Organising global work travel:
An ethnography of the travelling organisation

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List of Acronyms

ProQuip	Project and Equipment Company
MPW	Mobile project workers
FOS	Formal Organisation Studies
CMS	Critical Management Studies
ParentCo	Parent corporation
MetalCo	Metal corporation
GlassCo	Glass corporation
PaperCo	Paper corporation
WoodCo	Wood corporation
ClayCo	Clay corporation
SiliCo	Silicon corporation
QuipCo	Equipment Company
ManQuip	Manufacturing Equipment Company
ChairCo	Chair company
BAs	Business areas
MEs	Market enterprises
PMO	Project Management Organisation
PEA	Project Engineering and Automation
MOS	Management and Organisation Studies
IHRM	International Human Resource Management

ASEP	Austrian Sound and Electric Plastics
RAP	Russian Aerospace Plastics
RCP	Rojo Car Parts
EPL	Electrical project leader
TPL	Technical project leader
APL	Automation project leader
PPL	Process project leader
ENA	Europe and Northern Asia
OSEAA	Oceania, Southeast Asia, and Australia
AME	Africa and the Middle East
CA	Central Asia
SCNA	South, Central, and North America
HPO	Hard Plastics Organisation
SPO	Soft Plastics Organisation
GNP	General Nonreactive Plastics
MM	Medical Moulding

Abstract

This thesis explores the organisation of global work travel. The practice of work travel denotes different modes of working away from a permanent workplace, such as an office or factory, where professionals like engineers are typically required to travel to remote locations to perform their work. In particular, I find that work travel encompasses five forms of mobility: geographical movement; being away; engaging in travelling; enacting the traveller; and utilising digital technologies. I identify two challenges that work travel posits to the discipline of Management and Organisation Studies (MOS). First, that work related mobilities like work travel are generally studied as discrete entities disconnected from the organisations within which they emerge. Second, organisations are generally perceived as static and bounded units, where I specifically question the applicability of established organisation theory to the practice of work travel since this theory is derived from, and usually applied and researched in static settings that are unlike the conditions surrounding work travel.

Over the course of a 12-month ethnography in a multinational engineering company, ProQuip, I studied how work travel is practised by engineers who are regularly expected to travel to remote locations to engage in factory-building work on client sites. These professionals spend most of their working lives outside of the premises of their employing organisation, often away from their national cultures and countries. In order to understand how work travel, a practice that is inherently dynamic and based outside of the permanent organisation, is organised, I investigated what forms of control are applied outside of conventional organisational settings. I identify three modes of control that affect the organising of work travel, specifically formal, social, and ‘other’ organising. I first studied formal organisational control mechanisms that were deployed from the central organisation and its offices to ProQuip’s peripheral offices and sites. Second, I accounted for a range of social mechanisms and behaviours that organised travel, discovering a Travelling Organisation that substitutes ProQuip formal control where it does not extend. Finally, I considered ‘other’ modes of control that are not institutionalised within the MOS discourse, such as Organisation by Product. I argue that all three perspectives are instrumental for gaining a richer picture of work travel. I find that in studying work travel as an activity, the interrelation between ProQuip and travelling is illuminated, showing a symbiotic relationship where the practice of work travel constructs ProQuip as much as ProQuip gives rise to work travel.

Declaration

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Chapter 1: Introducing work travel and organisation

"When you say, 'I have a project in the USA, Russia, New Zealand,' people see it as a vacation. They don't see it as a challenge and the challenges with it," Fabio confessed to me one morning. He was telling me about how people often misunderstand what the travelling job entails. "We do not stay in cities or have much time, if any at all, to appreciate tourist attractions. We sometimes drive out on Sundays to see something, but it's not that often. We're usually tired. Usually, we are in the middle of nowhere, working full days onsite and if lucky, we stay in a big enough city to be able to do something after work if we're not too tired." He paused, seeming to take the scene around him in for a moment. We are in a large space, about seven floors up from the ground, near the top of the factory. I am sitting on a stool on the side of a small table where Fabio and his colleague Esteban have their computers. They are hunched over them. "But Rojo is good, it's big," Fabio continues, raising his voice to be heard over the welding noises from the adjacent chamber, "I try to go to the gym, meet some locals… I try to maintain a routine but it's hard sometimes, there's days I walk 23km onsite and all I want is a beer when I get back to the hotel, you know."

