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The Street and Organization Studies

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Abstract

Work and organization increasingly happen in transit. People meet in coffee shops and write emails from their phones while waiting for buses or sitting outdoors on benches. Business meetings are held in airports and projects are run from laptops during travel. We take the street as a place where organizing in transit accumulates. While the organization studies field has been catching up with various related phenomena, including co-working, digital nomadism, and mobile and online communities, we argue that it has overlooked what has historically been the most important site for organizational activity outside of organizations. The street has been both location and inspiration for organizing, whether political, social, or governmental. It is a space of both planning and spontaneity, of silent co-existence and explicit conflict, and therefore offers abundant empirical and methodological opportunities. It is surprising that the street and the experiences it brings with it have remained largely outside the scope of organization studies. We suggest that organization scholars take to the street, and offer recommendations as to how to do so. Specifically, we explore the tensions that become apparent when organizing happens in and through the street.

Keywords

Introduction

The organization studies field is almost ignorant of the one place that for centuries has been the most common site for organizing: the street. On the street, people walk, talk, drive, exercise, interact, transport, trade, navigate traffic, beg, consume, fight, attack, steal, riot, protest, evangelise, and advertise. People increasingly also use the street to conduct telephone calls and to read and compose correspondence. Some listen to podcasts, conduct walking meetings, or simply enjoy the pleasure of walking to facilitate the generation of new ideas. The street, we would argue, is both a long-standing location for organizational activity and a relatively new setting for the contemporary organization of work.

We also argue that inherent in the historical development of the street is a tension that is frequently encountered in our field at large. In Europe, for example, the street, both as a physical setting and as a concept, has been something that must be controlled or managed, as well as a space that facilitates the unexpected and spontaneous. The Roman Empire introduced infrastructure to mobilise armed forces and resources through its territories, making roads a constructed indicator of control. At the same time, people have also constructed their own experiences of their surroundings. During the medieval period, people's sense of belonging centred not on cities or boroughs, but rather on sites such as castles, churches, and cemeteries (Guerreau, 1986; Mazel, 2016). Space was experienced as a set of poles and places to be transversed in time (Guerreau, 1986). In fact, the word *spatium* emerged in the Middle Ages and indicated a lapse in time (Mazel, 2016).

A good example that illustrates how streets reflect both attempts at control and the freedom of experiencing space is provided by the *traboules* of Lyon, France. *Traboules* are

medieval short cuts, which emerged between the fourth and fifteenth centuries in Lyon's Saint-Jean neighbourhood. During this time, the city experienced a shift in how space was managed, with streets and other passages transitioning from shared spaces to either public or private spaces. The word *traboule* comes from the Latin *transambulare*, meaning 'to move through' (Blanchard, 2011), the word itself already indicating an action or an experience. *Traboules* were antidotes to the top-down approach to organizing space, as a *traboule* 'does not follow the logic of the city, avoids official roads, royal streets or long detours. A *traboule* links shores, establishes bridges, short-cuts the city, and links parallel streets which, for geometrical reasons should never meet' (Marmande, 1985, p. 107). *Traboules* are liminal spaces, in the sense that they were neither private property nor under the city's jurisdiction. They are shared but not public. Those who use them—local merchants then, tourists now—are permitted to move through, but cannot claim ownership.

The short history of the *traboule* exemplifies the ambiguous status of many types of urban space which, over time, fluctuated between public, private, and somewhere in between. Streets are for shared use, but the extent to which people can claim access or ownership depends on current regulations, as well as the identity and status of the individual in question. Processes of exclusion (subtle or explicit, formal or informal) define the street, as do claims to its shared nature. Interestingly, the tension between formal, organized space (for example, royal and Roman roads) and shared, informal space (Lyon's *traboules*), is also evident in the etymologies of the different words for street. The English word 'street' comes from the Old English *stret*, or *stræt*, which in turn is derived from the Late Latin *strata*, used elliptically for *via strata*: a paved road. These origins allow us to see the street as an artefact or a tool, something created for the purpose of guiding and managing movement. By contrast, the French word for 'street', *rue*, comes from the Latin *ruga*, meaning 'wrinkle'. *Rue* connotes not a tool, but rather an assemblage of ways, houses, and inhabitants, wrinkling itself into an urban landscape.

