dissipate depending on situational features.

Opening. The pattern of opening refers to a process in which academics shape their professional identity by reformulating the relationship between seeming opposites so that they are no longer pitted against one another: what can be conceptualized as a more-than approach. The opening pattern was not exclusive to any particular figuring relation and often resulted in more oppositional effects. Instead of trying to resolve ambiguities or contradictions, academics enacting an opening pattern were comfortable in living with, and sometimes even amplifying, oppositional effects.

The opening pattern was used by Ulysses to address contradictions established by connecting relations. Ulysses, like Andrew, worked in a discipline that requires a substantial library. While he aimed to collect “an extensive library like Andrew’s” he was confronted with the flexing office design. Instead of campaigning for more space before the move or “squatting” the office space (Elsbach, 2003) by claiming space with his books, Ulysses started collecting digital books and became known in his group for his digital book collection. By investing in a digital format of books, Ulysses was able to build himself a substantial digital library. This action blended his need for an extensive library with the constraints of the flexing office design.

The opening pattern was also used by Christopher to address oppositions established by resembling relations. During an early interview, Christopher explained he has

Always been closer to the practice side. That’s also what I enjoy most about research now is having these interactions with companies and their problems and raising it one level higher to an academically interesting problem.

In this statement, Christopher draws on the imagery associated with the “traditional professor,” to distinguish himself from “mobile consultants” making new space for the innovative academic figuration. This distinction, however, begins to deteriorate at a meeting with his colleagues in which they discuss how to make their work relevant to the industry. During the meeting, a Ph.D. student asked what distinguishes them as academics from consultants. One of Christopher’s colleagues answered

Management consultants...have small pockets of knowledge, and there is no interpretation...We then, you know, connect the different pockets of knowledge that management consultants are developing to add value.

Christopher interjected “I think that that’s a stereotype of what management consultants are doing because they are theorizing.” With this statement, Christopher
dissolved the boundary between innovative academics and mobile consultants that he earlier established as he holds multiple understandings of what knowledge professionals do. Later, this leaves him with an ambiguous understanding of his work that he expresses to his colleagues saying

_There is this constant tension between the extreme of solving one problem, and on the other extreme is theorizing about how to explain the world. Somewhere in between is where we get stuck. This is the feeling I have._

The opening pattern was also used to address tensions established by corresponding relations. Before moving into the renovated office, Fredrick described his purpose as an academic to “make sense of things in a nice way, develop new language, new jargon, and develop nice things sometimes coming up with ideas.” With this purpose, he explained that his “daily concerns…are publications.” After the move, however, Fredrick was more concerned with how the office design with a locked door and “use of jargon” excluded others and made academics more “exclusive” something he renders as contradictory because academics are “supposed to serve society.” With such a realization, his new aim was to “write fewer papers” in order to “potentially make more impact” by “translating ideas more into something close to practice.” In addition, one way he dealt with the locked door was to use social media to connect with people outside of the university.

In these three instances, academics were opening to new material-semiotic configurations of digital books, allying with competing professions, as well as in the process shifting the purpose of their work. In this manner, the opening patterns allow for and indeed enables identity transformations. Yet, at the same time, it is often also experienced as troubling by the professionals involved, as they actively need to work through the oppositions, and doing so challenges established orders and root identity images.

### 3.6 Discussion and Conclusion

Starting from the position that materiality is embedded in processes of identity work and operates as more than just an additional semiotic (Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009), we studied how professional identity is enacted, assembled, and conjured up in the context of an open-plan flexible work office redesign for business school academics. We examined (1) what relations, more than opposition, constitute professional identity, (2) how materiality operates more than an additional semiotic, and (3) how a professional can inhabit more than one identity at any one time. By borrowing the concept of figurations from feminist material-semiotician Donna Haraway (2004), we were able to address these questions and conceptualize relations, entities, and figurations as “more than”; as inherently configured and transfigured through materiality.

By developing this approach and through our empirical study of figurations, we believe we make three significant contributions to existing research on identity work. First, the concept of figurations helps us attend to relations beyond opposition. Opposition has been the dominant relation that identity literature examines in general, and with such a focus occupational and professional identity is simply rendered as defining and distinguishing “who I am” from “who I am not” (Nelson and Irwin, 2013). The focus on opposition eclipses many of the other relations that are at play in the constitution of professional identity. More recently, Ashcraft (2013) suggested that scholars should encompass additional relations through association when studying identity, arguing that “who I am” is defined by “what I do” and with “whom I do it.” We extend Ashcraft’s (2013) work by establishing a tropology of associative relations: connection, resemblance, and correspondence. In doing so, we also extend the definition of identity of “who I am” to “what I do” and with “whom and what I do it.” This allows us to build a relational “more-than-human” approach as identity is enacted through more than just oppositional relations and with more than just human “others.”

Second, the concept of figurations help us render materiality as more than a se-
miotic resource that individuals can use to present themselves in a particular way. Our findings build on previous research suggesting that material-semiotic things operate in a variety of ways—symbolically, instrumentally, aesthetically—when co-constituting professional identities (Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004). By tracing the relations that figure professional identities through interactions, we were able to render material-semiotic entities operating as embodied extensions (Hayles, 1999), analogical resources, and ventriloquizing actors that animate individuals in particular ways (Cooren et al., 2013). Thus, through different relations, material-semiotic things figure professional identities while they are simultaneously being figured themselves. Figurations, then, get at a more-than-human performative perspective of identity and associated processes of identity work.

Third, the concept of figurations captures the performative and processual nature of professional identity in a way that highlights how difference is produced through connections rather than through distinction, where figurations “stress transition, interconnectedness, interaction, and border-crossing, as opposed to individuation and distinction” (Timeto, 2011: 160). Expanding on performative models (Butler, 1993), figurations render professional identity as enacted with contextually specific configurations of heterogeneous characters, becoming with one another in which each enactment is “another next first time” (Garfinkel, 2002). As a figuration “never exists in isolation; it is always enacted as part of something larger than itself” (Nielsen, 2015: 15), we demonstrate how figurations can come to be configured with other figurations triggering moments of contestation—irony, ambiguity, and tension—that put boundaries in tension requiring engagement rather than distancing. With such an understanding of identity, the image of a struggler “fighting through a jungle of contradictions,” or a surfer who is “put into motion without much friction” (Alvesson, 2010: 8; 11) does not suffice. In keeping with Alvesson’s alliterative imagery, we suggest an image of a symphony; “a composition of different elements” (OED) performing with one another that plays out with both consonance and dissonance.

To conclude, in our process of asking “more than” about the role of materiality in identity work we put forward the concept of professional identity figurations. Such a concept incorporates a relational, decentered, and more-than-human performative view of identity work, which is a clear contribution given repeated calls to incorporate materiality in identity research (Bardon et al., 2012), to study identity work from a relational perspective (Paring et al., 2017), and a broader request across the management and organizational literature to examine “the generative manner...that experiences and objects are constituted in dialectical relationship to one another” (Mumby, 2011: 3). We suggest such an approach is important also beyond identity work scholarship because by attending to others, figurations have a political dimension. As heterogeneous characters “become together,” attention to others have implications for what we do, whom we become, and how we organize. This is one practical implication to consider when organizing as well as a fruitful domain for future research. In addition, and besides its potential, this perspective needs to be further unpacked especially in relation to identity regulation, workplace tensions, as well as be put to use in a way as many feminist scholars do: to put forth imagined futures.
CHAPTER 4

RESISTANCE IS IN THE RHYTHMS: FRAMING RADICAL STRATEGIC CHANGE AND INCORPORATING SPATIOTEMPORAL STRUCTURES
ABSTRACT

The success of strategic organizational changes are critical for an organization’s survival, and as a result scholars from diverse traditions have examined how leaders can persuade and influence followers’ understandings to accept a change. These diverse approaches have left leaders with a surfeit of guidelines for directing change, sometimes with inconclusive or contradictory advice. By taking a strong process approach, we show what is seemingly contradictory can be complementary if viewed over time. Drawing on a case study of strategic change targeting a research group’s identity, we demonstrate how strategic change is an ongoing, recursive process of leader and stakeholder cognitive, emotional and embodied sensemaking involving an ongoing renegotiation of the change and what it means for everyone involved. Furthermore, by attending to the very embodied aspects of sensemaking and sensegiving during strategic change, we identify a crucial challenge towards the implementation of a strategic change; namely, the degree to which employees can sync the rhythms inherent to the planned change with the rhythms of their everyday lives. We discuss the significance of this finding and draw out implications for further theorizing and research.

Keywords: Strategic change, sensemaking, sensegiving, framing, embodiment, spatiotemporal structures, rhythms

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Management scholars have long recognized that in order for organizations to endure, they occasionally need to enact radical strategic changes (Haveman, 1992), or major shifts consciously initiated by top managers that substantially break from existing priorities and goals (Dutton and Dunford, 1987; Gioia et al., 1994). As change of this magnitude is often infused with uncertainty and ambiguity (Welick, 1995), a primary concern of managers overseeing strategic change is not only its implementation but how organizational stakeholders perceive and understand it (Fiss and Zajac, 2006; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). Prior literature suggests that in order for strategic change to be successful the meanings related to the goals and priorities of the organization need to be aligned (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Shamir et al., 1994), and asserts that leaders need to engage in communicative activities to win the hearts (Huy, 2002) and minds (Bartunek, 1984) of followers (Quigley, 1994: 37). Leaders who are unsuccessful in directing how organizational stakeholders make sense of change can be confronted with change resistance (Kaplan, 2008; Kiefer, 2005) or rejection (Kellogg, 2009), which ultimately can lead to the failure of change projects (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Nutt, 1999).

Scholars from various traditions have examined how leaders can persuade and influence followers’ understandings to accept a change as envisioned by top management (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; van Knippenberg and Stam, 2014). There are two dominant streams of literature that do this, but given distinct variations in ontological and epistemological commitments, their findings are often contradictory and sometimes incommensurable (Scherer, 1998). The first, vision communication, is situated in the organizational behavior tradition (Baum et al., 1998; Kirkpatrick and Lock, 1996). Authors writing from this perspective assume that they can objectively capture causal relations between what a leader says and the degree to which followers accept their vision (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999; Holladay and Coombs, 1994; Howell and Frost, 1989; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996; Shamir et al., 1994; Stam et al., 2014, Venus et al., 2018). Researchers contributing to this literature tend to examine the content and articulation of a vision through communicative acts with the purpose of putting forth a generalizable theory of vision communication (van Knippenburg and Stam, 2014). The second stream of literature, sensemaking, is situated in the constructionist organizational theory tradition. From this perspective, authors assume that the world is actively constructed through interaction, and as a result, their purpose is to understand how sensemaking and sensegiving operate as processes. With this assumption, sensemaking researchers recognize the limits of a manager’s role in
RESISTANCE IS IN THE RHYTHMS

4.2 A REVIEW OF THE CONUNDRUMS FROM STRATEGIC CHANGE LITERATURE

Change and continuity

The first conundrum infused in strategic change literature is whether leaders should emphasize change or continuity when framing strategic change. Both sides to this debate are situated in leader communication literature and draw on social identity theory to explain what leaders should communicate in the face of change. Fiol (2002), on the one hand, contends that leaders “need to break down prior attachments” by emphasizing a previously held identity “no longer works” in order for “new definitions of self” to emerge allowing “ruptures in followers’ beliefs to occur” and “a sense of belonging to the new view of self” to grow. Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991).

The literature offers a surfeit of guidelines for how leaders should direct strategic change because of the different theoretical perspectives and camps situated inside them. They offer often contradictory guidelines yet “hold the potential for complementary insights” (Müller and Kunisch, 2018: 458). Some of the contradictions include (1) whether top managers should communicate a message of change (Fiol, 2002) or continuity (Chreim, 2002; Venus et al., 2018), (2) whether it is the speeches delivered by top managers (Stam et al., 2014) or the informal interactions that occur in their absence (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) that are most influential in directing change, (3) whether top managers’ messages should be ambiguous (Gioia et al., 2012) or clear (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Baum et al., 1998; Griffin et al., 2010), and (4) whether top managers’ messages should be abstract (Berson et al., 2016) or concrete (Carton, 2018). Due to the amassing and contradictory findings, we have yet to understand how strategic change can be successfully implemented. Thus, the purpose of this research is not intended to merely add to this fecundity of “what leaders should do,” but to address the existing contradictions embedded in the literature.

We argue that these conundrums cannot be resolved with something so simplistic as an either/or approach (Seo et al., 2004). Instead, we advance the perspective of strategic change as a strong non-linear process negotiated by leaders and other stakeholders that requires both change and continuity, concreteness and abstraction, clarity and ambiguity at different moments in time and depending on the context. In addition, we argue that the sensemaking and sensegiving processes of strategic change are cognitive, emotional and embodied. In making these arguments and demonstrating them empirically, we make two primary contributions. First, we address calls in the strategic change literature to examine strategic change conundrums specifically by showing how contradictory pairs such as change and continuity can be “managed to enhance the likelihood of successfully realizing strategic change” (Müller and Kunisch, 2018: 473). Second, we address calls in sensemaking literature to pay “closer attention to embodied sensemaking” (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015: S26) and unpack a prominent obstacle to strategic change acceptance that only became visible when attending to the change from a strong process perspective that engages the embodied experiences and reactions of leaders and employees involved in a strategic change. In order to make these contributions, we first outline these conundrums in greater detail. We then describe our case, how we collected our data, and the iterative and abductive sets of analyses that we employed to make sense of our data. After laying out how we conducted our analyses, we present our findings that present the processes at work as the strategic change unfolded. After showcasing our findings, we put forward a process model of sensemaking and sensegiving, explain why it is important for strategic change research and put forward suggestions for future research.
cause a sensemaking perspective asserts that change is an open-ended process that unfolds in contextually specific ways (Balogun and Hope-Hailey, 2003), it asserts that change is not episodic or predictable and as a result at some moments leaders should emphasize the continuity of the organization and at others they should highlight its transformation. Thus, from a sensemaking perspective, change and continuity should not be understood as a contradiction, but rather as an interplay.

Direction and type

As we explicate above, a sensemaking perspective to strategic change departs significantly from a vision communication perspective. From a vision communication perspective, strategic change is generally understood as a top-down action in which leaders are responsible for enrolling followers to align with their vision (Stam et al., 2014). With such an assumption, the literature focuses on what leaders say, and how leaders say it. Authors writing from a sensemaking perspective, on the other hand, examine how various actors engage in strategic framing, or “purposeful communication efforts…in shaping the frames of interpretation of others in an organization, so that they collectively accept and support a change” (Cornelissen and Werner, 2014: 198) and the sequence of sensemaking and sensegiving through communicative activities with one another (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Even though a sensegiving and sensemaking perspective treats strategic change as unfolding and unpredictable, the literature has been critiqued for rendering it as a top-down cognitive linear process of equivocality reduction (Mills, 2002). In response, researchers have expanded the sensegiving perspective in three critical ways.