Onsite means on the customer site where factory-building projects are done. Engineers come to install, commission, or manage projects for corporate clients in various stages of the project lifecycle, and Fabio is here to commission part of the plant. So far, he spent four months on this project. "My arrangement is 3-1," Fabio tells me that day, over lunch, "that means I work onsite for 3 weeks and get to spend a week home." Only a small portion of his work-life is spent doing 'travelling' in the traditional sense of moving from point A to B, such as travelling between the site in Colorado, USA and his home in Limeira, Brazil. Travelling, in the context of the company *ProQuip* where this ethnography is based, means coming to do work onsite where one is 'travelling' throughout the stay away from home, including the transfer between places and the time spent onsite.

"Life goes on there when you're travelling," Fabio elaborates, "I just bought an apartment, and my girlfriend and I are refurnishing it, but I spend more time in hotels or onsite than there. She is understanding, which is so important for this job. She's also an engineer and travelled a few times herself but she works on portfolios [at the office] now. Because she did this work, she understands my lifestyle. Support like that goes a long way, you know, from the family. You need that to continue working like this." Although Fabio is grateful to his girlfriend for

her support, he does feel guilty for abandoning the house-related chores to her. Fabio was not the only one who expressed the importance of support from home. Another ProQuip employee, Bianca, a young commissioning engineer, told me that she decided to end her relationship with a boyfriend since he was acting jealous about her work with many male colleagues and away from home, “I need someone who understands that this is my job,” she said, adding that a partner should respect her focus on her career; “I do not necessarily *not* want a family, if it comes, it comes, you know? I am just not concentrated on that. If the right man comes by, I’m not gonna shoo him away, maybe I’ll even have children, you know? But right now, my career is my focus, I really need to get this moulding machine going.”

Friends and the family of the traveller do not always understand what the job travelling necessitates, and as a consequence cannot provide adequate support. “I cannot commit to dinners and parties, things like that because I can get called away unexpectedly and then I’m a no-show again,” Fabio told me, “this puts a strain on some friendships. They kind of stop inviting you after a while.” However, support from family and friends is not the only resource Fabio described as important for a job demanding by its nature. “You also need support from your home office,” he told me, “especially the young ones need it. When you’ve been in ProQuip for a while you meet people, make connections, and develop experience. You know what to do and who to talk to, but when you’re just starting out you need the manager’s support. That’s very difficult for a few of the young guys in our office since our manager is now in Germany, it’s difficult for them to have that connection. The time zones, the distance, it’s easier when you have experience, you can work like that more easily.”

Fabio indicates that travel in ProQuip has a social dimension to it, where over time one builds up a form of social capital as well as networks and connections with other travelling or office-based colleagues. They, then, offer vocational support when necessary. “Travel at ProQuip is better than in other companies,” Fabio tells me, “I used to travel and save, travel and save, that’s all. Now I go out to the gym after work, hang out with people, do stuff. It’s not bad. I go to the home office every now and again, but most of the job is with [travelling] colleagues. When I travel, I know things that office people just don’t, I know how to approach a customer, I know I’m able to talk to a colleague and they will support me. The longer you are at ProQuip the more you have that. You have ‘an album’ and you put a new sticker in it! You know what to do more and more, looking back at the album.” Fabio, like many of his colleagues, points toward an apparent disparity between ProQuip the offices and ProQuip the

‘travelling organisation’, where support is predominantly drawn from a network of people one has acquired through travelling and experience (‘stickers in an album’).