Our field is also characterised by a continuous investigation of the relationship between what is given and what emerges, or between organizing as a verb, and organization as a noun (Hernes, 2014). Much like the different types of streets that exist—from the Haussmannian boulevards of Paris, which gave the army room to manoeuvre its vehicles through the city, to other types of historical and ever-emerging short cuts—organizing and organization embody a continuous oscillation between that which is given or planned and the instantaneous or the improvised. Nevertheless, organizational scholars apparently continue to favour the comfortable quarters of furnished, centrally heated, and often privately-owned organizational spaces. Even if our field has developed a strong interest in liminal, transitional, or boundary-spanning places (Courpasson, Dany, & Delbridge, 2016; Shortt, 2014), these spaces still tend to have four walls and a ceiling. Much of this may have to do with the origins of organization theory and its focus on questions of control, confinement, and restriction (Fayol, 1919), the minutiae of which tend to be more easily scrutinised in closed-off spaces, where variables can be controlled and manipulated.

The street, we would argue, is an interesting focal point at which to examine the situated nature of organizing and organization. The aim of our essay is to make explicit the constantly changing modes of relation between organizations, organizing, and the street. We identify four such modes: (i) organizing that takes place *on* the street, (ii) organizing *through* the street, (iii) the organization's entry onto the street, and, finally, (iv) the street's entry into the organization. We argue here that it is precisely the co-occurrence of *both* the symbolic (the street as a style) and the material (the physical sites that make up urban space) that, in different ways, provides avenues for thinking through the relationships between the organization, organizing, and outside spaces.

The Street as a Site for Organizing

The street is not unidimensional but rather acts as shorthand for open, outdoor spaces, in urban or sub-urban environments, that are accessible to different types of users. Indeed, we concur with scholars in science and technology studies, who have emphasised that common conceptions of urban space should be decentred (Farías & Bender, 2009) and that the street's social aspects should be investigated in light of new developments, for instance by considering how the development of new technologies such as self-driving cars can turn the street into a laboratory (Marres, 2018). The ever-changing social nature of the street does not carry the same meaning to everyone, as new and continuously improving connectivity allows some to turn their commute into efficient work time and others to be on call as members of the precarious cohort of ubiquitous service providers, such as Uber drivers (Peticca-Harris, De Gama, & Ravishankar, 2018).

In adopting this non-essentialist and historically situated understanding of the street, we can explore its relationship to organizing and organization. Returning to the work of Weick (1979), the term 'organizing' connotes practices (Czarniawska 2005; 2008) and processes. It has also been defined as the 'connecting of heterogeneous actors' (Hernes, 2014, p. vii) and is often used with an adjective, e.g. temporary organizing (Bakker, DeFillippi, Schwab, & Sydow, 2016), or alternative organizing (Reedy, King & Coupland, 2016). Understood in this way, the street is replete with organizing. For street vendors (Bromley, 2000; Cross, 2000), buskers (Kaul, 2014; Richter, 2012), door-to-door salespeople (Harrison, Massi & Chalmers, 2014), taxi drivers (Faber, 2005; Monroe, 2016), police agents (Machin & Marie, 2011; Martin, 2018), postal workers (Geddes, 2005), employees of waste removal companies (Brinkmann & Tobin, 2001), homeless people (Balkin, 1992; Snow and Anderson, 1993), and maintenance workers (Denis & Pontille, 2018), the street is an integral part of their economic activity, and the ability to predict its rhythms is part of everyday organizing. Street-based work is associated with casual

labour as well as with illegality and danger, for example, in the drug trade (Gootenberg, 2009; Ruggiero & South, 1997) and in sex work (Roche, Neaigus & Miller, 2005; Weitzer, 2009). These associations are not the result of any true nature, or 'essence,' of the street, but rather stem from the specific material qualities the street may offer, such as the preservation of anonymity. With digital technologies accessible in the street (Powell, 2011), online platforms and messenger services are reconfiguring much of the gig work happening on the street, giving us the opportunity to investigate what street-based organizing means for those on either side of these transactions, as well as for our understandings of the relationship between the street and the organization.