First, researchers have unpacked how sensemaking also entails non-volitional processes. Initially this meant explicating how emotions influence cognitive sensemaking, but research has amended this perspective by arguing that emotions are not just a byproduct or a mediator of sensemaking (Bartunek, 2006; Huy,
With the conclusion that managers need to facilitate recipient sensemaking as opposed to imposing their visions, the literature offers two contradictory pieces of advice. The first suggests that when directing a radical strategic change “an ambiguous vision can help to launch the change effort” (Gioia et al., 2012: 265). From this perspective, ambiguity, a vagueness that fosters multiple possible meanings, is assumed to foster change support because it is inclusionary, avoids conflict, and can trigger a bandwagon effect (Gioia et al., 2012: 365). In contrast, the second argues that when facilitating radical strategic change, leaders are better off communicating clear purposes around the change (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) because ambiguity can result in employees feeling distrust or manipulated due to a lack of clarity (McCabe, 2010), or can backfire when there are too many interpretations resulting in conflict. While both of these approaches argue leaders should approach strategic change in a way that affords employee sensemaking, they offer contradictory suggestions and lock leaders into yet another damning double-bind dilemma. Should they offer clear or ambiguous vision frames in moments of radical strategic change?

**Abstract and concrete**

In addition to the ambiguity and clarity conundrum, scholars debate whether leaders should direct strategic change in abstract or concrete ways. Those taking a vision communication perspective argue that in order for a change to be successful, a leader needs to offer an abstract, or “general idea” rather than a “specific achievement” in order to ensure that it will endure rather than be accomplished and discarded (Locke, 1991: 51). Recent research, however, has suggested that leader visions should be both abstract and concrete because employees need both abstractly defined aspirations to find meaning in their work, and concreteness in order to root these aspirations to their everyday lives (Carton, 2018). To offer both abstract and concrete visions, these authors argue leaders should employ embodied constructs because they concretize abstract ideas, and motivate action more
effectively than abstract constructs. Embodied constructs allow individuals to grasp broad, lofty aims by making them proximal and accessible to their mundane reality (Carton, 2018; Harquail and King, 2010). Subsequently, embodied knowledge and change initiatives need to be aligned; if not they will likely be rejected (Harquail and King, 2010: 1635).

Unfortunately, however, we know very little about how embodied constructs impact strategic change. Indeed, most analyses of strategic change are analytical and cognitive in nature, abstracting out change processes from the embodied flux of experiences of those who are undergoing the change. As a result, embodied sensemaking is generally ignored in strategic change research even though it is crucial to “the ways people generate what they interpret” (Weick, 1995: 13). Attending to embodied sensemaking to a much greater extent than previous research may, therefore, be the key to navigating change and preventing failure.

4.3 METHODS

Research setting

In order to answer these questions, we studied a research group, STAR, situated at a business school located at a university in the Netherlands. This research group emerged when Lenore agreed with her department head that it would be best for her research group to split forming their own department. Beginning with just thirteen researchers, STAR grew rapidly, nearly three times its size in just two years. While the growth of the group denotes their success in attracting students, researchers, funding, and producing publications, accelerated expectations of excellence and competition directed Lenore to attend to her department’s identity and strategically position it.

In this study, we focus on how Lenore used a renovation to the university’s physical environment as an opportunity to support a strategic change targeting the department’s identity. Specifically, the board of trustees at the university decided to renovate the university’s building and implement flexible open-plan offices for academic and support staff; a change that would both disrupt existing routines and traditional academic symbols (Baldry and Barnes, 2012). By flexible open-plan offices, we are referring to an office arrangement in which no academic would be allocated a desk and scholarly and personal artifacts were prohibited due to a clean desk policy. In addition, many of the “workstations” that academics could work at were located in an open space. This office arrangement, designed originally for the industry, allowed Lenore to blend the dominant frame of “traditional academics” to “innovative academics” as the office design embodies traits and expectations affiliated with commercial firms.

Data collection

Our data consists of three different types: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) written and electronic documentation, and (3) participant observations. Each of these sources are useful in providing evidence of different aspects of STAR’s group identity transformation. For example, STAR’s meeting minutes provided a chronology of STAR’s history including the decisions made by Lenore over time, while PowerPoint presentations and emails provide an overview of the strategies and modes of communicating these strategies from Lenore. Interviews provided details of STAR member’s sensemaking, and how it changed over time. Our participant observations were an opportunity to further understand STAR’s identity by seeing how it influenced embodied sensemaking and organizational practices.

Semi-structured interviews. We conducted thirty interviews with STAR members over three phases that we determined before beginning the study: before moving into a renovated office, just after moving into a renovated office, and a year and a half after moving into the renovated offices. These interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to an hour and forty-five minutes, most lasting an hour. An overview of our interviews whose names are pseudonyms can be found in Ta-
ble 4.1. During the interviews, STAR members were asked to describe their office environment, their work history, their tasks, how they conduct their tasks, how they think of themselves as professionals and as STAR members, how they define STAR, and what they expect in their future. These interviews were conducted in STAR’s offices, and the interviews began with a tour of their office space in order to capture how they made sense of their workspace in their own words.

The first type of archival material we collected was the meeting minutes of fifty-three different departmental meetings. These documents originated from two years before STAR left the larger department and spanned to 2017. These documents helped us trace the formation of the group; decisions made by the group; celebrations, surprises, or concerns of the group; fluctuations in the composition of the group (employees); and the orientation of the group. The second type of documents we collected were 140 emails sent by Lenore to her group. These emails are important because as Lenore explains herself, it is her primary way of communicating with the group and she does so frequently. The third type of documents we collected were four PowerPoints directing this strategic change. By referring to these PowerPoints, we were able to see how Lenore presented the change to her group. Table 4.2 provides an overview of these data.

### Table 4.1 Overview of Semi-Structured Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lenore</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcie</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.2 Overview Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting minutes</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails sent to STAR group from Lenore</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoints of strategic change</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant observations.** Across the phases, the first author was immersed in the group conducting participant observations. Over the one hundred and seventeen hours within STAR’s offices, the first author recorded how STAR members did their work, interacted, and what they said to one another. She wrote extensive field notes of her days that she was in the field; recording activities, behaviors, and emotions first hand as they played out. An overview of the observational data can be found in Table 4.3. These observations ranged from just sitting in the office, to meetings, to reading groups, department meetings, and other events.
### TABLE 4.3 OVERVIEW FIELD NOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-09-24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2015-03-13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-11-07</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2015-04-01</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-12-12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2015-06-23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-01-13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2015-06-26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-01-16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2015-11-17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-01-21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2016-05-09</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-02-16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2016-05-10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-02-17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2016-05-13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-02-18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2016-07-11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-02-19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2016-07-12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-02-20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2016-07-13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-02-27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2016-07-14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-03-06</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>117 hours total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis

In order to build theory (Charmaz, 2006) with qualitative rigor, we relied on Gioia’s systematic approach for concept development (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Although this approach is intended for inductive inquiry, ours was abductive (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007) because we were primed to look for the conundrums we presented above while remaining open to important issues that emerged during analysis. As a result, such an approach led us to unexpected findings (Agar, 2010). We began our analysis by familiarizing ourselves with the data in which we read through interviews, documents, and field notes many times over. After reading the material, the first author began to identify first-order concepts, or concepts or phrases in the language of the informants (Van Maanen, 1979). An overview of these codes can be found in Figure 4.1.

After identifying these first-order codes, the first author began to compare the codes and organize them in order to reduce them to manageable phrasal descriptions or second order themes (Gioia et al., 2012). She did this by going back and forth between the data and theoretical work on strategic framing in order to address the change-continuity, abstract-concrete, and ambiguous-clear conundrums. In doing so, she confronted an “unmet expectation” (Van Maanen et al., 2007: 1149), specifically how and what stimulated resistance to change. This unmet expectation helped her organize the data resulting in patterns that indexed specific processes of strategic change. Given these emergent patterns, the first author was able to organize these categories into aggregate dimensions and construct a data structure.

Since scientific reasoning is “a social process that takes place in dialogue among members of a scientific community, as opposed to being an intraindividual cognitive activity” (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010: 317), the second and third authors probed and challenged the first author’s interpretations as a means to ensure we offer the best explanation (Lipton, 2004). They relied on pragmatic virtues for criteria; namely, interestingness, usefulness, and plausibility (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010). As a result, we put forward a best explanation rather than “a final, authoritative and exclusive interpretation” (Clegg et al., 2012).

Three of our second order codes required us to conduct two additional analyses to ensure our best explanation. First, because we wanted to understand how Lenore communicated the sense she had made of the change and the degree to which fellow STAR members accepted it, we needed to examine the frames she was sharing and the content of those frames. In order to identify the frames being shared and shaped, we relied on frame analysis (Creed, Langstraat, and Scully, 2002; Goffman, 1974). Frame analysis involves the identification and organization of frames with a matrix that generally includes: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, visual images, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle. In doing so, we identified seven dominant frames, five of which Lenore emphasized with the strategic change: team members, innovative academics, elite researchers, consultants, socialites, public servants, and parents. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the frames.
FIGURE 4.1 DATA STRUCTURE STAR’S STRATEGIC CHANGE

- Relatively large group of scholars
- Unclear focus re external world
- Wrong label
- If you talk to lay people they think we don’t help people in society at all
- How do we jump on these new developments [trends in academia]?
- How can we make our research more impactful?
- Less first stream funding research
- Collaboration with other research groups
- Create a buzz that we are embedded in the field... we promised valorization
- Need to find a synergy and/or restructure existing ‘structure’ of our identity
- We do not want to change the ‘brand’ but it does not represent what we do.
- Innovation brings together our (present and future) expertise
- We have this long table for sitting, drinking coffee, talking research.
- We have to experiment in new seats everyday
- It looks a lot like a natural science lab
- We always stick here... it’s always fun.
- The people [in STAR] are very sweet. They’re very nice and they help each other
- I really like to go to the university now
- Lenore is making a joke and reminding us of what is expected
- We like to explore things and think out loud. We have to experiment.
- It’s so nice because people are here in the evening; you can work with them.
- We push ourselves... we push each other, we push our students. That’s common.
- Everyone is very active and ambitious... at least three new initiatives popped up.
- There are days that I’m here... it’s just meeting, meeting, meeting.
- I’m working more and that’s sort of almost beyond the max that you can do.
- I like it so much, it feels like a consultancy
- Sometimes I just feel guilty that I didn’t do anything in the weekend.
- Things sort of speed up it’s really difficult to also keep up
- I had to stop... there’s no way to do this on a less intensive level
- All these different balls in the air, at the same time
- STAR is a bit chaos. It is all over the place, but chaos can lead to innovation
- For a while we did not have STAR Talks... PhDs are very busy with their theses
- There has been a change in reading groups... faculty stays out... unless of interest

Identity incoherence
Shifting external perceptions
Structural changes
Keying of group identity
Incarnating meanings in material artifacts
Activating emotions
Prototyping behaviours
Syncing rhythms
Turning emotions
Discursifying embodied interpretations
Keying

Triggers for strategic change
Strategic Framing Processes
Employee sensemaking and sensegiving
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.4 STAR’S PERVERSIVE FRAMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teammates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors (rhetorical devices to highlight characteristics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplars (representative events/people of the past/present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catchphrases (slogans and statements summarizing frame)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depictions (characterizations of subjects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Images (icons and visual images core of the frame)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roots (explanation of the causes underlying the events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences (effects of different policies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeals to principle (general precepts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatiotemporal structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second, we found that moments in which STAR members keyed the leader’s frame had little to do with discrepancies of meaning, but rather moments of discomfort related to their embodied rhythms. This was an emergent, unexpected, and inductive finding, and required us to draw on relevant literature to make sense of it (Charmaz, 2006). Orlikowski and Yates’ (2002) work on temporal structures and Lefebvre’s (2004) work on rhythms offered appropriate conceptual tools to make sense of how STAR members as individuals sensed, felt, and voiced the rhythms of their lives when confronting these imposed spatiotemporal structures.

Specifically, the concept of spatiotemporal structures refers to socially shared “templates for the timing and rhythm of members’ social action” (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002: 685). Such a concept gave us explanatory power to explain how different frames were attached to various spatiotemporal templates. We took this concept into consideration with our data and first coded for any spatiotemporal structure that we observed in our data. This included structures related to the university as an institution (e.g. the academic calendar), the career trajectory of the academic profession (e.g. the tenure, professor chair process), the broader spatiotemporal structures of society (e.g., forty hour weeks, work 5 days per week, hours of 9-5, holidays), the family (e.g. pick up from school/daycare), embodied rhythms (e.g., eat, sleep, exercise) or of projects (e.g. revision deadlines).

We then went back to our data and looked for shared spatiotemporal structures associated with particular frames. We found a number of spatiotemporal structures associated with each frame, which we then added to our frame analysis matrix, which can be found in Table 4.4. Examples of the spatiotemporal structures can be found in Table 4.5.

### TABLE 4.5 SPATIOTEMPORAL STRUCTURES OF FRAMES AS REPORTED BY STAR MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Temporal Structure</th>
<th>Exemplary quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teammates</td>
<td>Meetings (Mondays and Thursdays)</td>
<td>“When I came to work here I remember that the head of department said to me, I don’t mind where you work as long as you’re here for your teaching and as long you try to be here on Monday and Thursday… because otherwise the whole community feeling gets lost and we don’t speak to each other anymore. So that’s something that she indicated when I started to work” — Interview, Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The group is supportive. I have a paper, it’s the last round, very important, and I can ask for a friendly review. And I know that takes a second, at least sometimes hours. And I know that the person is squeezed with many other projects, but then would spend time and do that. I am teaching the course, I need some more hands-on deck in the lecture or whatever. It’s not that difficult to find someone to help you and support, so you are not left on your own” — Interview, Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>Work long hours, weekends</td>
<td>“I usually feel obligated to work in the weekend because that’s what people do (laughs) you know. That’s what they all do. One of my colleagues, she even goes here in the weekend just to work all day. And then I try to work at least one or two hours in the weekend” — Interview, Iris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>Conference deadlines</td>
<td>“Academia, in general, has a temporal structure that is very standard. So in that sense yeah there are certain conferences with deadlines, they don’t change” — Interview, Darcie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovators</td>
<td>Bi-weekly incubator meeting</td>
<td>“We have our incubators, which is usually on Thursdays at noon, where somebody sends a paper around, and we all read, or at least browse some of it before we come to the session and then just focus feedback to that person. That is sort of the intellectual meeting point for us. It’s usually weekly or bi-weekly or something” — Interview, Donna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.4 FINDINGS

The implementation of a new group identity as a strategic change involved a number of non-linear processes. These processes included leader sensemaking, leader’s sensegiving, employee sensemaking, and, finally, employee sensegiving in which individual employees then reframed the new group identity. These processes are often simultaneous, but we begin with STAR’s early identity frame and the sensemaking that Lenore engaged in when she commenced the strategic change.

**STAR’s early identity frame**

STAR had a distinct identity since its formation. From the outset, Lenore, STAR’s department head, drew on the metaphor of a team in order to differentiate the group from other academic departments as well as use it to set expectations for how STAR members should work and relate to one another. In an interview, she explained “you know typically people are doing things on their own...Instead, I based my model on the natural sciences in which labs are successful because of the team. So I copied that in my group now.” Lenore’s initial image of the group, of a collaborative team of researchers as opposed to a fragmented group of solitary academics exemplified by other departments within her faculty, was widely embraced by STAR members. She was able to build a research group committed to teamwork by first, during recruitment, making it clear to candidates that the group works in teams. Consequently, STAR attracted people who liked the idea of working in teams. Joseph, a senior academic who Lenore considered to be “a very good scholar with promising research” and someone who she “always wanted to be a part of my group,” explained that one of the reasons why he chose to join STAR finally was the fact that Lenore made it “very clear that she wanted to have a group that was collaborative and that was also one of the reasons to join here.”