Fabio also makes a point about the disorienting aspect of work travel. “When I travel a lot, to different places, when I wake up, I keep my eyes closed to try to remember where I am,” Fabio told me, “then I open my eyes and see if it matches.” He laughed. When travelling, Fabio and his colleagues deal with situations that office-based employees rarely experience. Fabio shared a few ‘war-stories’ from the job. One time he arrived onsite and found that nothing was ready for him to do his work and had to spend two weeks waiting for the customer to prepare what they promised would be ready for his arrival, another time he missed his flight and had to wait 24 hours until the next one. “Biggest issue is food,” he added, “I try to eat healthy, you know vegetables, salads, protein and stuff, but it’s difficult to find sometimes. Now I can cook in the kitchen in the hotel, we have an apartment with the guys, but it’s sometimes impossible and you have to be flexible. The more remote the worse it gets. I was in China a few years ago and the city wasn’t very nice, it was very cold, small, and communication was hard with the people. It was winter and went to negative 20 and 30, near Siberia. Food was made for me, but the canteen was bad. In the evenings it was better, we went out and the food was good. In these scenarios you can’t be picky. It was really hard on the Indian guys; the Chinese just couldn’t cook without meat. It wasn’t easy even to buy fruit.” Nevertheless, Fabio does not appear to be concerned with *whether* he finds the travelling aspect of the job too challenging, but rather how to manage these challenges. “It’s a different reality from offices; I wouldn’t like it there. I like this life.”

Although the lifestyle of travelling seems taxing on the accounts of family and home-life, Fabio emphasised that an understanding partner is all one needs to continue doing this type of work. He and many of his colleagues find the work of building factories far more exciting than anything they can do in the office, “imagine arriving on your first day and there is nothing but a field. Then when you leave, there is a fully functioning factory there. And it’s because of you. You and your colleagues did this,” Fabio told me excitedly. The engineering tasks and activities, which form the bulk of the daily activity for these engineers, were not mentioned as a challenge. Fabio found it more important to explain the travelling aspect of his travelling job and how he mediates its challenges. In particular, there appeared to be concerns around maintaining normality in constantly shifting environments and spaces: hotels, projects, home, sites, airports. It appears that the work is constant, but the spaces are everchanging. Fabio also

indicated at the work done to find one's place in ProQuip, especially when new to the organisation and guidance from offices and managers is lacking. The process of becoming a ProQuipper was hinted to be one that falls onto the traveller him or herself: "you go to travel and meet people from before. It's good thing people in ProQuip stay for so long".

1.1 An introduction to work travel

The vignette introduces the practice of *work travel* as experienced by engineers working at ProQuip, a multinational projects and equipment company. For engineers such as Fabio, travelling to remote locations for work is a necessity of the job. The business of ProQuip is in building factories and engineers must be onsite to oversee and deliver such projects. Fabio is a composite narrative; a collage of the thoughts, experiences, and stories of several engineers who regularly travel for work, representing the everyday of thousands of ProQuip employees. He has worked in ProQuip for about a decade and in the vignette, he describes some of the difficulties of the job and how he overcomes them. He starts by noting that work travel is often misunderstood; when people hear that he is travelling to a different country, he says, they imagine leisurely forms of travel as opposed to the type of travel he practices, which involves long days on production sites in small towns or villages. In other words, Fabio feels that the practice of travelling is often unjustifiably glorified, veiling his experiences. This is important. Work travel is not a widely known phenomenon, often occluded in the popular media by more glamorous forms of mobile working, such as elite business travel (Du Preez 2015). This also warrants making a note that work travel is a subset of a wider phenomenon of mobility, which may include anything from sightseeing trips to adoption tourism (Gustafsson 2020), a range of modes of transportation (Meinherz and Fritz 2021), voluntourism (McGloin and Georgeou 2016), urban commuting (Lyons et al. 2008; Xia 2020), forms of migration (Cresswell and Merriman 2012), and much more. It is therefore crucial to differentiate work travel from other forms of mobility, but it is equally important to elucidate what is meant by 'mobility'.