The Street as a Mode of Organizing

One important way in which the street and the organization have often been thought together, is the street's role as an integral part of political organizing, invoked in the expression 'taking to the streets'. In a way, blocking a street at its centre impedes all movement of the city. One need only look at the mass protests of the last and current centuries to see that political change, an organizational endeavour, is often achieved through a presence on the street, as well as an engagement with the street as a concept. For example, not only did the global protest movement 'Occupy Wall Street' do exactly that, but, in its spread across the globe, the Wall Street address became a metonym for the institutions and mechanisms that the activists opposed. In fact, during the protests that took place in Paris in 1968, the street was a place in which to gather, but also symbolised the controlling measures put in place by those in power; we may cite, for example, the slogan '*sous les pavés, la plage*!' ('underneath the pavement lies the beach!').

The street does not only feature as both tool and object of political protest, but it has also played a key role in the emergence of the image of the modern, reflexive individual.

Balzac's *Ferragus*, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Perec's *Life: A User's Manual*, Dostojevski's *Crime and Punishment*, Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, and many other seminal European novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been set in urban landscapes, which has associated the independently thinking individual with urban space (Tygstrup, 2007). The close relationship between the street and the individual's independence is also evident in hip hop's associations of the street with status and intelligence (e.g., in terms such as 'street cred' and 'street smart'). Further examples are myriad, such that, in many contexts, the practice of moving around the city on foot immediately indicates a state of solitary reflection (Solnit, 2001). Perhaps the clearest intertwining of individual creativity and street-dwelling is found in the *dérive*, a technique of seemingly purposeless urban dwelling developed by the mid-20th century Paris-based collective of artists and Marxist intellectuals known as the Situationist International (Debord, 1956; Bonard & Capt, 2009). The tradition is currently kept alive by British literary writers and artists such as Sinclair, Keiller, and Self (Coverley, 2018), and the *dérive* continues to exemplify the political potential of a solitary roaming of the streets.

In response to this tradition, here have also been calls to understand the political organization of the street from a non-Western viewpoint (Mbembe & Nuttall, 2008; Robinson 2006), or in the context of working-class immigrant communities (Whyte, 1943). Others have critiqued the romanticised perspective on walking the street alone, an activity that, for many, is not without risks. For example, a woman alone on the street has classically been connected to promiscuity, evident in the term 'streetwalker' (Ferris, 2007). In the realm of contemporary fine art, Qualmann and Sharrocks's *Walking Women* brought together female artists who engage with the gendered experience of navigating the street. Numerous further examples could be given, many of which emphasise that, for women, the street offers freedom as well as danger (Wilson, 1992). Hence, we espouse the view that the street is not necessarily a harmonious space for equal exchange and tranquil reflection, but is also the realm of agonistic encounters

(Mouffe, 2013), in which different and potentially conflicting social groups exist alongside each other.

Noteworthy exceptions to the general absence of the street in our field have observed this political or conflict-ridden aspect to the street and have, as such, recognised it as what may be termed a 'mode' of organizing. In an organizational study at street level, Fernández (2017) studied an activist movement active on the streets of Buenos Aires. Focusing on the practice of putting roadblocks all over Argentina, the study focuses on the cooperative's decision to move the locus of their action back to their own neighbourhood. They normalise their resistance by organizing the streets; for instance, by inviting a banking service to take up residency on the main street in their area.