In addition to attracting collaborative academics, the notion of a team was, sec-
ond, a point of selection criteria. That is, Lenore would not hire even exceptional candidates if they were unwilling to work in teams. Lenore told a group of visiting researchers that even if exceptional academics want to work at STAR “we do not hire these people if they’re too much focused on their own trajectory.” To formalize this team orientation even more, Lenore structured the group into teams. She explains “when a new Ph.D. student enters the group we create, we create a new supervising team.” Lenore used the metaphor of a team to differentiate STAR from other academics, guide STAR members’ sensemaking, and structure their work. In doing so, she established a group that valued teamwork and collaboration to the degree that a senior STAR member, Darcie, argues that STAR members put “collaboration as the first priority in your mind and in your ways of doing over anything else.”

**Triggering strategic change**

In 2014, Lenore identified what she presented as three “opportunities/threats” that motivated her to modify STAR’s identity. To communicate these opportunities and threats, she first structured her ideas with a PowerPoint that she attached to an email and sent to the whole group. In the PowerPoint, Lenore signaled the group need to address: structural changes implemented by the government as to how research was to be funded, STAR’s identity incoherence resulting from significant growth of the group, and perceived external attitudes of academia and STAR. This culmination of forces motivated Lenore to transform STAR’s group identity actively.

Structural changes. Surmounting changes to the funding of academic research signaled to Lenore that she needed to make changes to the group’s identity to ensure STAR would remain financially solvent. These changes included: (1) the reduction of “first stream funding” or funding directly from the university, which Lenore indicated in her PowerPoint would require the group to put “more focus on external funding (EU/NWO grants, and industry money by means of consortia);” (2) the requirement made by government granting agencies for applicants to collaborate with other research institutions and industry partners; and (3) the requirement made by government grant agencies for applicants to valorize knowledge, or to make societal impact by offering a way to utilize academic knowledge.

To appeal to corporate partners, attract other academic collaborators, and satisfy funding bodies’ expectations of collaboration and valorization, Lenore recognized that STAR needed to be known for having the interests of practitioners at heart as well as being top researchers in their field. Thus, sorting out what she perceived as an incoherent research group identity as well as aligning with external demands were guiding factors in rekeying STAR’s identity.

Identity incoherence. In just two years, STAR had tripled its numbers in academic staff. This growth included staff from different institutional backgrounds and disciplines, as well as genders, nationalities, and ages. Lenore identified STAR’s heterogeneity in terms of research interests as a potential problem. In her PowerPoint, she pointed out that the group has an “unclear focus” and that “the brand STAR does not represent what we do.” This was confirmed by Felix, one of STAR’s top new hires, who explained that when looking for a new position, STAR was “not on my radar...it’s actually the wrong label.” It was “only when Joseph mentioned it then I found...that I should look into it.”

Instead of directing STAR members to shift their specializations, or to embrace a foreign notion of who they are as a group, Lenore used STAR’s heterogeneity as a descriptor of that which unifies them. At a meeting with visitors present, Lenore explained that STAR is “a very multidisciplinary group” which fosters innovation because each project is addressed by “a new constellation of people...we try to get an engineer in there, and a social scientist, and an anthropologist, or what have you, and then we create a new spores of creativity and innovation” Lenore’s framing of innovation as an outcome derived by a mixture of people from different perspectives allowed her to shift STAR’s identity to a group that is not only experts in innovation but are innovative themselves.
External attitudes of academia. On top of the structural changes and identity incoherence resulting from an influx of personnel, Lenore was perceptive of the changing attitudes of academics and academia. For example, she explained that managers at the university were concerned with “economic” choices when it came to the office renovation while parties outside the university, like the consulting architect, saw academic work as one that also could embrace new ways of working—the concept behind the design.

Adjacent to the physical changes to the office and its rationale, Lenore further reflected on the changing expectations of what a university is, what it does, and how it should be managed. She acknowledged that she would have to ensure STAR appealed to a wide range of external organizations as well as funding bodies in order to keep the group financially afloat. One particular group Lenore wanted to appeal to was practitioners. She explained at a STAR reading group meeting that “if you talk to lay people about it [our work] we do not help society at all. We just, you know, create concepts and then our colleagues at other universities might read our papers if we are lucky, but that’s the only audience we have... I reflected on our group, and then I was really thinking of seriously is that we have this really nice group, but we miss, we do not make a complete circle [by giving back and sharing knowledge with practitioners].” Lenore tried to orient STAR as a research group that does not just “study from a distance,” but rather one that makes contributions beyond the scope of just creating concepts and theories and “actually help” them. To do this, she aligned STAR closer to commercial firms describing the group as engaging in “embedded research” defined on the department’s website as “research in close collaboration with industry partners and the emphasis on discussing research.” By emphasizing the group’s proximity to industry, Lenore simultaneously distanced her group’s identity from notions of traditional academics.

Strategic framing processes

Lenore engaged in four strategic framing tactics in order to offer a reframed group identity: keying, incarnating, activating and prototyping. These activities are demonstrated in Table 4.6. Each of these activities aided Lenore in gaining change support by laying and laminating new frames onto old frames and embedding the frames into embodied practices with material things resulting in STAR’s new group identity as innovative academics.
### TABLE 4.6 STRATEGIC FRAMING TACTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Tactic</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Mechanism in play</th>
<th>Examples from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keying</strong></td>
<td>A communicative process wherein existing frames that are already meaningful come to be understood as something quite different by drawing on alternative frames to interpret a particular activity, and in doing so repeatedly become laminated, or layered and imbricated with additional meanings transforming the existing frame.</td>
<td>Through repeated interaction, multiple interpretations layer upon one another laminating into a new frame.</td>
<td>Layer 1: Teammates: “One of the most important things, of the STAR group is we have a team focus. That means work is always done in teams. There's no researcher of all the 30 researchers who works on his own or her own” - Observation, Lenore Layer 2: Top researchers: “Also what we do is we are reaching for the top. We work very hard. We aim for the top. We aim for the best journals” - Observation, Lenore Layer 3: Innovators: “This is a lab...people are always there, and they collaborate a lot which is completely different than the business environment because as you know and most people also know, you mostly work on your own...In our case we do not have a lab, but our labs are outside of the organizations” - Interview, Lenore Layer 4: Consultants: “We should make this a general rule in our group that every paper that we write that we need to end with practical implications...we should go full circle” - Observation, Lenore Layer 5: Socialites: “Stick around when people are drinking beer. I was there. I was always the last person leaving the party...you learn a lot from listening and seeing how they're doing it. It's important, it's the informal part. You need to be there” - Interview, Lenore Layer 6: Public servant: “I prefer those rooms [meeting rooms] not to be used for conversations with students anymore.” - Felix, reporting on announcement Layer 7: Parents: “Don’t go home because the kids, you know, need to get home from the school. It can also be your husband who goes home and gets the kids.” - Observation, Lenore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incarnating</strong></td>
<td>A communicative process in which leaders or managers infuse and anchor material things with symbolic relationships constituting material-symbols associated with their imagined frame.</td>
<td>Material things concretize and share a leader’s abstract frame, influence interpretations of other organizational members, and make change easier to digest.</td>
<td>Open: “We have an open office, which is also very helpful for, for our group, because we are so talkative, and we like to explore things and think out loud.” - Lenore during observation Collaborative: “There should be a long table there. There will be a long table where we can also sit and talk research.” - Lenore during observation Innovative: “We have to experiment. So no dedicated offices or permanent desks. Every morning, uh, people just find a desk and they sit with another person than they were sitting with the day before, and then you have different conversations and new ideas.” - Lenore during observation Social: And the drinking here on the floor, we never go to the bar anymore. We always stick here. And then we always stay quite long, because no one forces us to go. And that’s fun, it’s always fun. Yeah, it feels like, you know, family almost, that’s how it feels” - Interview, Lenore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Tactic</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Mechanism in play</td>
<td>Examples from data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Activating**   | A communicative process in which leaders or managers emote positive valence high activation affects (e.g. enthusiasm and excitement) in relation to their imagined frame. | Positive valence high activation affects transfer to organization members, instigating action and enhancing positive responses to the frames. | **Pride:** “Observation at Conference: STAR is well known! People asked how they can become part of the group (e.g. events). We need to be more open! We should bring people over to our group”<br>- Meeting minutes emailed to group  
**Enthusiasm:** “We are reaching, uh, for the, for the top, as I said. I want to be the world’s best group. Uh, which is nonsense of course, but it helps us, you know, to know where we’re going, and it, it helps to get this feeling going, like Yeah, yeah, yeah!”<br>- Verbatim statement Lenore, Observation  
**Excitement:** “I should tell you that I really like to go to the university now...Now, you know, I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone in the morning and yeah, it's really fun!”<br>- Lenore, Interview |
| **Prototyping**  | A communicative process in which leaders or managers demonstrate behaviors, traits, and attributes that they interpret as validating their imagined frame. | Embodied enactments demonstrating how to act converts abstract imagined frames to embodied constructs, increasing frame understanding and attractiveness. | **Demonstrating how to work as innovative academics:** “all other departments [must work on PCs] but we made an agreement with the help desk that we get our own laptops...”<br>- Observation  
**She grabs her bag and her laptop and goes to the next meeting she needs to attend.**<br>- Repeated observation  
**Demonstrating importance of trying new innovations:** “we now also have a social media platform where we share things...I read it in the New York Times, and then I was checking it, it was in the weekend, and ooh this is actually quite cool. I invited the people who I know like using that stuff.”<br>- Interview, Lenore  
“The group really wants to get on top of [innovation] that that’s why Lenore said well let’s get a 3D printer. Let’s see how it works. Maybe our students can do something with it”<br>- Interview, Junior academic 5  
“I was thinking that if we want to teach about startups that it would be nice to have our own startup”<br>- Observation, Lenore  
**Demonstrating how to collaborate as innovative academics:** STAR head sits in meeting room for three consecutive meetings with different PhD students. In one meeting they (herself, PhD student, an assistant, and associate professor) use a large screen to Skype with colleagues at another university.<br>- Observation, Lenore |
Keying. The first way that Lenore made and gave sense of STAR’s identity was through frame keying. Keying is defined as a communicative process wherein existing frames that are already meaningful come to be understood as something quite different by drawing on alternative frames to interpret a particular activity, and in doing so repeatedly become laminated, or layered and infused with additional meanings, transforming the existing frame. Lenore was adept in keying people’s frames. She started by stressing the enduring quality of the group: that they are a team. To enrich this frame and direct their identity to the future, Lenore emphasized how through teamwork, STAR could and would be innovative. She bolstered this frame by hiring faculty whose personal identity exuded innovation, thus orienting the group’s identity to innovation by their membership. By laminating the group as an innovative team, it became easy to attach three additional frames. For example, through their focus on innovation Lenore also suggested that STAR was an elite research group producing top publications. As elite innovators, she argued, they are also best equipped to consult organizations about the challenges they face, bringing in yet another frame. Finally, on top of all the teamwork and hard work, she argued that STAR is social because members liked working with one another—hence why they wanted to work at STAR in the first place—and because they needed to “play hard” to complement their hard work. The other two frames, public servant and parent, were very pervasive in how STAR members describe themselves but were not as pervasive in the group identity. Lenore demonstrated this intricate layering of frames during an introduction at a meeting with a group of visiting researchers explaining

One of the most important parts of our group, is that, is this team. And therefore we also have a lot of meetings. We call them, so stupid, we call them incubators (crowd laughs). The moment we have an idea we create an incubator session. That’s on Thursday afternoon. It’s organized around a theme or one of the papers in the group ...What we value a lot is that we are helpful towards each other. So if you have a paper, everyone knows that you’re working on this paper. When you read something, you think that’s relevant for this person; you send it out... So, a lot of advice, helping, support is happening in the group...How has STAR grown?

Incarnating. The second way that Lenore directed the strategic change was through incarnating: a communicative process in which managers infuse and anchor material things into symbolic relationships, making them material-symbols associated with a preferred frame. The renovation of the office environment offered an opportunistic moment for Lenore to anchor her preferred frame to material things, thus concretizing abstract frames as well as establish the boundaries of the new frames with objects found in the environment. This process involved entangling persuasive rhetoric with material things.

Some of the material–symbols perpetuated existing notions of STAR and allowed
her to build on what was already established. For example, Lenore explained at a
group meeting

We have an open office, which is also very helpful for our group because we are so
talkative, and we like to explore things and think, think out loud. That’s very helpful
for us. For us, we have to experiment. So no dedicated offices or permanent desks.
Every morning, people just find a desk and then they sit with another person than
they were sitting with the day before, and then you have different conversations
and different ideas.

Lenore linked the openness of the office to STAR being collaborative—a frame
that links teamwork. Also, she was able to frame the group as innovative by point-
ing to the flexible desk arrangement, one that signifies the group’s experimental
and innovative nature.

Lenore padded these metonymic relations with other rhetorical devices such
as metaphors to guide relating (STAR as a “team,” “family,” “a lab,” and “a top
group”); clichés to persuade STAR members of this imagery (“we’re team play-
ers,” “we work hard, we play hard,” “make mistakes” and “think big, act small,”);
as well using other groups as a negative identity or outgroup to make themselves
stand out positively. For example, during a department meeting just before STAR
moved into their renovated offices Lenore explained that “all other departments
[will work on desktop PCs], but we made an agreement with the help desk that
we get our own laptops.” Thus, while all other departments were offered desks
with clunky PCs, STAR members could move place to place with their MacBooks
tucked under their arms differentiating them from the rest of the faculty as mo-
bile, innovative, and elite.

Activating. The third way Lenore directed the strategic change was through acti-
vating; a communicative process in which managers emote positive valence high
activation affects (e.g. enthusiasm and excitement) in relation to their imagined
frame. In exuding these emotions to other STAR members, Lenore not only influ-
enced them to think positively about the keyed frames, but also animated them
to embrace the change. In the context of the renovated office, activating became
much easier for Lenore to enact because of the space’s openness. STAR mem-
bers could easily hear and see Lenore making it much easier for her emotions to
be contagious.

Lenore would activate STAR members in a number of ways. For example, Thurs-
day night drinks offered an opportunity for Lenore to have fun collectively with her
colleagues. Since the drinks were always in the pantry, an open space on the floor,
STAR members were attracted to the laughter and conversations coming from
down the hall. In addition, through enterprise social media, Lenore instigated an
entire channel to recognize accomplishments of the group intensifying pride in
the group. Lenore also made sure to interact with all STAR members on either
Monday or Thursday. By engaging in conversations with them regarding their re-
search projects and their lives, she was able to generate enthusiasm about com-
ing to work and working together. In these ways, Lenore attached positive high
activation emotions to expected behavioral practices of STAR members.