The central issue of mobility is motion, or rather, movement. Motion indicates a state other than stasis, fixity, or stability. Movement, unlike motion, is directed and intentional; a movement is made away from something toward something else for a particular goal. Work travel, in simple terms, is a movement of individuals from their homes and permanent workplaces to other locations in order to produce the key output of their company: factories. A typical representation of mobility would be in terms of geographical displacement from Point

A on the map to Point B. Relative to ProQuip, Point A could be one's home or the company offices, where an engineer would start their trip, and Point B would be the factory building site where the engineer arrives to do their work. However, as multiple mobility scholars point out, this would be a highly reductionist perspective onto mobilities. In a seminal text, geographer Tim Cresswell (2009) argues that mobilities are inherently political, producing various scales, speeds, and possibilities of mobility and immobility differently across populations. The movement (or lack thereof) between Points A and B is filled with meanings. Similarly, sociologists Anthony Elliott and John Urry (2010) explore the many ways in which technologies and artefacts interact with the everyday lives of people to produce 'mobile lives'.

Following this current of research, this thesis addresses mobilities and hence work travel as a nuanced, complex phenomenon that is socially and politically constructed. Indeed, as Costas (2013) highlights, work travel, although often fantasised as smooth, glamorous, and romanticised nomadic liberation, is in fact riddled with frictions and ambiguities. The practice becomes a 'sticky' fixity as people like Fabio continue moving from 'non-place' to 'non-place' (Augé 1995), going through nearly homogenous airports, hotels, and project sites. While work travel can be defined as working outside of one's home and employer's office for prolonged periods of time (Axtell and Hislop 2008), as this ethnography progresses it becomes clear that work travel encompasses more than this single meaning.

Fabio also points to another aspect of work travel, which is the difficulty of being away from their home lives, families, and friends as well as being distant from the offices, line managers and the central hubs of the organisation. The travellers, Fabio indicates, are often in a peripheral state to the events in the company and their family lives, and hence require more support than his colleagues who work in co-located stable spaces, predominantly the offices. Fabio is subject to different workplace challenges than office-based employees, among which are increased family-work conflict (Gustafson 2006), isolation and loneliness (Axtell and Hislop 2008), and stress, instability, and feelings of being stuck (Costas 2013). Being a nearly ideal 'mobile worker', whose work must take place in spaces other than their home or office (Hislop and Axtell 2007), also means that he is subject to different work practices from a management standpoint than previously theorised. While there is abundant research on different forms of mobility, only a small proportion of studies on work-related mobilities addresses the type of work that 'work travellers' or near-ideal 'mobile workers' do (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Costas 2013). Of the studies that address work travel, few studies on work travel

look beyond the managerial and administrative professions to consider other professions such as engineering, where work travel forms an essential part of their work (Axtell and Hislop 2008). Furthermore, most organisational research to date has been set in fixed organisational sites, such as manufacturing plants and offices (Costas 2013), and indeed, research on teleworking practices from home has proliferated in recent years (Hafermalz 2021). However, little is known about how work is done or organised outside of fixed organisational spaces, in particular in multinational, inter-organisational sites such as Fabio's project site.

This thesis enquires into how the mobile work practice I call 'work travel' is practised and organised. It aims to make three contributions to the field of Management and Organisation Studies (MOS). First, it addresses the scarcity of empirical studies on the topic of work travel by engaging in an ethnographic study exploring the experiences of work travel of engineers who regularly engage in this work and participating in the practice. Second, the thesis focuses on the relation between ProQuip and work travel. As Faulconbridge and colleagues (2020) point out, no studies to date have considered work travel and organisation as co-constituent or entangled entities. Work travel and related mobilities have been studied as separate occurrences from the organisations in which they take place. Third, the thesis problematises the assumption that extant organisation theories can explain work travel and the organisation of work outside of the permanent organisation. Since these theories are derived from and typically 'applied' in fixed organisation spaces, I argue that one cannot assume that the same conditions would apply equally to the organisation of a phenomenon that takes place outside of direct supervision or other influences of the permanent organisation. This thesis, therefore, aims to answer the research question: "how is work travel organised?". In the following section, I explain what this Chapter aims to do and how it is organised.

1.1.1 Chapter outline

This thesis is about organisation, and more specifically, it is an ethnography of the organisation of a phenomenon I call global *work travel*, which is a subset of work mobility processes that occurs when people are required to travel internationally between different organisational sites for work purposes. The principal research question of the thesis is "*how is global work travel organised?*" which, throughout the thesis, also raises the concerns of *where this organisation is* and *how are work travel and organisation entangled*. The thesis responds to these questions.