In contrast to transformative attempts, Islam, Zyphur, and Boje (2008) see in the street the potential to preserve local culture. Their study concerns a carnival group parading in the annual Krewe du Vieux float two weeks prior to New Orleans' world-famous Mardi Gras parade. The authors analyse how the Krewe du Vieux float, in which people walk or use donkey-carts, is more in touch with the street than the institutionalised tractor-pulled floats parading during Mardi Gras. Here also, the street is not only a setting, but the act of being on the street (and choosing not to elevate oneself above it) is an inherent part of the point being made, and can be read in line with earlier work on the class-dimensions of carnival (Da Matta, 1991).

Also drawing attention to the politics of the local, Courpasson (2017) investigates how mundane gestures become subversive when performed in the workplace. Here, the street is a space away from work that offers a break to people who choose to have lunch there: 'we escape, and we walk for five or ten minutes together to go to another place, these walking minutes are great because we are nowhere to be controlled' (Courpasson, 2017, p. 489;). Again, the street

is more than a setting. Walking along the street instead of the office hallways, even if only for several minutes, can allow people to shift to a different mindset.

Furthermore, in a study of a Swedish suburb some 20 kilometres from Stockholm, Barinaga (2016) found that the creation of mural paintings became a tool in challenging the stigma of the area. In her study, the street is approached as a canvas for artistic murals, but working on the street also becomes a means of 'rearticulating the socio-spatial dynamic' (Barinaga 2016, p. 944). Much in line with the idea of a mode of organizing, Barinaga's study sees public outdoor space as constitutive of a specific organizational phenomenon.

Other research has also revealed that the street is not merely a setting, but also acts as a mode of organizing and forms an inherent part of the phenomenon at hand. A study of the annual Edinburgh Fringe Festival has revealed how performance artists use different parts of the street in the inner city, thereby constituting new types of space (Munro & Jordan, 2013). Similarly, a study of a volunteer organization in Montréal emphasised how walking children to school in a group challenged existing boundaries between organizations and social groups (Plourde, Vásquez & Del Fa, 2016), while a study of a purposefully unplanned section of pavement behind Amsterdam's Central Station revealed how cyclists and pedestrians are required to engage in self-organizing (Van Oorschot, 2017). While the settings and specificities of these studies are widely varied, each concludes that the situated and embodied ways of being on the street matter. Nonetheless, all these studies frame the street as a setting, and do not theorise the street. We believe that framing the street as a distinctive mode of organizing is the first step toward considering the political potential of organizing not just on, but *with* the street.

Organizations Entering the Street

While the previous sections have focused on instances of organiz*ing*, we also observe an increasingly busy intersection between the street and formal organizations, the latter seeming to make it their business to enter and engage with the street. One need only look at the history of jaywalking, which became a punishable offence as a result of automobile manufacturers' efforts (Norton, 2007), or the ways in which commercial firms have taken up space on the street through advertising. In many urban environments, billboards, posters, and animated screens colonise the street in increasingly advanced ways. The street then becomes an organizational or even bureaucratic space, where rules are made more visible than in any other societal contexts. Traffic signs, pedestrian crossings, and speed-bumps, amongst other things, make social regulations material and explicit.

Formal organizations, such as for-profit actors, can now also capture more of people's attention and effort through their smartphones and mobile devices. Public Wi-Fi, laptops, and smartphones facilitate work on the street or outside the place of work. Assembled under the umbrella term 'smart city', these new technological possibilities also help governments to plan the organization of cities on the levels of public transport, waste removal, or crowd control (Vanolo, 2014). Citizens engage in open or critical mapping projects and community architecture to regain a sense of control over their immediate urban environment (Hilgers & Ihl, 2010), but such democratic or self-organized initiatives often also entail an 'infiltration' of street life by more professional practices or entities.