Prototyping. The fourth way that Lenore made and gave sense of the new group
identity was through prototyping. Prototyping is a communicative process in
which managers demonstrate behaviors and embody traits and attributes that
they interpret as validating their imagined frame. The move into new offices was
an opportune moment to establish these behaviors because STAR members had
to get rid of most of their possessions (such as books and papers), acquire new
tools (such as a laptop and other communication technologies), and establish
new norms and routines given such a space. Nevertheless, demonstrating par-
ticular behaviors at the outset was important so that STAR members would not
merely import previously held routines as other academic groups did. By demon-
strating particular behaviors and traits, Lenore made it easier for STAR members
to understand what an abstract frame of innovative academics looked like in the
everyday enactment of their lives as well as increase the attractiveness of the
new frame.
The ways Lenore shared a set of behaviors that she saw suitable for her group was informal; she demonstrated how to behave in the space, used humor to critique STAR members wavering from how she thought the space should be used, and explicitly reprioritize undesirable norms set by other STAR members. For example, we observed her having conversations in the open space, razzing STAR members who worked the traditional nine to five, and vocalizing preferences of how the meeting rooms should be used for discussing research rather than hosting meetings with students. However, even though she prototyped behavior, she still left the way in which STAR members could work as open, arguing that an innovative group is diverse. Not only in terms of discipline, methods, and background, but also in how they work. Thus, even though she set these norms and some STAR members might follow her lead, others might work the standard nine to five.

**STAR members initial change acceptance**

At first, we found that STAR members embraced the proposed new identity for what it symbolized because it built on existing conceptions of the group, and simultaneously offered a direction for growth and improvement. Donna explains that the frames Lenore offered were “trendy sexy keywords” that were complemented by the trendy new office design, and as a result were able to help the group “level up” to meet the challenges they faced. Darcie adds to these sentiments saying “it’s very nice and inspirational because it feels like yes, we’re doing it. We’re getting somewhere. We’re building and developing ourselves into a good direction, becoming more internationally known as a group, and in that sense, I’m very proud of it.” Joseph explains STAR is “collaborative, and at this moment it’s also energetic. I feel that – especially with Lenore. She brings in a lot of energy with some others like Tara. There is a lot of things going on, new projects that are being acquired, being started.” Dan describes the group as “professional because we see that it’s all playing at a higher level than it used to be, which also has some interesting side effects, and it’s dynamic because there’s a lot of interaction and a lot of teamwork and people.”

The meanings and practices around the frames were infused with socially acceptable positive valued traits that energized individual STAR members and helped them embrace their new group identity. Thus, the strategic tactics employed by Lenore were very effective in fostering change acceptance. Over time, however, resistance to the change started to emerge through embodied means requiring STAR members to engage in processes of sensemaking and sensegiving to make sense of and respond to these embodied disturbances.

**STAR members individual sensemaking and sensegiving**

STAR members engaged in four different kinds of sensemaking and sensegiving processes: syncing, feeling, discursifying, and keying as demonstrated in Tables 4.7 and Table 4.8. These activities helped STAR members interpret what they were experiencing through embodied, emotional, and cognitive means and occurred sequentially.
### TABLE 4.7 EMBODIED, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE SENSEMAKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAR MEMBERS</th>
<th>Sensemaking</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Process in play</th>
<th>Examples from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syncing</td>
<td>An embodied sensemaking process wherein an individual attempts to incorporate and align existing embodied rhythms with emergent rhythms derived from proposed new spatiotemporal structures.</td>
<td>STAR members try to achieve eurhythmia by altering the spatial-temporal patterns of their work lives.</td>
<td>Euhrhythmia: “I was used to a family working long hours and working on the weekends...Paper deadlines and things, they don’t go in vacations. It just goes on. Yeah that’s a lifestyle we chose. On the other hand it also means that if the kids are off from school early and I think it’s a nice day, I can take them to the beach, I need to compensate for that, and that happens at night, or in the weekends” – Felix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arrhythmia: “I mean everybody will have their own perception of course. Other people may be very hectic...I do have the feeling that a lot of people, uh, that there is some, uh, I wouldn’t say tensions because it sounds too negative, but that we have to be aware of the risk of there being tension or something”- Dan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Typically I don’t see it as a burden, but there have been periods where it has been too much and especially when it’s teaching and when there’s deadlines for revisions, then you have to and that’s an additional burden and an additional stress factor that if it’s just working on a paper I’m working night to get it done and I’m working the other night and other night and other night” - Joseph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuning</td>
<td>An emotional sensemaking process wherein an individual’s emotions operate as interpretations, directing individuals to maintain or alter the way they enact their work.</td>
<td>Positive and neutral emotions operate as a stabilizing feature of work rhythms, but negative emotions direct individuals to engage in cognitive sensemaking to alleviate negative emotions and discomfort triggered by arrhythmia.</td>
<td>Positive feelings: “There are a lot of change and transitions...but our enthusiasm stays...we keep optimistic and we keep happy” - Darcie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“STAR is sparkling and full of energy...because so many things are happening at a fast pace” – Darcie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I’m fine with the demanding environment, I mean we have a lot of freedom here” – Felix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negative feelings: “I constantly feel like I’m lagging behind and that’s not a nice feeling”- Iris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Every minute was full completely every day. That was my dark period. Just it was not very fun time. Then I got tenure and then things sort of lightened up a little bit” – Donna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“People sort of barge in if they see you sit there and they are they want to ask you...Do you have a moment? Do you have a minute? And then the whole afternoon goes away on having minutes” – Darcie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursifying</td>
<td>A cognitive sensemaking process wherein an individual attempts to commit embodied and emotional interpretations into language in order to further reflect and make decisions in relation to how they do their work.</td>
<td>Depending on how individuals perceive arrhythmia and its negative feelings (as related to tempo, intensity, or rhythmic consistency), individuals (1) employ different metaphors to verbalize their embodied experience, (2) identify a specific culprit of the arrhythmia, (3) craft a rationale to respond to arrhythmia, and (4) ultimately key the group’s identity frame.</td>
<td>See Table 4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syncing. STAR members were continuously engaging in syncing. Syncing is defined as an embodied sensemaking process wherein an individual attempts to incorporate and align existing embodied rhythms with emergent rhythms derived from proposed spatiotemporal structures. Mostly, STAR members were able to successfully sync their already existing embodied rhythms, such as: teaching periods, conference deadlines, career advancement trajectories, public transit schedules, national holidays, daycare opening hours, circadian rhythms, and full time work hour schemes, among many others with the rhythms derived from the spatiotemporal structures that came with the layered frames such as: monthly STARTalks, bi-weekly social events, sporadic meetings with companies, biweekly incubator sessions among others (see Table 4.5). Successfully synced rhythms, what Lefebvre (2004) calls eurythmia, generally went unnoticed. However, when STAR members could not sync the rhythms, moments of arrhythmia in which rhythms clash, break apart, and become discordant (Lefebvre, 2004) manifested themselves in bodily breakdowns (Michel, 2011).

Sensations of arrhythmia were, of course, challenging to observe. However, we interpreted some of the behaviors we observed as triggered by arrhythmia. These sensations include haste which we observed in the speed of professors strides when walking down corridors. One academic explained she felt one of her colleagues made the office “kind of a stressful atmosphere every time he comes in because he’s so busy...He walks in and out, and every time he walks in I get distracted.” Another sensation is one of irritation which we saw in academics who offered curt responses to colleagues while avoiding eye contact. Iris explained “when I am working on a paper, I go to the big room, and if anyone walked by I would look at them really cranky and they wouldn’t bother me.” Another sensation is of anxiety which manifested in an individual sitting and shaking their leg, tapping their pen excessively, or as we recorded Ben enacting in our field notes, “pacing back and forth upset” STAR members also felt exhaustion which we observed in individuals moving lethargically or speaking with a monotone voice. For example, at a department meeting we observed Lenore speaking with monotone intonations which she tells the group “I sent you the agenda for the day, and I think we can do it like within a half an hour. And well because we already had our whole morning talking about the new master, so we’re all quite tired.”

These sensations operated as an embodied process of interpretation. They were an intuitive understanding “encoded in...movements” (Kudesia, 2017: 22), derived from intuitive sense-perception (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012), and contingent on specific spaces (e.g., the big room, the busy atmosphere, the pace-able office). Sometimes these sensations would lead to an openness for additional forms of sensemaking (cf. Holt and Cornelissen, 2013), such as emotional sensemaking, which we describe next.

Tuning. The sensations from the syncing process that individual STAR members experienced sometimes would “float ambiguously,” but at other times they would be classed as a feeling (James, 1912: 296). We qualify tuning as an emotional sensemaking process and one that is different in kind than syncing. We differentiate these two processes because emotional sensemaking is a process in which a sensation, an affect, becomes attuned to the world transforming into an emotion, a feeling that is social and recognizable (Fotkai et al., 2017). This process of tuning also operates as an interpretation, directing individuals to maintain or alter the way they enact their work.

Neutral feelings and positive feelings such as enthusiasm, enjoyment, happiness, pride, energy, and fun gave STAR members the sense to continue enacting their work in the way they always had. For example Dan explained “I enjoy it [working at STAR]. So it’s just the atmosphere is nice...I would describe it as happy vibes.” Iris supported this sentiment explaining “I really feel a bit more happy than before. It may also be because I get to know these people. You know they’re really awesome people. I got to know the group.” Tara takes it one step further at a Thursday night drink in which she decides to skip an engagement with her friends telling the group “I like hanging out with you guys more than my own friends.”

On the other hand, negative feelings such as stress, guilt, anxiety, shame, sad-
ness, and irritation, made STAR members pause and led them to engage in even more sensemaking, a different kind of sensemaking, especially after extended bouts of negative feelings. Janet told us “I can see a lot of stress with the people around me. There’s a lot of pressure... it’s just stress stress stress stress.” Iris recognized feelings of guilt saying “I just feel guilty if I didn’t do anything in the weekend. Like oh my god, now I have to work really really hard during the rest of the week... I think it’s because everyone else is doing it and if you’re not doing it, you feel kind of slacking.” Donna identified a period of negative feelings in which “every minute was full completely every day. That was my dark period. Just it was not very fun time.” Felix described being in a period of discomfort explaining “I think we all have a lot of extra responsibilities right now and we are trying to kind of balance. It’s more, I think, than anyone is comfortable shouldering.” Darcie described her ongoing feelings of irritation explaining “people sort of barge in if they see you sit there and they want to ask you...Do you have a moment? Do you have a minute? And then the whole afternoon goes away on having minutes.”

**Discursifying.** During extended bouts of negative feelings, STAR members would begin engaging in discursifying what they felt. We define discursifying as a cognitive sensemaking process wherein an individual attempts to commit embodied and emotional interpretations into language in order to further reflect and make decisions about how they do their work. During this process, individuals would employ different metaphors to verbalize their embodied experience. These metaphors would help them identify a specific culprit responsible for the arrhythmia. After identifying a culprit, STAR members would be able to craft a rationale to respond to the arrhythmia. There were three different types of arrhythmia that STAR members described: one as related to tempo or the rate or speed of a motion or activity; another intensity, or the amount of energy expended when enacting an activity; and the final arrhythmia related to rhythmic (in)consistency, or the degree to which rhythms are synced and regularly repeated.

Individuals who made sense of their arrhythmia as a result of mismatching speeds tended to draw on metaphors of a moving vehicle or a race in which they were behind due to their own capacities. Iris explained “I just constantly feel like I’m uh lagging behind and that’s not a nice feeling. And then when I ask Michael, and he says no you’re not lagging behind you’re actually doing a pretty good job. But then I see how Jordan and Ken are actually producing things, and I still haven’t really produced anything yet. I’m working on a paper, but it’s not really going anywhere yet, and I get stressed out because I feel like I’m not working hard enough, but I am working hard.” After trying to speed up and recognizing this is not possible, individuals who made sense of their arrhythmia with the metaphor of a race or moving vehicle rationalized that they needed to stop participating in all group activities as well as work longer hours. Amy explained she accomplished this strategically stating “when I came back from my research visit, I started coming in early and leaving early. I stopped coming in on Mondays and Thursdays, so I could concentrate on my work. I don’t think people noticed because I had already been gone.”

Individuals who discursified their arrhythmia as related to intensity relied on metaphors of force, strength, luminosity, and level to describe discrepancies between the group’s intensity and their own. For example, Janet explained at “the beginning of this year I got ill again, and for me, that was like the breakpoint. I had to stop doing what I’m doing because it’s too much and there’s no way to do this job on a lower level—or a less intense level. So that was the trigger for me to decide I would have to do something else.” Rather than fixating on their own capacities, like those who describe their arrhythmia as having to do with speed, individuals who experienced arrhythmia as intensity saw it as the result of a mismatch of their aims, the group’s aims, and requirements of their professional and organizational role. Thus, rather than fault themselves, or try to do more, STAR members who made sense of arrhythmia in this way committed to their aims and priorities with mixed consequences. Donna recognized a reduction in the quality of her work knowing she would have to “let someone down.” Joyce recognized that “the group is very ambitious. They work a lot...I can’t work more than the hours I actually get paid for...I’m actually a minority in that, which is also one of the reasons why I am
going to the other faculty.” And Janet, in the end, decided she would switch to “a new role at this current department” because she likes her job and likes the group. STAR members who described their arrhythmia as a form of rhythmic inconsistency generally used metaphors related to themselves moving objects such as “having all these balls in the air,” “trading off,” and “closing tasks” as though a task were a door or a box to be shut. Unlike academics suffering from speed or intensity based arrhythmias, academics who suffered from rhythmic inconsistency used metaphors of tangible artifacts that are separate from them as opposed to metaphors that highlight individual capacities or traits. For example, Felix explained:

*There’s a lot of things to take care of...I am investing in preparations for that second period because it’s going to be very busy for me. And then in the little time that I have left (laughs), I’m trying to uh revise my paper together with a colleague of ours, finish a book chapter. I just submitted another paper, and then that paper that I mentioned this morning. So, I’m quite overcommitted, and I’m somehow, um, trying to juggle with all these, um, balls. But that’s, so, I’m trying to be a good soldier, and (laughs) do the best I can.*

STAR members who framed their arrhythmia in this way saw these disruptions as caused by structural issues, and no faults of their own. In order to cope with rhythmic inconsistency, these academics looked for ways to reduce the number of “balls in the air,” that is STAR members sought to change the structural requirements of their work. For example, Felix explained that to ensure this might not happen again he “was discussing the load with my colleagues because you could say, well, this is the time we get for that and if I cannot do a better job in that amount of hours then that’s the way it is. But, I don’t think that does justice to our responsibility.” For Felix and a few others, they assumed that by restructuring how they do their work, STAR members would be able to continue to work in, as Felix put it, a “healthy way.”

Through these various cognitive sensemaking practices, STAR members were able to make further sense of the embodied sensations they experienced and alter their work practices. These practices ultimately had the capacity to impact the group’s identity through keying processes.

**Keying.** The way in which STAR members made sense of the strategic change was equally a process of enactment in which the proposed change itself transformed through keying. Above we defined keying as part of the leader’s sensegiving process, but as a communicative process in which existing frames come to be understood as something different, other organizational members also engaged in keying too. We identified four different keying processes that STAR members enacted: embracing, revising (bottom-up), rejecting, and revising (top-down). An overview of these keying processes can be found in Figure 4.2. The first keying process, embracing, was enacted by STAR members who were able to sync the rhythms of their lives with the spatiotemporal structures brought on by the change, and as a result, they reiterated the proposed change through the everyday performance of their work.