The principal question, as benefiting a thesis, is complex. It requires understanding what is meant by the notion of 'work travel' and an explanation of what it means for something to be 'organised', particularly globally. The first two Chapters are dedicated to the former, *defining* work travel using current literature on the topic. However, it is crucial to note that a nuanced understanding of work travel can only be achieved where 'the empirical' is engaged with, so the remaining six Chapters of this ethnography encompass the exploration of the concepts of work travel and its organisation. The answer this thesis arrives at is that work travel is organised via the process of continuous organisation-making that occurs at the peripheries of 'permanent organisations' (Packendorff 1995), and is made visible through, constructed by, and supports work travel. This process then is, in some ways, the dynamic boundary(ing) of organisation which manifests its being (which is how it responds to the question of *where organisation is*). This definition may not have made much sense now, but it is not yet necessary to understand it fully. Indeed, it is the work of the thesis to ensure that when I write this definition again in the conclusion, it makes perfect sense.

I split this introductory Chapter into four sections. Following this introduction, the second section aims to explain why work travel is a relevant concern for the discipline of Management and Organisation Studies (MOS), to which this thesis seeks to contribute. In the third section I point to some of the theoretical problems that emerge from the literature and the field. I explain the research questions that drive the thesis and how they were identified and constructed. I also explain what issues I identify throughout the study and how I seek to solve them. In the final, fourth section, I outline how the thesis is structured.

1.2 Studying global work travel in MOS

The last half a century has seen an increase in work being done outside of the physical boundaries of the workplace in a trend known as mobile working (Saarenpää 2018; Garsten 2003; Hislop and Axtell 2007; Costas 2013; Borg 2014; Borg and Söderlund 2015). Mobile work, denoting work travel to an irregular place of work (Aguiléra 2008), as described in the previous section, is one of the many ways work has changed in late twentieth century post-industrialism (Barley and Kunda 2001; Beck 1992; Bauman 2000; Sennett 1998). Yet, mobile working is not a new phenomenon. It has been practised for centuries by sailors, merchants, and religious ambassadors, as well as other occupations. In recent years, however, the social status of work travel has been elevated, the scale of mobility has accelerated, and the magnitude

of travel has expanded, where routinely, people travel faster and further than ever before (Elliott and Urry 2010). This acceleration (alongside other accelerations, see Mackay and Avanessian 2017) forms a part of a broader shift in society, the economy, and environment, affecting how work is done nowadays.

The acceleration in work mobilities stems, broadly, from the emergence of new technologies and the erosion of national borders in favour of freer flow of people, goods, and services between nation-states (Parker 2005; Beck and Sznaider 2006; McKenna and Peticca-Harris 2016), also known as globalisation. In particular, global work travel is produced by and is embedded within a social, political, and cultural scene that can be described as a post-industrial, globalised knowledge economy (Augé 1995). There are two primary forms of mobile work, distinguished by the resource they draw upon. Mobility of digital nature corresponds to the rise in new technologies, mostly drawing nowadays on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Mobility of physical nature involves various forms of travel for work and is concomitant with the weakening national borders and ascend of multinational corporations (Sheller and Urry 2006), encompassing work travel but also migration and expatriation practices. It is important to note that modern mobile work often includes both, ICT and physical forms, where one form of mobility typically supports the other.

In MOS research, the digital form of mobility has merited most attention (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Felstead et al. 2005), generally known as *teleworking*. It is founded on the idea that work can be performed from anywhere, as long as there is technological infrastructure to facilitate it, so it is, in some ways, placeless (Hislop and Axtell 2007). Physical mobility has largely been ignored within MOS research, with few studies engaging with employees who are required to travel to the sites of other organisations to perform the core of their work (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Borg 2014). Examples of such work include engineers doing field visits to manufacturing sites (Borg and Söderlund 2014) and consultants travelling to visit clients (Costas 2013). Work travel, described earlier, is a form of physical mobile work that necessitates geographical displacement, which I contend is no less important than digital mobility.