Manifestations of firms on the street raise issues of locality and simultaneity that question the definition of an organization by its physical location only. When an organization is exposed to outdoor spaces, we observe an imbrication (Taylor & Van Every, 2011) of situated encounters, actions, processes, and experiences happening outside of those practices usually considered to 'scale up' (Cooren & Fairhurst, 2004) to organizations. As a result, formal organizations seep through into various street-based social processes. We believe that the

reverse may also be observed, and wish next to discuss the increasingly 'street-like' nature of some types of formal organizations. These two mirror images should be considered in relation to one another, prompting us to wonder whether organizational members become more welcoming towards street-like elements entering their organizational spaces because their mobile devices have already allowed them to take parts of their work life outside, to the street.

The Street Entering Organizations

How are the street, its aesthetics, or its presumed principles incorporated in formal organizations? Companies try to encourage more movement within the walls of their offices, often through policies of hot- and flex-desking, open-plan offices, and spaces designed for flexible use (Fabbri, 2016). However, we argue that organizations do not merely encourage movement and encounters but also incorporate street-like features, such as mural paintings in 'street art' fashion, benches in hallways, and food trucks and barista corners, transforming the entrance halls and foyers of companies into landscapes that evoke street life.

We also think that, with some imagination, the metaphor of the street may be extended to encompass the ongoing flexibilisation of labour. In many countries, job security for highly educated workers has decreased (Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Helfen, 2015; Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2018), and, in particular, those who seek to execute knowledge-intensive, cultural, or creative work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2010; 2011) are compelled to accept project-based work and self-employment, leading to the emergence of what some have termed a new precarious class (Gill & Pratt, 2008). While those with somewhat creative or intellectually stimulating jobs may at least take pleasure in a more bohemian lifestyle (Eikhof & Haunshild, 2006; McRobbie, 2015), scholars have also argued that the new precariat is partially characterised by boredom (van den Berg & O'Neill, 2017). The lack of permanent

employment opportunities within organizations has led to the emergence of work environments catering specifically to independent, precarious workers, many of whom are not precarious by choice (Avkidos & Kalogeresis, 2016). In fact, scholars have recently started to acknowledge how flexible and creative workplaces such as co-working spaces (Gandini, 2015; Garrett, Spreizer & Bacevice, 2017), business incubators (Ebbers, 2014), and creative hubs (Cnossen & Bencherki, 2019) may help to conceal or reinforce inequalities (Gill, Pratt & Virani, 2019), for example, by giving people the opportunity to appear content and busy in the absence of dependable work.

If using the image of the street to signify the emergence of the gig-economy (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2018) and the new middle-class precariat may seem too much of a stretch, we need only consider that many urban spaces typically aimed at consumption are now in fact populated with independent workers, carrying their laptops from café to café. This phenomenon may be characterised as both the street entering organizations (the street being a metaphor for casual work and informal-looking work environments catering to freelancers) and the organization entering the streets, since freelancers may also be found conducting their work from urban places such as parks and public benches, where practices of leisure and consumption may co-exist alongside their working activities.

Although the spatial turn in organization studies (Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010) has brought to the field greater awareness of the material, aesthetic, affective, and symbolic elements of organizational spaces, to date, no investigation has examined the manifestations and consequences of that which we now call the colonisation of the street by formal organizations and the increasingly street-like appearance of formal organizations. For example, if the street can indeed act as a mode of organizing, organizational scholars should ask whether this mode of organizing also enters organizations when they become more street-like in terms of their aesthetics and spatial layout.

Moreover, while some scholarship has examined high-skilled employees' mobility and experiences of disorientation as a result of working in transit (Costas, 2013), this research has focused mostly on non-places (e.g., airports and stations), which typically convey a generic atmosphere and aesthetic. By contrast, research into workers-on-the-go might specifically investigate the role of the street in their rhythms and experiences of work, as well as looking not only at elite, but also at precarious and/or low-skilled mobile workers and the darker side of street business.