The second keying process, revising from the bottom-up, was enacted by STAR members who made sense of their arrhythmia as resulting from their own capacities. While these academics did not influence Lenore to make structural changes to the spatiotemporal structures and the frames that make up the group’s identity, their absence from certain activities started to add up. Michael explained that many of the activities were “declining in the quality and quantity” and that the main reason why is that STAR members did not “have any systematic time for them.” Thus through repeatedly skipping certain activities, temporal structures that once belonged to certain frames were no longer enacted. By not enacting these activities, parts of STAR’s group identity started to diminish and decoupled from the group’s identity. As a result, we observed Lenore trying to reinstate certain activities and reinstate certain frames once again to ensure they would not fade. She did this by assigning individual STAR members the task of organizing certain activities.
### TABLE 4.8 DISCURSIFYING ARRHYTHMIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Rhythmic Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The rate or speed of a motion or activity</td>
<td>The amount of energy transmitted when enacting an activity</td>
<td>The degree to which rhythms are synced and regularly repeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors</td>
<td>Train, race</td>
<td>Force, luminosity, level</td>
<td>Juggling, tradeoffs, closing doors/boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived culprit</td>
<td>Individual capacities</td>
<td>Stage in life, mismatch of group aims and personal priorities</td>
<td>Structural issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rationale</td>
<td>Cannot speed up, selecting, working more hours</td>
<td>Reduce quality of work, leave position</td>
<td>Persuade leadership to change structures that result in clash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keying</td>
<td>Bottom-up through repeated interaction</td>
<td>Little influence on keying, becoming peripheral members</td>
<td>Sensegiving to head of STAR who implemented top-down keying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>&quot;We had this talk that this moment is the start of the train acceleration. We will be on this fast running train. We will be there in the upcoming years because then, at the time, we were hiring certain people who had really had it in them to publish like mad persons and um, and from that moment on indeed we got all kinds of funds and more people in and more people in. And indeed that was a consequence that as of that moment a lot of thing sped up...I'm thinking now what happened? It's of course very nice and inspirational because it feels like we're doing it. We're getting somewhere. We're building and developing ourselves into the good direction becoming more internationally known as a group and in that sense very proud of it. But um because things sort of speed up it's really difficult to also keep up because um also I am a slow reader for instance and I want to do everything perfectly so I meet a lot of challenges personally to sort of deal with that. I do have to sort of develop some mechanisms to not be like whoa! Whooa whoa! Uh, because I do need to um indeed make some selections like oh this is an important activity and this is less and so forth because you cannot do everything uh and somehow I cannot really speed up myself so uh, I need to select. And that's something I'm still sometimes struggling with and sometimes it works.&quot; - Darcie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The group has leveled up I think...I would rather be working with a bunch of top performers, and be the weakest link, than be with a bunch of weak performers and be the strong one. I would rather be this way...I mean now the institute, there is going to be a new season. I can see that things are changing. I think I can see the head of the department is always going to push this to its full max, and we're going to be exec. education. We are going to have context industry now, much stronger. We are going to be accepted to valorize our research a lot more. It's almost like we've achieved some of that top journal status that you get from publishing top journals in the field of academia. We've been recognized for that. This seems like a new chapter. Of course, that chapter doesn't go away. We still have to do all of that. I have to say yes to that. I have to say yes to a lot of things...Things don't get done on time. I have to have lower quality on some things. I just have to prioritize. I just have to say, "Okay, what am I not going to do this week? Who am I going to let down?" It used to be that I would work a lot on the weekend, or at night. I actually stopped doing that, since this summer, since the dark period. I just quit doing that..." - Donna

"I work in quite a lot of different teams. In sets of collaborations on papers. So that if you would work with the same team, put a note on finishing this one and then see to the other one, but when you work on this team and you have to really invest in this paper, the others on the other teams don't care about that, they want to progress with that paper. So it's like having all these different balls in the air, at the same time, and that is still a bit demanding, so I'm thinking a lot about that at the moment, it also has, one question is, how to either reduce attention for projects, or to get involved in less projects. So one discussion that we have internally now is about being co-author on PhD papers, that used to be a kind of an automatism. Now we are saying, well, it doesn't have to be because, being a co-author also implies a commitment to co-developing that paper for journal submission and rounds of revision that will follow. It is very demanding, so you can't do that for three papers for each PhD. That's the way that I see it. Uh, so that's one of the concerns that I have, how to solve that. And the things that I am committed to, I want to do well, and I want to do my share of the work, but there are limits to the amount of work that you can do." - Joseph
### TABLE 4.7 EMBODIED, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE SENSEMAKING

#### STAR MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrhythmia perceived as self-induced</th>
<th>Perceived arrhythmia</th>
<th>Metaphores</th>
<th>Perceived antecedent</th>
<th>Response to Arrhythmia</th>
<th>Keying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior staff</td>
<td>Tempo (the rate or speed of a motion or activity)</td>
<td>Train, race</td>
<td>Individual capacities</td>
<td>Cannot speed up, selecting, work more</td>
<td>Bottom-up through repeated interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensity (the amount of energy transmitted when enacting an activity)</td>
<td>Force, luminosity, level</td>
<td>Stage in life, mismatch of group aims and personal priorities</td>
<td>Reduce quality of work, leave position</td>
<td>Little influence on keying, becoming peripheral members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consistency (the degree to which rhythms are synced and regularly repeated)</td>
<td>Juggling, trading off, closing doors/boxes/drawers</td>
<td>Structural issues</td>
<td>Persuade leadership to change structures that result in clash</td>
<td>Sensegiving to Lenore who implements top-down keying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrhythmia perceived as structurally induced</th>
<th>Senior Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

**RESISTANCE IS IN THE RHYTHMS**

**PAPERLESS PROFESSORS CHAPTER 4**
The third keying process, rejecting, was enacted by STAR members who made sense of their arrhythmia to be the result of misaligned priorities. Instead of increasing their intensity, they did their work with a quality and an intensity lower than the rest of the group. In doing so, they embraced the tension of their arrhythmia as just a tension with which they would have to live. Unlike academics who sat out on activities due to speed, academics facing intensity arrhythmia did not significantly key frames or impact the group’s identity. Instead, they became members on the periphery of the group.

The fourth keying process, revising from the top-down, was enacted by STAR members who made sense of their arrhythmia to be the result of too demanding structural constraints. These individuals, notably senior academics, were able to key frames by appealing to the leader who altered specific demands by changing policies and expectations. Joseph, the prize hire of the group, explained that his work extended beyond the “limits to the amount of work that you can do,” which caused him to question “how to either reduce attention for projects or to get involved in less projects.” As a result, he started a discussion with Lenore to change the policy in which professors were automatically set “being co-authors on Ph.D. papers” which led to “this decision that we have now taken. It’s not this automatism.” Joseph would now have fewer “balls in the air.”

Despite these different ways of making sense, what was consistent was the way resistances to Lenore’s strategic change manifested and how sensemaking and giving processes unfolded from those instances. First, these resistances were triggered with embodied sensations stemming from discomfort derived from inabilities to sync embodied rhythms. These sensations would often lead to negative feelings which would offer more interpretation, but also direct STAR members to engage in even more sensemaking through discursifying. Darcie demonstrates how these processes unfold with her description of making sense of the change.

"We’re building and developing ourselves into the good direction becoming more internationally known as a group and in that sense very proud of it. But um because things sort of speed up it’s really difficult to also keep up because um also I’m a slow reader for instance and I want to do everything perfectly, so I meet a lot of challenges personally to sort of deal with that. I do have to sort of develop some mechanisms to not be like whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Uh, because I do need to um indeed make some selections like oh this is an important activity, and this is less and so forth because you cannot do everything, uh and somehow I cannot really speed up myself so uh, I need to select... We explicitly in larger constellations within the group have discussed or at least say it out loud that somehow our group sometimes goes a bit beyond what is normal and what should be the case with that pace and with the expectations and ambitions and so forth. We talked about it. There’s no real solution in that sense, but it is noticed.

Here Darcie uses the interjection “whoa” to express a sudden feeling relating to something going too fast. In response to this feeling, she starts to make sense that she cannot speed up and keep up, and she has to do something different. As a result, she speaks to others, recognizes she cannot easily resolve the situation and decides for herself to participate in fewer things. In an interview a half a year later, Darcie explained how this began to boil up saying:

I have to say these [activities] are not done or organized as regularly as we did before. We do have um the reading group; we do, well at least I heard that some are planning to find people for STAR Talks but it’s really linked to certain people, and if certain people are abroad for half a year or something like that then uh...they don’t happen.

STAR members continued keying

Though initially STAR members embraced the change to the group’s identity, over time they came to enact their group identity differently than how Lenore envisioned. Specifically, STAR members stopped participating in some of the activities associated with certain frames that they did not identify. For example, Dan explained “I have sort of canceled writing papers. I am just not doing that right now, but the time I would usually have to write papers, I now use to work on these
courses.” Donna told us “I think there is kind of an expectation. That’s one thing we have a working community. However, I don’t like the Thursday night things, like this dinner this Thursday night, not my bag. I am tired at the end of the week. I don’t even get to see my kids during the day, so I just want to spend time with my family.” Iris tells us she “does something new” where she skips incubator sessions because it is “actually a nice time to work because everyone else is there;” and Joseph told us “We also work with some industry partners...but I must admit that I have too little time for that...it’s less I would say my contact. It’s primarily through the PhDs.”

In each of these instances, STAR members let go of one of the many frames that had come to make up STAR. However, by associating themselves with the other STAR members who maintain those frames, they could continue to identify as elite if not doing research, social if not joining for drinks, innovative if not participating in incubator sessions, and consultants if not in contact with industry. The frame, however, that no one downplayed and was there from the outset was that of the teammate. Not one STAR member tried to shirk off her responsibilities to her team.

4.5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A model encompassing the embodied elements of strategic change

Our analysis shows a significantly overlooked aspect of strategic change is its embodied nature (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). Drawing on our findings, we constructed a model of strategic framing that highlights the multiple directions in which keying processes unfold due to the actors who participate in it (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014). As a result, we present a model, Figure 4.3 that addresses the conundrums that drove this research as well as the emergent findings we encountered regarding embodied sensemaking.
Leader sensemaking and sensegiving

Lenore recognized changes in her environment as opportunities and threats to her department’s identity. She responded to these triggers by engaging in various types of sensegiving activities. The first process, keying turned out to be a successful way to gain support for a “new” group identity. Keying occurs when frames that are already meaningful come to be understood as something quite different through interactions (Snow et al., 1986: 474). When frames are drawn on in different contexts or by different people, they can be understood as something else. Thus, keying offers opportunities for “new” interpretations to emerge, potentially resulting in an enduring transformation of meanings associated with an activity (Lee et al., 2018). We placed new in quotations because rather than roll out a completely new identity (Fiol, 2002), or promise the endurance of an old one (Venus et al., 2018) keying involves the transformation of existing identity frames into something alternative (Goffman, 1974). Through repeated interactions, these meanings begin to laminate or layer and meld with one another (Diehl and McFarland, 2010), editing the frame (Weber and Glynn, 2006) to be radically transformed: a “systematic alteration’ that that radically reconstitutes what it is for participants that is going on” (Snow et al., 1986: 474 as quoting Goffman, 1974:45). Thus, effectively facilitating a change required keying and an openness to keying directed by others.

Lenore began to concretize STAR’s abstract keyed identity frame by incarnating material things with specific meanings. Incarnation is the process in which something supposedly immaterial (e.g., ideas, symbols) becomes materialized (Kuhn et al., 2017: 97). Lenore was able to attach fleeting meanings to something concrete. She accomplished this by opportunistically incarnating the new office environment with abstract concepts associated with the frames of who STAR members are. In doing so, Lenore made the new identity easier to grasp (Car- ton, 2018) and to be shared (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012). Lenore demonstrated that by incarnating material things with particular meanings, abstract visions could be concrete.

In addition, Lenore also employed a third form of sensegiving, prototyping, in order to provide clarity. Prototyping encompasses what it implies. On the one hand, prototyping means being prototypical in the sense that it operates as a representational example of something because it embodies its key features. On the other, it means being the first of many models used to test a process or device. Lenore does both. She experiments with how STAR members should behave given a new context while simultaneously demonstrating how they should behave. Prototyping is an important type of sensegiving to attend to because sensegiving also entails the “non-verbal signs and signals, like behaviours and actions, to infer and give meaning” (Balogun and Johnson, 2005: 1576). Through reiterating prototypical behavior, Lenore tied embodied movements to interpretations themselves (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012) as well as engraining frames into STAR member’s physical bodies (Harquail and King, 2010). Though this tactic could be read as inhibiting strategic change by narrowing too soon, and potentially creating factions of members who resist due to perceiving their preferences and interests to be ignored (Gioia et al., 2012), Lenore managed to simultaneously open interpretation up again by emphasizing that “because we are innovative we are open to diverse ways of working.” Thus she essentially provides clarity as to how STAR members might work given the transformed identity while simultaneously opening up to multiple interpretations of the frame. Lenore offered STAR members both clarity and openness in order to enroll STAR members to accept her new vision.

STAR member sensemaking and sensegiving

Resistance to strategic change is generally described as the result of emotional (Huy et al., 2014), political (Gioia et al., 2012), or cognitive (Kaplan, 2008) clashes that emerge through daily interactions. Our findings show that resistances are also often embodied when individuals are unable to synchronize spatiotemporal structures (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002) into a rhythm or set of
rhythms that more or less operate harmoniously (Lefebvre, 2004). Rhythms are the reiterated organizing of daily routines that provide an order—a habitual tempo for the everyday enactment of life (Verduyn, 2015). Rhythms are spatiotemporally specific in the sense that they are rooted in specific contexts and reiterated through movements, gestures, action, situations, differences” (Lefebvre, 2004: 15). Rhythms generate spaces and times for specific activities and experiences. Most of the time STAR members were able to sync rhythms resulting in eurhythmia, or a relative stability, but moments of rhythmic clashes, or arrhythmia produced “antagonistic effects” (Lefebvre, 2004: 44). These antagonistic effects manifested in the form of embodied breakdowns (Michel, 2011) and operated as a first form of sensemaking for STAR members. The rhythmic clashes were experienced as sensations—not yet verbalized—often going against “the mind’s goals” (Michel, 2011: 353), or in this case the strategic change. Although STAR members often made adjustments to alleviate arrhythmic sensations, extended moments of arrhythmia generally resulted in negative emotions such as feelings of guilt, anxiety, unhappiness, or irritation. For STAR members, these emotions operated as a further appraisal of their situations, denoting the severity of their situation. By tuning the sensation into an emotion, STAR members experienced a “complementary form of accomplishing sense in situations which would otherwise remain equivocal or contradictory” (Myers, 2007: 618). These emotions also signaled that something was wrong, even if they accepted the proposed change. Based on how they felt, STAR members engaged in a third sensemaking process, discursifying, in which STAR members verbalized the breakdowns they experienced as a means of further making sense of what the arrhythmia was and how to deal with it. This finding emphasizes what Heracleous and Jacobs (2008) so importantly point out that metaphors, in general, are “both constitutive of the structure of embodied experience as well as emerge from this experience” (50). The metaphors that STAR members could draw on helped sketch and enact what they were experiencing, how it occurred, and what they could do about it.

The metaphors that individual STAR members drew on to describe their arrhythmia shaped the way in which they experienced, read, and responded to their situation. They engaged in keying practices that required them either to change their daily rhythms, eventually restructuring the spatiotemporal structures associated with laminated frames, or confront Lenore to restructure the spatiotemporal structures of laminated frames in an official more efficient way. Our findings affirm Orlikowski and Yates’ (2002) assertion that temporal structures both are “shaping and being shaped by ongoing human action, and thus as neither independent of human action...nor fully determined by human action” (684). As a result, our description of embodied sensemaking engages the questions of when, where, why and how of strategic change, aspects that are often ignored (Kunisch et al., 2017). Our model shows that all of these elements are interlinked, that sensemaking and sensegiving are cognitive, emotional, and embodied affairs that are sequential, interlinked, and recursive.