I argue that there is an urgent need for studying physical forms of mobility in MOS for three key reasons. First, with most MOS literature and theory is based in static sites (Costas 2013), I argue that we cannot assume that the same organisational processes and theories that apply in static places would apply equally in a dynamic environment. In other words, I

problematise (Alvesson and Sandberg 2011) the applicability of current organisation theory to the context of global work travel.

Second, work travel is a prominent global phenomenon, supporting a tremendous business. Work travel comprises about a fifth of all international travel over the last few decades (Aguiléra 2008; Statista Research Department 2021), sustaining, transportation companies, hotel and restaurant businesses, and various agencies among other markets. In 2015, global spending on work travel was $1.25 trillion (Faulconbridge et al. 2020), increasing to $1.28 trillion in 2019, and up by 2.6% in spending from 2018 to 2019 (Statista Research Department 2021). In general, it is a growing business fuelled by individual organisations that are highly dependent on working across borders to remain competitive and profitable (Alvesson 2004; Faulconbridge et al. 2020). A trend of more people travelling abroad for work is observable as the world globalises (Saarenpää 2018), resulting from normalisation of cross-border travel for business, migration, and consumption reasons (Beck and Sznaider 2006). Even the advancing ICTs have proven inadequate to replace work travel (Haynes 2010; Gaspar and Glaeser 1998; Faulconbridge et al. 2020). Hence, the phenomenon is extensive enough to merit concentrated study.

Third, as Barley and Kunda (2001) argue, work travel is important to understand the functioning of the post-industrial economy. With the growth of multi-unit companies and increasing inter-organisational collaborations there is greater need to coordinate remote locations, and although the trend may seem to be affecting a minority of workers around the world, it is critical to emphasise that work travel forms a central aspect of their working lives (Aguiléra 2008). Despite the growing mobilities in the work context, a surprising few studies actually address mobile forms of work from an MOS perspective, particularly work travel (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Faulconbridge et al. 2020). This means that aside from a few studies (e.g. Costas 2013; Borg 2014), little is actually known about work travel in organisational terms. In fact, there is a worrying scarcity of empirical studies on the subject, where work travel is theorised more than it is actually examined in the real world (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Beaverstock et al. 2009). This opens up questions about how work travel is enacted, practised, and managed in contemporary organisations.

1.3 Theoretical problems

Work travel is a subset of the body of literature on mobile working. I delineate the particular concerns of this thesis and distinguish the concept of work travel from broader forms of mobile work on the basis of three criteria: first, work travel is particularly concerned with mobilities for *work*, as opposed to for example, leisure or migration; second, it is of the nature of *physical displacement,* as opposed to digital forms, like internet communications; and third, the need for mobility derives from *placeness* as opposed to placeless-ness, that is, the requirement of being somewhere. In other words, to preform work travel, one needs to travel to a particular place where work is to be performed. Whereas the following Chapter engages in depth with the literature on mobilities and how management and organisation scholars have studied it in the past, in this Chapter I explain how the research questions that drive this thesis were derived. In the way that research questions emerge in ethnographic research, such as this thesis, there is often overlap between the original questions derived from the literature and the questions that emerge from the field (Neyland 2008). In the following two sections, I clarify the chronology of my research focus and how it developed over time, explaining the connections between mobility, travel, and organisation.

1.3.1 Research questions

In my first year on the doctoral programme, I worked out the principal research question *"how is mobile work organised?"*. It seems to be fairly straightforward: it first makes the assumption that there is something called 'mobile work', and second, that this 'mobile work' is organised. However, arriving at the field, I found that mobile work is not a straightforward concept, and in fact, ProQuippers were much more concerned with an entity they called 'travel'. This led to some answers to my first empirical sub-question, "what is work mobility?", defining work travel (taking place at ProQuip) as a subset of work mobilities. In next Chapter I touch upon the complexity and multiple meanings of mobile work, and define my focus on work travel, which is the ProQuippers' emic term for their instance of mobility. My second assumption, however, that mobile work *is* organised, turned out to be significantly more problematic.