Researching on and with the Street

To present our suggestions for research at the intersection of organizations, organizing, and the street in a more structured and extensive manner, we now offer an example of a performance art piece that the first author attended. We chose this piece, which took place on the street, as a means of illustrating the different tensions that may be identified in the intersection between street, organization, and organizing. These tensions are each related to the first observation that the street, as setting and as concept, is characterised by formal, as well as informal, elements. Identifying these tensions, with the help of our short example, will help us to suggest ways in which organization scholars can engage with the street, which we believe offers ample methodological and epistemological opportunity. To this, we will propose an agenda with research questions and designs for organizational scholars. Rather than designing a typology that is intended to capture reality, these tensions are aimed at orienting the reader and linking our observations to well-established discussions in organization studies, pertaining to issues of structure (formal/informal), practice (routine/improvisation), and experience (presence/absence).

The performance piece in question, entitled HOME, was created by Hilde Tuinstra, a artist active in the Netherlands and Germany. HOME consisted of a theatrical audio-tour around Buikslotermeerplein in Amsterdam, a large square next to a shopping centre in a traditionally working-class area in the city's northern district. Tuinstra worked on this project for over a year, engaging in a type of artistic ethnography with the neighbourhood immediately surrounding the shopping centre. During this time, she was interested in the upcoming changes that the neighbourhood was about to experience. In particular, the long-anticipated construction of a new underground train line offering Amsterdam's northern district a much quicker connection not only to the city centre but also to the city's financial district.

HOME can be seen as both performance art and participatory art. To offer some brief background: in the fields of fine art and theatre, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a movement that mimicked, or led, the much wider-spread need for democratisation of public institutions. Much like the student protests, many artists no longer wished to cater to the demands of what they felt were hermetic and hierarchic institutions, and took their practice outside, sometimes to the streets.

Furthermore, bringing artistic work into the ongoing flows and interactions of everyday life is often recognised as having political potential because it offers people the possibility of adopting a new perspective (Mairesse, 2014). According to Rancière (2000), aesthetical practices and judgements are always political, because they promote an order or a hierarchy of valuation. Aesthetics are thus also capable of challenging existing orders, and can be used productively in protests and social movements (Bassett, 2014) as well as in other interventions in existing organizational contexts (Mairesse, 2014; Papastergiadis, 2014). Hence, we should ask not what certain artworks are, but rather what they do (Deutscher, 2000). Here, art can be understood as a system of action (Gell, 1998) and an affordance for social encounters or

individual contemplation (Tygstrup, 2017). This, to our minds, offers clues to the potential benefits (and the potential pitfalls) of taking the organization outside.

The example of Tuinstra's performance discloses a set of tensions that exist in the street and disrupt the flow of work and organizing in ways that invite theorising and, for a start, a set of research questions. Put briefly, these tensions cohere around formal versus informal organization, routine versus improvisation, and presence versus absence. Let us begin with how HOME relates to the question of formal versus informal organization.

Taking part in this experience, the participants gathered in a pop-up cultural venue located in a former Chinese restaurant. It was a Saturday afternoon in December, and very cold by local standards. The participants, including the first author, were given headphones and the group of around twenty people headed outside. Each of them was immersed in the beautiful soundscapes that they heard through our individual headphones, yet they also had to coordinate their actions, as they had to walk from one point to the next. Although instructions were given, visual clues and gestures were used among the participants to encourage one another to move along. At different points, local residents performed their autobiographies through a combination of pre-recorded and well-timed storytelling, and a performance by the person in question, often in silence and at a distance. The combination of the intimate story and the distant, but visually impressive, bodily postures enhanced the participants' awareness of their own presence. How were they walking, standing, sitting? How did their own actions shape the situation? Should they surrender to the dramaturgical precision of sound, story, and sight, or should they interrupt the scripted instructions and say something in response?