Theoretical contributions, implications, and future research

Weary of simplifying the complex and dynamic nature of strategic change, Seo and colleagues (2004) argue “we should be skeptical of interventions that overly simplify the change process, ignore possible tensions or take extreme responses to handling the tensions in them” (101). Our first contribution lies here: showing that seemingly contradictory ways of communicating strategic change are needed and not necessarily incompatible (Müller and Kunisch, 2018). An embodied processual account of strategic sensegiving and sensemaking makes this visible and has shown just how skilled a leader needs to be to direct change because she needs to be able to direct change in seemingly contradictory ways. She was able to direct change in contradictory ways by employing communicative activities such as keying that expand beyond the scope of merely delivering the right messages in the right way. By incorporating things, tools, and movements into her communications, she can offer messages of change and continuity; concreteness...
and abstraction; and clarity and ambiguity in order to get group members onboard. This leads us to our second contribution, and that is the theoretical and empirical development of rhythm and syncing an aspect of embodied sensemaking that is typically ignored. While we know that “strategic change often involves shifts in temporal structures,” strategic change literature generally focuses on what leaders do in order to “entrain organizations to their environment” (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997: 25) as opposed to actually explaining how entrainment works in practice (Kunisch et al. 2017: 1021). Our findings demonstrate that because rhythms are reiterated movements and actions, in order to understand how strategic change can be successfully implemented, successfully entrained, researchers need address change at the level of embodied movements and experiences.

We were surprised by the lack of literature attending to spatiotemporal structures from an embodied perspective for two reasons; first, other domains of embodied sensemaking have garnered increasing attention and, second, how central the incorporation of these spatiotemporal structures into the rhythms of everyday life requires and directs sensemaking. Though time is a central feature of strategic change, the spatiotemporal structures of the proposed change and how organization members experience them has rarely been empirically examined (with exception to Bluedorn and Denhardt, 1988).

By drawing on Lefebvre (2004) and other literature building on his work (Nash, 2018; Verduyn, 2015), we were able to show how rhythms both give sense and result in clashes that require additional sensemaking and sensegiving processes often resulting in the keying of identity frames. We demonstrated that no matter how adept a leader is in communicating a strategic change if individual stakeholders cannot incorporate the rhythms of the proposed change into their everyday life, the change might not be accepted. The resistance, then, is in the rhythms.

Even with this claim our study still has some limitations and promising lines for future research. First of all, because rhythms are an emergent finding of our research, we were only able to capture rhythms as reported by STAR members and in a few cases as we observed them in their daily lives. Future research on strategic change, spatiotemporal structures and rhythms should employ methodologies such as rhythm analysis and shadowing (e.g., Nash, 2018, McDonald, 2005) from the start in order to uncover additional insights as to how individuals engage in rhythm work in the face of a strategic change. Second, additional studies should further examine the relationship of metaphors used for describing arrhythmia and all other embodied breakdowns to unpack further how these metaphors relate to things like seniority, tenure, and, as we suspect, gender. Third, we suggest that in order to advance the literature, future research should ask: how can leaders help employees manage the spatiotemporal structures that come with a strategic change in order for the change to be accepted? Attention to such a question, we argue, will help unpack the intricacies of strategic change.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION
5.1 INTRODUCTION

This doctoral thesis addressed the changing nature of academic work from the angle of organizational space. Emphasizing where academics do their work not only influences but constitutes how and what they do, I demonstrated the importance of examining organizational space with a constitutive approach. In the introduction of this dissertation, I stated that the purpose of my inquiry is to understand what happens to academic work when academics’ workspaces are replaced to resemble that of the commercial industry, and how and through what relations these changes occur. In addition, I posed three sub-questions: (1) How do spatial processes organize work and work organize spatial processes? (2) How are workspaces implicated in how individuals make sense of who they are and as a result shape how they work and vice versa? (3) How are organizational spaces implicated when enacting radical strategic change? I addressed these questions with a systematic review of the literature that frames organizational space as a process, and with an ethnography that examines professional identity work and strategic change. In this chapter, I reflect on these findings collectively, offer practical implications for managers overseeing renovations, and propose some directions for future research in light of these theoretical advances and the limitations of my dissertation.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

In this section, I discuss my findings related to the questions I posed in the introduction. Each of these questions provides insights as to what happens to academic work in open-plan flexing offices and how it happens. Table 5.1 displays a summary of these findings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How do spaces organize work and work organize spaces as described by process studies of space over the past sixteen years?</td>
<td>• Spaces are not containers, but are produced and processual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Organizational spacing literature clusters around five spatial processes: developing, transitioning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>imbricating, becoming, and constituting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Each of these processes entails different interplays of order and disorder and absence and presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>allowing or prohibiting certain organizational activities to thrive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Future research should employ relational theorizing to better understand how organizational spacings and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organizing are enacted together. We suggest drawing on concepts such as hybrid agency, assemblage, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rhythms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>How in the context of a changing work environment are different and conflicting figurations of business school academics enacted, assembled, and conjured up through material-semiotic practices with heterogeneous others? And how, once produced, do these figurations relate to one another?</td>
<td>• Organizational spaces are made up of arrangements, or figurations, of material-semiotic things. These</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>arrangements constitute the identities of individuals embedded in them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• There are three figuring practices that individuals engaged in to make sense of who they were in relation to the people and things around them. These included connecting, resembling, and corresponding practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• These figuring practices rendered three professional figurations in the context of academics in an open-plan flexible office: a traditional academic, a mobile consultant, and an innovative academic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Figurations are unstable because arrangements continually rearrange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Academics experience frictional events due to ambiguity, irony, and contradictions that emerge from the process of rearranging configurations. Academics respond with frictional patternings such as selecting, oscillating and opening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How can leaders communicate and direct a successful strategic change?</td>
<td>• Using embodied sensegiving techniques can help garner organizational change acceptance because it links the abstract to the concrete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Resistance to change can manifest through embodied means even when it is cognitively and emotionally accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• This resistance manifests when individuals are unable to sync the spatiotemporal structures that come with a change with the already existing rhythms of their life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Embodied breakdowns trigger emotional responses, and individuals try to make sense of both the sensations and emotions they experience with metaphors that do not quite fit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• These metaphors shade what is at fault for the breakdown and how to cope with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Based on how individuals make sense of the embodied breakdowns, they key frames of the change, altering it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategic change, then, is ongoing, recursive, and embodied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.1 How do spatial processes organize work and work organize spatial processes?

Chapter two set the foundation to understand how and what happens to academic work when academic workspaces are replaced to resemble that of the commercial industry. It is a foundational chapter because it examines what the field of management and organization studies as a whole has come to describe how spatial processes organize work and how work organizes spatial processes. I accomplished this with my co-authors by systematically reviewing 114 empirical articles in management and organization studies that have been written over the past sixteen years since the second wave of spatial organizational analysis, which is marked by the conceptualization of space as a process rather than a container (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Giovannoni and Quattrone, 2018; Knox et al., 2015). In this chapter, we inventoried, scrutinized, and defined the types of organizational spacing processes that research describes, which up until this chapter had been amalgamated into one broad category even though spacing processes unfold in distinct ways with diverse sets of implications (van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

These articles clustered around five different kinds of processes: (1) developing, or the changing of space episodically; (2) transitioning, or in-between spaces in which there is a suspension of general rules or norms of the organization; (3) imbricating, the interlocking of material-relational bundles through spatial-social practices; (4) becoming, or the performative embodied, fleeting, and constantly unfolding of space; and (5) constituting, or ongoing choreographed actions and interactions of heterogeneous constituents. Each of these processes treats fundamental dialectics of organizational space—order and disorder, and absence and presence—in different ways, and as a result, report what space does—its hybrid agency—in various ways.

Rather than suggest researchers commit to one organizational spacing, we concluded the chapter by calling for scholars to take a relational approach to organizational spacing embracing the imbricating, becoming and constituting processes. To develop these lines of research further, we called for scholars to examine the concepts of hybrid agency, assemblage (arrangement), and rhythm (movement) because we understand them to be fundamental to explaining how organizational space is implicated in organizing.

5.2.2 How are workspaces implicated in how individuals make sense of who they are and as a result shape how they work and vice versa?

Chapter three focused on how different figurations (c.f. assemblage) of material-semiotic things constitute professional identity. This first empirical chapter examined what happens to academic professional identity when academics’ workspaces are transformed to resemble that of the commercial industry, which will ultimately impact how they do their work. From the assumption that identity is enacted in relation to others, both human and non-human, we wanted to understand how academics’ professional identity transformed when the things they usually relate to such as books, their own office, their names on the door, were revoked thus physically absent.

We found that professional identity was constituted through three figuring practices, or relational practices that configured academics in relation to material things. These figuring practices include: connecting, or relational processes in which two entities are brought together to form an ensemble; resembling or relational processes in which one idea is presented under the sign of another that is more striking, or better known; and corresponding or relational processes in which two objects satisfy the general conditions of correspondence. These processes influenced how academics did their work, made sense of what their work was, and described the motivations that drove them to do their work. Figuring practices tended to conjure two professional figurations, and generally a strange mixture of the two. The first figuration, the traditional professor, was figured when academics related books as physically a part of them, academic work as a journey to great
lengths and depths to find new knowledge, and the purpose of academic work as for knowledge’s sake. The second figuration, innovative academics, was figured when academics related themselves mobile like a laptop, work as the product of idea generation through collaboration, and the purpose of academic work to be conducted to help improve things.

Because the academics whom we studied would relate to different things and people in different ways at different times, they would come to understand themselves in multiple and conflicting ways leading to ironic, ambiguous, and contradictory experiences. We classified these experiences as frictional events. Some academics chose to select one figuration of themselves over another by physically manipulating their space in order to cope with frictional events. Other academics chose to oscillate between figurations by constituting themselves as one figuration in one contextually specific moment and another at a different contextually specific moment. Others still chose to open themselves to reformulate the relationship between seeming opposites. This chapter demonstrates that academics relate to people, practices, and things in their environment to make sense of themselves, and as relations with things, practices and people are rearranged so are understandings of self. Importantly, these shifts influence not only the meaning academics give to themselves, but also what they do and why they do it.

Given our findings, we conclude the chapter by encouraging scholars to employ a relational approach to identity. Such an approach addresses many kinds of relations that make up identity beyond opposition; renders materiality as being not only a tool, but an embodied extension, analogical resource, and animating actor; and captures the performative and processual nature of professional identity. In addition, a relational approach to professional identity simultaneously offers a way to think of professional ethics. By understanding oneself as made with and connected with others, professionals might pay more attention to what they do, whom they become, and how they organize.

5.2.3 How are organizational spaces implicated when enacting radical strategic change?

Strategic change literature tends to focus on how managers should direct the emotions and cognitions of organization members in order to implement strategic change successfully. Research focused on cognition and emotions, however, diverts attention away from how strategic change is enacted in organizations, particularly how the spatiotemporal structures integral to a strategic change disrupt the rhythms of organization members’ everyday lives. Chapter four addressed how spatiotemporal structures require specific sensemaking and sensegiving processes in order to manage tensions that occur when organization members try to integrate these spatiotemporal structures into the rhythms of their lives.

We found that even when a manager overseeing a strategic change communicated the change skillfully, it was still resisted. At first, many organization members embraced the change, however, after enacting the practices associated with it they started experiencing embodied resistance. Responding to their embodied resistance, organization members tried to sync the spatiotemporal structures linked to the change with the existing rhythms of their everyday life—an embodied form of sensemaking. If they were unable to sync these rhythms, they would experience embodied breakdowns and would begin enacting a second form of sensemaking in which they attempted to tune their embodied sensations into identifiable emotions. If organization members experienced these emotions negatively, they felt—a kind of sense—they would have to take action, and would often engage in a third form of sensemaking. This third form of sensemaking, discursifying, is a process in which organization members tried to transform their sensations and emotions into words in order to have direction when taking action to alleviate their bad feelings. Based on how they verbalized their embodied experiences, organization members would alter their activities or alter the change itself.

This chapter further emphasized that the contexts (i.e., where/when) and rhythms (i.e., repetition of organizational practices) of organizing need consid-
eration when managers implement organizational change. Although it is often individuals who manage rhythms, managers should be aware that organization members will likely confront challenges when trying to integrate new spatiotemporal structures into their everyday lives. As a result, managers might acknowledge the inability to sync rhythms as a regular part of the change process and be open to suggestions from organization members regarding how they might need to alter spatiotemporal structures inherent to a strategic change in order for it to be accepted. We concluded the chapter by joining other calls to look closer at the temporal (Kunisch et al., 2017) and embodied aspects (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Kudesia, 2017; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015) of strategic change, and direct future empirical research to use new methods, like rhythmanalysis (Nash, 2018), in this endeavor.

5.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RELATED FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In this dissertation, I made the case that organizational spaces are not merely concrete containers, but rather an infrastructure for organizing while simultaneously being influenced by its own processes (Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren, 2009). In doing so, I argued that organizational spaces are simultaneously material (e.g. artifacts, buildings, bodies, and tools) and social (i.e. contingent upon social relations), relationally produced by a mix of heterogeneous agents, plural in the sense that space work can be done in a multiplicity of ways (Kuhn et al., 2017), and processual. By promoting this constitutive approach of organizational space (Wilhoit, 2016), I advanced three lines of theoretical work that require further development. These lines of theoretical work will provide fruitful insights to many domains of management and organization research. Specifically, management and organization scholars need to theorize further: space work, or what spaces do; professional identity figurations, or how professional identities are constituted through the arrangements of material-semiotic things; and rhythm, or the repetitive organization of everyday routines (Lefebvre, 2004).

5.3.1 Space work

This dissertation has shown that management and organization scholars have come a long way from understanding organizational spaces as merely a backdrop for organizing to the assertion that spaces actually constitute organizing and are constituted by organizing. This means that spaces do things: they have an agency in organizing. That is, spaces engage in space work. While writing chapter two, my co-authors and I began to grapple with how research has demonstrated spaces’ agency. We see that certain kinds of spaces, for example, hide, link, welcome, and legitimize, constituting certain kinds of organizational practices over others. We identified this relationship of what spaces do and what kinds of organizing occurs to be an important one for management and organization scholars to theorize. We are currently theorizing space work in revisions of chapter two by identifying what space is doing and how the dialectics of order and disorder and absence and presence play into what space does. While we develop this concept of space work, we call for other scholars to consider what space is doing too.

This line of theorizing requires empirical work across a variety of management and organizational themes to encompass spacing analyses. That is, in order to theorize space work management and organization scholarship needs to examine more broadly how and what space does in different kinds of organizational settings. One way of doing this could be tacking spatial analyses to organizing as practice approaches (e.g., strategy as practice (Whittington, 2006), entrepreneurship as practice (Gartner et al., 2016), which look closely at what people do in specific contexts. Not only would this help theorize space work, but it will offer practice scholars interesting insights as well. Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) offer a notable example of how to research space work. She and her colleagues show that certain types of spacings are made with various material, bodily, and discursive resources. They do this by employing video recordings of interactions.
of reinsurers making important capital placement decisions, as well as by using more traditional ethnographic methods. Ultimately, Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) found that different spacings co-constitute different kinds of strategic work (i.e., private work, collaborative work, and negotiating work).