Several months into the fieldwork, I found myself frustrated and struggling to find those "mechanisms" that were organising people. Previous studies of engineering professionals (e.g. Kunda 2006; Casey 1995; Turco 2016) pointed to cultural mechanisms as agents of structure and organisation, which were maintained through the endorsement of loyalty and commitment

generated by forms of normative and neo-normative control (Kunda 2006). However, in those ethnographies the informants were engineers in stationary, enclosed environments that perpetuate the respective culture, subject to the influences of the closed system (Goffman 1961). I found that the multiple sites and travelling that my informants regularly engage in created an organisational space too different from the circumstances previously studied, and that the answers that other authors arrived at did not apply here. Over time, the lack of already theorised answers led me to a series of new questions. To use Alvesson and Sandberg's (2011) formulation: I started problematising my assumptions about the nature of the research I was conducting. While I could determine a format in which mobility was done, namely, *work travel*, it was more difficult to tell what organisational processes were taking place, where they were coming from, how and what were they organising, and indeed: where organisation was and how this "organisation" was imposing its control over its employees.

My original research question gave way to a new set of concerns. I was no longer convinced I knew where the organisation that was meant to control work travel was. When moving between many interorganisational spaces, it became difficult to delineate the boundaries of where ProQuip starts, ends, and extends their influence. So, my second empirical sub-question, having defined work travel as an instance of mobility, became: "where is the organisation?". I start at the headquarters and my first clue, with which I engage in Chapter Five, where multiple organisational charts, maps, and diagrams were drawn up for me at the field. These are artefacts of the formal organisation, so my first point of analysis was trying to understand how ProQuip is formally organised and what constitutes the 'organisation', and later on what this means for organising work travel. I mostly draw on the body of literature I call formal organisation studies (or FOS), led by the revived interest in formal organisation among the Copenhagen School scholars. However, I found that FOS presented a too static imagination of organisation that could not account for the lived realities of travelling workers, so in the Sixth Chapter I respond to FOS by engaging with charts in a more dynamic manner, initially through Critical Management Studies (CMS) perspectives, and later on in Chapter Seven, following the works of Robert Cooper. I study maps, engineering drawings, and charts onsite, showing that although formal organisation plays a crucial role in organising work, it cannot be considered merely an accounting system or record of organisation as suggested by FOS scholars (e.g., Vikkelsø 2016), but rather artefacts of formal organisation are active in constructing this oscillating and dynamic organisation. This, I argue, becomes very visible onsite.

My third empirical sub-question became whether at all work travel is "organised", and indeed what does it mean to be organised? It would appear, for example, that there are formal 'organising efforts' led by headquarters' ProQuippers that do not reach the site, yet other 'organising' is effectively done at the pub after work. I was no longer convinced that there is an organising class that was enforcing some top-down management regime, since the offices – and especially the headquarters – seemed to be living their own separate lives from the sites and their travelling inhabitants. It seems important to then ask whether the relationship between work travel and organisation may be "inverted", and perhaps work travel "organises" ProQuip? I found that travel and organisation are interlinked through the processes of work travel. To respond to these questions, I study work travel ethnographically. I explain the progression of the thesis in the following section.

1.4 Thesis outline

The thesis is organised in eight Chapters. Chapter 2 is a review of relevant bodies of literature on the topics of mobilities and its organising. Specifically, I review MOS literature and related fields, including sociology, geography, international human resource management, and migration studies to discuss the multiple lenses applied to the study of mobilities. I distinguish the concept of *work travel* from this literature. I explain the relevance of studying work travel for MOS and problematise existing literature within the field across two accounts. First, 'the entanglement problem' occurs because travel and organisation are treated as isolated entities and therefore the relationship between travel and organisation goes unaccounted for. Second, 'the static problem' denotes that much of MOS literature conceptualises or studies organisation as a static unit located in a place, with organisational theorising being developed in such settings. I problematise whether such organisation theory is transferable to dynamic and multi-sited settings like those of work travelling.