Furthermore, for HOME, Tuinstra collected stories and biographies from local residents who reflected on the neighbourhood, its changes, and their personal connections to it. When the first author met the artist, she was in the midst of this process, and going into a café located

on the aforementioned square meant running into at least several informants. Embedded in the local tapestry, the artist continuously opened herself up to unplanned encounters. She began to inhabit an unknown environment and positioned herself as an inquisitive newcomer, rather than a performer or creator. Typical of this kind of art, she was open to incorporating everything that she encountered into her creative process. In approaching this from a researcher's perspective, it becomes clear that everything can be data. The artist's working process implied conducting an in-depth investigation into an environment that was open and undefined. Tuinstra finally constructed a multi-media theatrical tour around the neighbourhood. The artwork can thus be seen as consisting of both the experience that Tuinstra eventually offered her audience and the research and social ties that were created along the way. The artwork plays with the tension of routine versus improvisation.

Via the headphones, the participants in HOME were present in the immediate physical environment and enveloped in a virtual world. The feeling was comparable to the sensation of navigating the street while listening to one's favourite music: wrapped in a solitary blanket of private sounds, yet utterly enchanted with the surrounding world. At some moments, it seemed as though the music was telling the story of the trees, cars, and people passing by; your thoughts are your own, but they are amplified by the immediate uniqueness of this moment, this place. The music may be interrupted by a call that streams through the same headphones and enters your personal space. Should you respond to this immediate demand, or remain encapsulated in the moment? When you leave your house or place of work to attend a meeting, do you stop to look at graffiti signs, or do you travel in an uninterrupted straight line, as if traversing a void? Encounters with strangers may pull you out of your thoughts and into the here and now of ordering something or responding to a request for directions. These questions relate to the tension of presence versus absence that often characterises work and communication on mobile devices while in transit.

Taking Organization Studies to the Street

We propose that the street is not merely a setting for research, nor an object, but argue that it has value as a methodological and epistemological device, and wish to offer several directions for conducting research on and with the street. The street has long been a site and a mode of organizing. Furthermore, formal organizations are increasingly intertwined with street life, as we argued above. Not only do mobile technologies facilitate working in transit, but the interiors of organizations have acquired street-like aesthetics: large glass windows, imitations of graffiti pieces, and open spaces bring the atmosphere of urban space inside. The street is an empirical setting of shifting and hybrid roles of production, and research on phenomena outside of—or predating—the grand theories in management and organization science (von Krogh, Rossi-Lamastra, & Haefliger, 2012) provides an opportunity to revisit these theories (Bamberger, 2018).

Navigating the tension between formal and informal structures, individuals can explore various paths of consuming and producing, earning and spending. Hence, organization scholars may study the street as a location for novel forms of crowd-based organizing (Majchrzak, Griffith, Reetz & Alexy, 2018) and liquid consumption (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017). For example, people come up with ideas, set up shop, or review products with a few touches on the screens of their smartphones while on the go. For knowledge workers with flexible work hours and locations, mobile information technology and improvements in public transport are turning the street into a more attractive place to work, away from boredom and amidst the flow of public life, fresh encounters, and better coffee. At the same time, particularly in western cities, the street and its adjacent spaces are carefully planned and monitored. When do we amend space and make it our own? Structures can be subverted and practices may follow a straight path or take a detour. We must study and reflect on the situatedness of these modes

of connecting and interacting, and conceptualise these as aspects of organizations that happen beyond the traditional temporal and spatial boundaries.

The performance piece HOME helps to exemplify the different ways in which the street is relevant to the empirical and conceptual understanding of organizing and organization. The street is both formal and informal, and allows for both routine and improvisation. Being in different types of urban space, with different purposes in mind (transit, leisure, or work), is conducive to different types of experience, which are increasingly mediated through various modes of connectivity.

In conclusion, we believe that exploring the street helps understand some of the tensions pertaining to, and constituting, work and organizing processes today. Planned routes with room for adjustment, well-established practices for co-existence with the possibility of surprises (good or bad), and a continuous oscillation between presence and absence through mobile device use, all make the street a setting that exemplifies the issues and phenomena relevant to organization studies.

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