In order to have a greater scope of what spacings do and how spacings do it, scholars could employ video recordings of interactions to supplement traditional ethnographic methods when examining other management and organization phenomena. These phenomena include leadership, project management, collaboration, innovation, mediation, negotiation, recruitment, socialization, training, mentoring, pitching, institutional work, work-life balance, teamwork, among many others. When examining these various managerial themes and how they are accomplished, researchers can easily adapt the research question that drove Jarzabkowski et al.’s (2015) work, namely, “how is strategic work accomplished through the orchestration of material, bodily and discursive resources” (S28) by just replacing “strategic work” with their phenomenon of interest.

Also, one of the areas of space work that needs to be developed theoretically is the relationship between space, spacing and “the ontogenesis of organization, organizing, and organizationality” (Schoeneborn et al., 2018: 16). Traditionally, management and organization scholars have taken an “architectonic vision” of an organization equating an organization’s space with the organization itself (Ford and Harding, 2004). However, since space is widely considered to be a process and organizational spacings have become stretched across the globe with the help of communication technologies, we need to advance alternative ways of theorizing the relationship of spacings and organizing.

One way scholars might develop this work is by supplementing Schoeneborn et al.’s (2018) systemization of the theoretical orientations of communication constitutes organizing (CCO) scholarship. In their piece, the authors highlight the tensions of communication as a process with organization as an entity, organization as a process, and organizationality as an attribute. We suggest these tensions become even more complicated if we approach them with space as an entity and space as a process. Doing this work is important especially due to the “range of contemporary phenomena that fall outside the common understanding of what an organization is” such as “hacker communities…terrorist networks…or crowdfunding platforms” (Schoenenborn et al., 2018: 16), as well as the range of organizing that falls outside of common understandings of organizational space such as virtual organizing spaces and globally dispersed organizational spaces. By theorizing the tensions of communication, spacing, and organizing, we will be better equipped to theorize space work.

5.3.2 Professional identity figurations

In this dissertation, I also confronted existing definitions and theoretical work on professional identity and called for scholars to consider professional identity as the meanings derived from a figuration of multiple relations with multiple things, practices, and people. My co-authors and I constructed this argument by drawing on leading definitions of professional identity which suggest professional identity is (1) the meanings individuals give to “who I am” from “what I do” (Pratt et al., 2006); (2) the meanings individuals give to “who I am” from “who I am not” (Nelson and Irwin, 2013); and (3) the meanings individuals give to “who I am” with “whom I do it” (Ashcraft, 2013). We amended these definitions arguing that professional identity is actually a figuration process encompassing all of these relations as well as (4) the meanings individuals give to who I am with what I do it.

A figuration perspective of professional identity work requires further development given the rising salience of professionals in work-life dynamics (Anteby et al., 2016) and the changing nature of professional work due to technological advances (Barley et al., 2017). Chapter three showed that a professional’s identity is a configuration of meanings, materialities, and practices that through relations of distinction and connection shape how and why professionals do their work. In order to test if the relations that constitute professional identity figurations hold
across professional groups, future research might examine professional groups other than academics.

In order to advance the field’s understanding of professional figurations empirically, scholars should look at how professional work is changing and the pressures that professionals face. For example, because professional career patterns increasingly are marked by inter-organizational mobility (Arthur et al., 2005), future research might study what happens to professional figurations when professionals move from one organization to another. In order to capture the accounts of professionals moving one organization to another, scholars might consider using a mobile ethnography that is not bound to an organization, but instead follows participants (Czarniawska, 2004). This would allow an ethnographer to observe a professional from one organization to another and observe how their professional figurations change over time and place.

In addition, because professionals are increasingly participating in contingent work, or employment that is organized around the completion of a task and is generally is short in duration (Barley and Kunda, 2004), scholars might examine professional figurations in relation to employment enhancing activities such as networking, trainings, and branding (Smith, 2010). To do this, researchers could attend professional trainings and networking events and examine how individuals’ professional figurations are constituted before, during and after and trace how and to what degree their professional figurations transform throughout the event. Scholars also might examine how professionals engage on social media as a means to brand and promote themselves in order to gain employment. Researchers could do this by collecting blogs and social media messages and conducting discursive analyses to point out broader trends of how professionals figure themselves (Nelson and Irwin, 2013).

Moreover, future work needs to develop professional figurations theoretically. One avenue for development has to do with how professionals come to share professional figurations and how these figurations endure. From the social constructionist perspective, this is referred to as “cross-level dynamics,” and it explains how identities can scale up from the intrasubjective “I think,” to the intersubjective “we think,” to the generic subjective “it is” (Ashcraft et al., 2011: 1146). A relational approach to professional figurations, however, takes a flat ontology, which asserts that “scalar structuration makes no sense in a world constituted by emergent assemblages that are shaped by the interactions of their constituent parts” (Häkkin, 2018: 275). Without the concept of scale, answers to how professional figurations come to be shared and how they endure require additional vocabulary and alternative explanations.

5.3.3 Rhythms

In chapter four, it became clear that rhythms are core to organizing, and require much more theoretical attention in order to understand how organizational spaces and organizing constitute one another. Work stemming from Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis has begun to theorize how repetitive enactments of daily routines constitute spatiotemporal patterns creating temporary constellations that are necessary for leading organizations (Ropo and Salovaara, 2018), entrepreneuring (Verduyn, 2015), providing services to clients (Nilsson and Hertzum, 2005), enacting demanding professional work (Borch et al., 2015), organizing work sectors (Nash, 2018), and as I suggest in this dissertation, implementing strategic change.

In chapter four, my co-authors and I argued that even if a strategic change is successfully communicated and directed, it might fail if the newly introduced spatiotemporal structures of a strategic change are unable to be synced with existing rhythms. Such a claim suggests that strategic change literature needs to address not only the cognitions and emotions of organizational stakeholders during strategic change, but the everyday repetitive embodied enactment of organizational practices.

In order to examine spatiotemporal rhythms more centrally, scholars could em-
ploy a shadowing ethnographic technique (McDonald, 2005), or diary method (Zundel et al., 2018). A shadowing ethnographic technique allows researchers to capture the daily rhythms of organization members’ lives as well as their embodied aspects. A downside to this method is that it is very labor intensive, and while it provides rich detail about an organization member’s rhythms, the number of individuals shadowed will likely be limited. Alternatively, scholars can employ a diary method which allows a “deep analysis of individuals’ internal processes and practices” (Radcliffe as quoted in Zundel et al., 2018: 394). By asking individuals to report what, where, and when they are doing it, researchers can collect the rhythms of a wider pool of people. By using these methods, future research can answer some of the questions we could not, such as, how do spatiotemporal structures emerge? When and in what contexts do they emerge? How and through what activities do individuals deviate from widely accepted organizational spatiotemporal structures and what are the consequences of their deviations?

In addition, although I focus on the alignment of rhythms in the context of strategic change, rhythms are integral to nearly every kind of organizing process as individuals come together to work together. Thus future research might also consider contemporary phenomena that complicate the syncing of rhythms such as globally dispersed teams (Wilson et al., 2008), fast-paced technologies (Borch et al., 2015), and “flexible” contract work (Evans et al., 2004). They might ask how, given these challenges, organizational spatiotemporal structures come to be shared, how organizational stakeholders deviate from them, and the consequences of their deviations. I think that research attending to organizational rhythms might provide missing insights that can only come from the attention to the mundane, repetitive enactment of work.

5.4 LIMITATIONS AND RELATED FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Like any study, there are some limitations to this dissertation. The overarching limitations that I discuss here—as well as avenues for future research—stem from the empirical setting I study, the method I employ, and the way I write up the dissertation.

The first overarching limitation of my dissertation has to do with the empirical setting. When trying to find a case to study, researchers consider what kind of case it will be and how it might advance knowledge. Cases can be extreme, critical, unique, revelatory, or in this instance of my case study representative and typical (Yin, 2003). However, was it really representative and typical? The academics that I studied, though rationalized to be typical and representative have unique characteristics. First, most of the academics I studied are Dutch, and all of them work in Dutch academia. Although Dutch academia is situated in an international context, it has its own history and idiosyncrasies. In other national contexts, such offices might be considered even more unsuitable for academic work than expressed by some of the academics included in my study and could potentially have more dramatic effects on the organization. Future research might examine flexible open-plan offices in universities outside of the Netherlands. Second, the physical setting of the university in which the renovation was taking place happened to be in dire need of a renovation. The academics included in my study were sometimes physically disgusted by the (lack of) cleanliness of the building and often equated its aesthetic to a prison or dungeon. Thus, any improvement would be considered drastically better. Thus additional studies that examine organizations that implement such an office design based on ideological principles than sheer need might open up additional insights to the questions I posed in this research.

The second overarching limitation to my dissertation stems from my choice to ad-
dress my research questions with an ethnography. An ethnography offers rich insights regarding a group of people as reported by an ethnographer. This detail describes what a group of people does, and how the group makes sense of the world as an ethnographer interprets and reports it. As a result, this dissertation based on my ethnographic work is both infused with my perspective, and cannot be generalizable because it focuses on a relatively small social group. My aims, however, were not to offer an unbiased generalizable theory of what happens to academic work when academics move into open-plan offices with flexing arrangements, but rather to describe in great detail the processes I saw unfolding in my own words. Even so, I was disciplined and rigorous in my data collection, I relied on criteria of credibility and plausibility in my analyses, and in no way suggest that this is a definitive explanation of what happens to academic work in such an office. While I think my method of ethnography was the right one, I am delighted by all of the potential future research that might employ alternative methods for examining what space does, how material-semiotic things come to relate and make assemblages, and the rhythms of strategic change. These methods include diaries, videos (Mengis et al., 2016), walking (Nash, 2018), and photography (Bramming et al., 2012) that can complement the data gathered in an ethnography (Zundel et al., 2018).

The third overarching limitation to my dissertation stems from my choice to write it up as chapters targeting academic journals than as a monograph written like a traditional ethnographic book. Although I describe my choice more thoroughly in the introduction of this dissertation, I reiterate here that the purpose of writing up my dissertation in this way is both pragmatic and idealistic. It is pragmatic because I want to be published and have a career. My choice is also idealistic because I hope that by publishing empirical studies with ethnographic sensibilities theorizing from thick description might gain more legitimacy in the management and organization field (Cornelissen, 2017).

5.5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Because workspaces are so expensive, are relatively permanent, and offer a dizzying array of choices, I offer three practical suggestions for managers to consider when making decisions about what kind of workspace they want to offer employees when planning a renovation, move, or construction project. Elsbach and Pratt (2007) already made it clear in a review nearly a decade ago that these decisions will always be trade-offs, and that managers can be certain that any choice they make will result in some sort of inefficiency, resistance, or unexpected result. By considering the following three suggestions, managers will be better prepared to address these inefficiencies, resistances, and surprises.

5.5.1 Arranging the workspace in a way that recognizes the present and orients to a desired future

First, managers need to recognize the meanings, materialities, and practices already enacted in their organizations’ offices and identify what meanings, materialities, and practices they would like to see enacted in their future offices. This may seem like an obvious piece of advice, but managers often focus on one facet of a workspace (e.g., workspace occupancy), or fixate on one temporality (e.g., how the new office will reset how individuals in the organization work). Managers’ tendencies not to reconcile the present with the imagined future is problematic because change is never a blank slate, but rather as chapter four demonstrates, change is a dynamic of continuity and transformation. There are always lasting remnants from what came before impacting how the change will unfold. For example, if there is a strict hierarchy in an organization merely implementing an egalitarian office concept design will not change the practices or culture of the group. If this were a manager’s aim, she would need to consider additional interventions to instigate such a change.
5.5.2 Continually maintain organizational spaces

Second, managers should consider their role in managing a new office arrangement to be an ongoing process, not an episodic one. Before commencing my study, the consultant overseeing the renovation said he would be interested in finding out if my study substantiates his claim that organizations implementing flexible open-plan offices require follow-up interventions. My findings indicate that managers need to engage in maintenance work in a physical and social sense. Put differently, just as managers might hire maintenance workers to ensure lights continue to illuminate, doors continue to lock, and walls continue to keep rain, wind, and noise from seeping into workspaces, managers also need to do maintenance with regards to how organizational space is enacted. For example, that common areas continue to bring people together, desks continue to be flexed, and that people continue to come into the office. Thus, while I can definitively tell the consultant overseeing the renovation that workspaces do indeed need maintenance work, I cannot confirm whether or not a discussion session offered by the consulting firm is the best way to facilitate this maintenance.

5.5.3 Attempt to arrange space to afford certain kinds of organizing

Third, managers should consider what they want spaces to do. I am not suggesting that a certain kind of space result in certain outcomes over others, but as a whole, this dissertation suggests that the arrangement of various material-social things will constitute certain organizational practices over others. Even so, managers need to be open and consider organizational spaces as generative (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004). In order to try to stimulate certain types of organizing and organizational spacings, managers should be aware of where/when certain practices are occurring and with whom/what. If organization members enact certain desirable practices, managers should try to figure out why in order to preserve such an arrangement. If they do not, managers should consider altering the rhythms and configuration of material-social things in order to stimulate alternative organizing practices.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

With this doctoral thesis, I have demonstrated how organizational spaces are more than just the backdrop of organizations and organizing. By embracing and endorsing a constitutive approach to organizational space, I have shown that the arrangements and relations of socio-material things are multiple and processual, and, as a result, have implications for work, managing, and organizing. By specifically focusing on what happens to academic work when academics’ physical environments are replaced to resemble the commercial industry, I have established that these new configurations impact how academics make sense of themselves as well as disrupts the rhythms of their everyday lives. Office environments do more than anchor meaning and work practices—they can disturb and do things themselves as they are part of organizing.

With one systematic review of the literature and two empirical papers, I have shown how organizational space is involved in various management themes and that attending to organizational space brings additional insights that are often overlooked. In the second chapter, I took stock of all of the empirical research that has addressed organizational space as a process in order to better understand what has been found in the field and how the field can move forward. In the third chapter, I addressed professional identity with the spatial metaphor of figurations to illustrate that professional identity involves various arrangements made up of different kinds of relations with heterogeneous relata. In the fourth chapter, I demonstrated that the success of strategic change is not only contingent on sharing cognitions and attending to emotions, but also on addressing the spatio-temporal rhythms of everyday organizational life.

By reflecting on what this dissertation has found, I can say that the image of the paperless professor in an open-plan flexible office is far more disruptive than how
I observed it lived. Academics still find ways to make themselves solitary, whether this means putting on headphones or hiding from colleagues instead of shutting their door. Academics still read recent research, whether this is at their computers or on a tablet rather than photocopying physical journals at their universities’ libraries. Moreover, academics still co-write papers with colleagues, whether this means sitting in a conference room fervently writing ideas on a whiteboard or wearing headsets while Skyping with multiple colleagues across the globe rather than sending hard copies back and forth in the mail. In this regard, academic work must transform in order to endure.

REFERENCES


Cornelissen J, Mantere S and Vaara E (2014) The contraction of meaning: The
combined effect of communication, emotions, and materiality on sensemaking

of framing and frame analysis across the management and organizational


Courpasson D and Delbridge R (2017) Politics of place: The meaningfulness of

Courpasson D and Monties V (2017) “I am my body” Physical selves of police


Crevani L (2018) Is there leadership in a fluid world? Exploring the ongoing

Crouch A and Nimran U (1989) Perceived Facilitators and Inhibitors of Work

from the extreme case of Vann Nath, prisoner at S-21. *European Management

Cunliffe A and Coupland C (2012) From hero to villain to hero: Making
experience sensible through embodied narrative sensemaking. *Human

Cunliffe A (2011) Crafting qualitative research: Morgan and Smircich 30 years


Dale K (2005) Building an organizational materiality: Spatial and embodied

Dale K and Burrell G (2008) *The Spaces of organisation and the organization of

Dashtipour P and Rumens N (2018) Entrepreneurship, incongruence and affect:


Davis M, Leach D and Clegg C (2011) The Physical Environment of the Office:
Contemporary and Emerging Issues. In: Hodgkinson G and Ford J (eds)
Chichester, UK: Wiley.

California Press.

for a special issue on organizational control and surveillance of new work

De Vaujany F and Vaast E (2014) If these walls could talk: The mutual


SUMMARY

Where we work and how we work are intimately entwined. Where we work shapes what we can do, how we think, and how we feel. In addition, the arrangement of the spaces where we work happens to be a large decision managers contemplate because office arrangements are costly, relatively permanent, and riddled with tradeoffs. No doubt for these reasons, headlines continue to hyperbolize the promises and pitfalls of different office arrangements, and researchers call for more studies examining workspaces and organizing.

Recently, flexible open-plan offices have surfaced as a trendy office design sweeping across all kinds of organizations. Most often rationalized as saving costs, flexible open-plan offices have spread under the guise of stimulating interaction and creativity, reducing organizational hierarchy, facilitating flexible work arrangements, creating a light and airy atmosphere, and appearing modern and fashionable. This trend has mushroomed much faster than academic research has kept up with, and as a result, managers and workers alike wonder how do flexible open-plan offices influence my work?

This dissertation examines how one group of people, academics, do work and make sense of their work when situated in a flexible open-plan office. The iconic image of an academic is at her desk, surrounded by her books, papers, and coffee is disrupted with such an office, but how and in what ways? Does she, herself, become someone different? Does academia as a profession change? Might academics use these changes to their advantage? With an ethnographic case study of academics in such an office, this dissertation begins to answer these questions.

Before delving into empirical findings, this dissertation starts by examining what research has found about work, organizing, and organizational spaces. Given the increased use of mobile devices to carry out work, diminished boundaries between home and work, and the pervasiveness of virtual and distributed work, organizational scholars have started to center their research on the dynamic actions that create and alter spatial configurations. Unfortunately, until this chapter, literature that casts space as a process has not been reviewed making it difficult to synthesize ideas and pinpoint directions that research needs to go. By reviewing organizational literature that considers organizational space as a process, this chapter organizes the literature into five different clusters of scholarship. Each of these clusters have varying underlying assumptions, research questions, and findings, and contribute in different ways to understanding how work and organizing is wrapped up with space processually. It concludes with future directions for organizational space literature.

One of these directions is understanding how relations of people and things in organizations not only configure space, but also identities. With an ethnographic study of academics working in a dynamic work environment, chapter three demonstrates how academics relate to their environment and enact identity work to make sense of who they are in a flexible open-plan office environment over time. In doing so, the study identifies three relating practices through which various professional identity figurations emerge. These findings indicate that by relating to the people and things around them, academics come to make sense of who they are as professionals in a way that is common, but not homogenous, and repeatable but not stable.

With an understanding that workspaces influence how academics come to make sense of themselves, the fourth chapter of this dissertation examines how a leader can employ a change to an office environment to further her strategic vision of her group. By examining how a leader uses various kinds of frames and framing techniques, beyond cognitions and emotions, and how group members responded to her frames and refined them, this chapter suggests that change entails simultaneous embodied sensemaking and sensegiving. The findings indicate that in order for change to succeed, leaders must pay attention to specific embodied rhythms that employees live.

Taken together, this dissertation contributes to literature on organizational space,
professional identity, and strategic change. It highlights the importance of space when it comes to work, managing, and organizing, but does not assert that physical arrangements determine outcomes. Even so, it calls for researchers and managers to take space seriously by highlighting how it is wrapped up in defining who we are, what we do, and how we do it. As space continues to be experienced in different ways due to technology, this dissertation is only the start of a much needed body of scholarship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No individual accomplishment is ever one’s own. My name might be attributed to this book, but it is based on the work and collaboration of a number of actors. They are too many to count, but there are some people who must be named.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and thank my promoters. Svetlana and Joep, you two have been central to this project, this dissertation, and my socialization to the academic profession. Svetlana, thank you for seeing my potential already as a project manager at ABRI, and supporting me in every opportunity I sought during my PhD trajectory. I always knew that no matter what—good or bad—I could turn to you for your guidance and expertise. I appreciate your patience with me, your willingness to sit down with me and show me “how it is done.” Joep, I appreciate how you embraced my niche and quirky ideas and pushed me to develop them in a way that could be understood by the management community as well as open up what they/we know about work, managing, and organizing. I am nothing less than awestruck by your tireless work reading draft after draft of my writing, and your ability to help me think, theorize, and write better every single revision. It is an honor working with both of you. You have opened so many doors for me, and for that, I am filled with gratitude.

To my PhD reading committee, I thank you for your expertise and the time that you contributed to ensuring I earned my PhD. Alfons, Christine, Johan, Dennis, and Mark, it is a great honor for me to join you in scholarly conversation, and to host you for this joyous occasion. I thank you for taking the time to travel and discuss my work with me, and I look forward to future conversations in other forms such as journals, conferences, and workshops. Thank you Onno for joining as an opponent at my defense.

To my other co-authors, Linda, Ari, and Anu, this day would not come to fruition without you too. I have enjoyed our project immensely, I have learned so much from each one of you, and I have thrived with your support.
To my paranymphs, Claartje and Shannon, you both have been there for me and endured some of my more tumultuous experiences in life. I imagine the day of my defense will be no different—except for the amount of blood. I am so happy to be standing with you two strong women helping me defend my work and earn a new title.

To the numerous (and anonymous) participants that allowed me to spy on—I mean—interview and follow them. Thank you for letting me do so. This dissertation is just the beginning of publications I can develop on academic work and workspaces, and your participation has offered me a wealth of data from which I can build a career. Thank you.

To all of the staff who have supported me administratively, Ellen, Ellis, Ina, Inge, Maijke, Mira, Niki, Sandra, Sylvia, and also dear Francine, thank you for helping me especially in those moments I came to you anxious about whether or not I could accomplish something by a certain deadline. You have always made whatever I needed to happen by when I needed it to happen.

So many colleagues have shaped me through this trajectory. Tom, thank you for all your support both at the VU and in Liverpool. I am delighted that we will continue to be colleagues. Here’s to many Easyjet flights together Monday mornings from Schiphol! To my M&O colleagues, Chris, David, Donna, Evgenia, Floor, Geert Jan, Jingsu, Jos, Jost, Omar, Marco, Neil, Riku, whether it be short conversations in the hallway, support at conferences, delivering courses together, grading theses, or throwing memorable parties in my hometown of Chicago, thank you for all you have taught me and the fun we’ve had together. To my (former) officemate and partner in crime, Liselore, I have enjoyed every conversation we have had whether it be discussing action research to Ru Paul; you have made the PhD process much more bearable.

To Marleen, and fellow KIN members—Amanda, Bart, Ella, Fleur, Hans, Maura, Marijn, Marloes, Mohammad, Philipp, Stella—thank you for inviting me along to all of the KIN activities. You always made me feel one of the group, and I’ve learned so much from all of you. Anastasia and Stas, I enjoyed the dinners, interesting conversations, and bike and boat rides. Not only are you two brilliant, but you make for great company. Susan, being in your PhD cohort has been a dream. It was always so nice to come together and chat about what we are doing and where we were going. In addition, you always provided such practical and much needed advice.

My fellow SBE PhDs—many who are no longer PhDs—Brian, Caroline, Chen, Daniel, David, Inge, Jochem, Johannes, Julia, Julian, Lauren, Mathilde, Michiel, Nataja, Nick, Wendy, Yuval—thanks for the fun at PhD events, the PhD council, conferences, getting coffees, and even moving me from one house to another! To Mariel, thanks for all your support in the last weeks of writing my dissertation from a new city!

To Boukje, I am so happy that Joep introduced us already three years ago in Naples! I’m inspired by your energy, your enthusiasm, and your daringness. I have enjoyed our talks about work and life because of your sound advice. I have also enjoyed collaborating you on each project because of your vision and dependability. I look forward to all of our future endeavors.

To my academic siblings, Marlieke, Ruben, and Simon, you are always great fun, supportive, and I cherish the time we have spent together at the office, in Uitgeest, and especially at conferences. (Including trying to walk in a straight line with our eyes closed across the Piazza del Plebiscito, dinner in Copenhagen, and Malort in Chicago). You three are the best academic siblings a gal could ask for.

To Coach Iverson, Professor Schneider, Darcie, Joyce, and Lenore, thank you for sharing your passion and knowledge with me and pushing me to work hard. With your guidance, I have accomplished more than I ever imagined I could.

To the Rusty (and Rental) Bikes—Bron, Casper, Christina, Coco, Eelke, Fery, Fred, Galen, Gemma, Graham, Hilco, Inger, Jesse, Just, Marieke, Rogier, Rene, Rui, Sietse, Sam, and Willemijn. Thank you all for your love and support over the past 10 years! Thank you for keeping me alive and kicking during the years I was writing...
my dissertation, and for cutting me slack when turving or dropping your disc after
a long day of writing!

To the Weber-Fergusons, Mark, Julie, Emile, and Celine, thanks for all you love and
support. I think you know that you have made my life in the Netherlands possible,
and that you have been a home away from home. I cherish our memories and look
forward to making more.

To the group, Goodness you folks helped me get through this project day by day,
week by week, and year by year. You were always there when I needed you with
a conversation to distract me, a cold beer to help me endure, a couch to sit and
listen, two arms to give me a hug. Adriaan, thank you for your ceaseless warm
welcoming nature, delicious food, interesting stories, and entertaining beer taps
mishaps. Bronwyn, your willingness to listen to what it is that I do and feedback
is invaluable, your invitations for “nights in” were always what I needed, and your
encouragement has helped me immensely when writing this dissertation. To Trini
thanks for holding me accountable to take breaks and accomplish great things.

To Bicyclemark, thank you for always getting my references, for challenging me to
do better/think better/be better, and for all the fun we have had since we met my
first day in Amsterdam. To Jack, I am so lucky to have someone close by (when
not in Australia), who I respect immensely to talk about our chosen profession.
Mara, your ability to assess how I am feeling and what I should do in any given
situation is uncanny. I cannot imagine how I would have survived the last year of
my dissertation without our runs to Krajicek, and your ability to make everything
seem alright. To Lisa, your energy is contagious, and it has helped me finish this
project that seemed to drag on and on.

To Tris, you are always eager to listen and share about what is interesting in con-
temporary work. To Nan, you are around to re-establish order and help me get
things done. Tris and Nan you have always been charitable and supportive es-
pecially at the moments when academia seemed to make me most vulnerable.
To Carine, you’ve been there for everything from day one. More times than I can
count you have raised my spirits, dragged me out the door to take a break, and
given me advice—not just how you see it, but how you see I’d see it. Thanks for
everything you do. To Seton, you are not just good company, a bikkie of a workout
buddy, a brilliant designer, but a true friend. Thanks for putting so much energy
into the design of this book.

To the bunch—How do you thank people who know you better than yourself?
Who support you over the Christmas holidays willing to set up “the office” so
you can complete your work instead of watching Elf? Who in 7th grade made up
an irritating nickname—Professor Katie—only to predict her pursuit of a PhD?
Each one of you are brilliant, hilarious, and above all loving. I can’t imagine a
bunch of people I aspire to be like more. To Garrett, although Kirsten and I may be
“academics” by profession, you’re the true academic of the bunch. Thank you for
all of your insights, challenges, and sheer interest in the work I do. Jaclyn, your
ability to break tension in an awkward situation coupled with your giving heart
make you one of my dearest and most relied on confidants. To Kirsten, after
talking hotdogs on that Prairie stage all 26 years ago we’d end up here with PhDs
within 2 weeks of each other. It’s certainly a different occupation than we thought
we’d end up in. You continue to surprise me with your work ethic, your continued
willingness to sacrifice for others, and your secret accomplishments (and jobs)
that you refuse to share with others. Thanks for all your support over the years.

To my family, Alice, Robert, Rimke, Pepijn, and Julanna, from the day we met I
felt the warm embrace of your love and support. Moving away from my family and
friends became much easier with your care for my wellbeing and career. I thank
you for taking me in as one of your own.

To my copy editors. Tom, you are selfless and hardworking, and you have always
been more than willing to help in any way including proofreading cover letters, lis-
tening to me complain about my work, and for making the coffee when we’d both
be up at 6am on a holiday to complete work related tasks. Shannon, even though
we live far apart it never really feels that far because of the continued support and
love. From checking if the lists were up at 500 Charles Avenue, to “improvising” at the jazz band pancake breakfast, to escaping Elenbaas’s field trip from hell, to assisting and scoring on the lacrosse field, we’ve had quite a history together, and you’ve always been there with me. Thank you for all you do every day, but also for all your contributions to my dissertation. Mom, your love and support is unwavering, your belief in my capabilities is encouraging, and your smile is contagious. Thank you for always being present at important things, and rooting for me. Dad, your stories of “getting off the roof” and your dedication to our family has not only left be with gratitude, but triggered my interest in the ways in which people make sense of their work, and their motivations for doing work. In addition, you’ve always encouraged me to develop my language and writing skills from getting that giant dictionary off from the top of the bookshelf to look up synonyms, to quizzing me on how to spell (very easy) words. You’re probably happy to hear you’re the culprit leading to my dissertation. Thank all of you, copyeditors, for your love and proofreading.

Elgin, this PhD would have been impossible without you. For the last two years, Elgin, you kept our home in order, kept me well fed, and kept me happy and, more importantly, sane. You suffered sleepless nights alongside me when anxious about a paper, you read drafts of my work with a perfectionist’s eye for typos, and you accepted that holidays would be replaced with me sat at my desk or at conferences in foreign cities without you. I don’t know if ten years ago as an undergraduate, when we met and I told you I wanted to go do a PhD you knew what you signed up for, but I’m incredibly privileged to have you by my side. Thank you for all you’ve sacrificed so that I could accomplish my dream.

**ABRI DISSERTATION SERIES**


PAPERLESS PROFESSORS: A STUDY OF CHANGING ACADEMIC WORK AND WORKSPACES

Recently, flexible open-plan offices have surfaced as a trendy office design sweeping across all kinds of organizations. This dissertation examines how one group of people, academics, do work and make sense of their work when situated in a flexible open-plan office. The iconic image of an academic is at her desk, surrounded by her books, papers, and coffee is disrupted with such an office, but how and in what ways? Does she, herself, become someone different? Does academia as a profession change? Might academics use these changes to their advantage? With an ethnographic case study of academics in such an office, this dissertation begins to answer these questions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathleen A. Stephenson is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management at the University of Liverpool Management School. She earned her PhD at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Prior to her PhD research, Kathleen received her Master of Arts degree in Cultural Analysis (cum laude) from the University of Amsterdam, and Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and Cultural Studies (summa cum laude) from Drake University. Her research interests include workspaces and organizing, ethnography, process research, identity, and organizational change.