In Chapter 3, I explain what ethnography is, why this approach to doing research was chosen, and how I conducted the ethnography. I position this research as an organisational ethnography and explore its meanings as fieldwork, mode of thinking or analysis, and writing. I also detail the practicalities of how this research was conducted. Chapter 4 explores the notion of work travel empirically, observing five meanings of relevance to my interlocutors. I, therefore, create an integrated account of work travel as a multifaceted phenomenon and activity. Furthermore, in this Chapter I explain that work travel is not only a concern for the

academic community for the theoretical challenges it poses for MOS, but it is also an issue for practitioners at ProQuip who are facing 'the Millennial Problem'. This problem occurs when 'Millennial' generation employees, generally under the age of 35, are hired to perform travelling jobs but move to office positions at an accelerating rate within their first five to ten years at ProQuip. ProQuip's management report difficulties with getting these employees to travel. I suggest starting the investigation by enquiring what organisational control mechanisms ProQuip employs, and which mechanism, if any, appears to be failing.

In Chapter 5, I introduce ProQuip as the setting from which work travel originates. I begin studying the formal organisation as an encompassing structure and mode of organisational control, assuming that the employing organisation is a stable centre around which peripheral objects like project sites, and subjects, the travelling engineers, orbit. To understand ProQuip, I draw upon multiple organisational charts given to me by organisational members, revealing inconsistencies in the ways ProQuip is perceived. I find that the act of charting is more than an illustration tool, but acts to organise ProQuip, simplifying and abstracting organisational realities and therefore making the distant manageable. The Chapter reveals that formal organisation, which is considered a stable and static facet of organisation, is dynamic, leading to question whether ProQuip and work travel are indeed centrally controlled by the formal organisation.

Chapter 6 explores the range of control methods employed by ProQuip, discussing formal and social forms of control applied to work travel. Specifically, I study formal infrastructures designed to ease the processes of work travel and social norms and customs among ProQuip's travelling engineers, describing two Travelling Cultures. Based on this, I propose the existence of a transcendental Travelling Organisation that is both connected to ProQuip and separate from it. In Chapter 7, I respond to the two research problems posed earlier in the thesis: the static representation of the organisation of work travel, and the entanglement between travel and organisation. I explain the entanglement using Cooper's (1986) concept of the boundary, showing that through practicing work travel, ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation are mutually defining. I respond to the static organisation problem by introducing organising activities driven by 'other' entities, such as the product to be produced at the factory. I argue that to understand work travel, organisation needs to be conceptualised as social activity, and social, formal, as well as other organising activities should be taken into account as co-constructing the practice of work travel and its encompassing 'organisations'. The final, Eighth

Chapter, concludes the thesis by reviewing its findings and contributions to the field of MOS and the study of work travel, as well as discussing the limitations of the study and future research avenues.

Chapter 2: Reviewing literature on mobilities and organisation theory

This Chapter considers the concept of mobile work, an overarching form of employment to work travel, in detail, reviewing the multiple manners in which it manifests across different disciplines. Through this review, I derive the particular instance of mobile working that I call 'work travel', which applies to the experiences of ProQuip's engineers and depicts their working lives. Travelling engineers at ProQuip, like Fabio who was introduced in the previous Chapter, engage in some activities which are not commonly done in more archetypical jobs, like in office-based positions. This Chapter addresses the practicalities of doing work travel and delineates how this work practice differs from other forms of mobile working. While performing work travel, travelling ProQuippers are going through airports, renting cars, engaging in work calls, and finding spaces and time to work in transit. As mentioned in the previous Chapter, work travel is a physically and mentally taxing way of working (Aguiléra 2008) that has proliferated with the expansion of globalisation and reach of multinational corporations (Sheller and Urry 2006).

Fabio's format of working is a subset of work mobilities which has been scarcely researched (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Costas 2013; Beaverstock et al. 2009). The paucity of research on the topic also means that the phenomenon never acquired a permanent name, with some researchers referring to Fabio's work as *teleworking* (e.g. Axtell and Hislop 2008), others calling it *business travel* (e.g. Faulconbridge et al. 2009; Salt and Wood 2012), or simply *mobile working* (e.g. Costas 2013). The ambiguity in naming also translates into an ambiguity in differentiating ProQuip's engineers' type of work from other forms of mobility. Indeed, among the work-related mobilities, there have been many sub-topics of research including studies of cosmopolitanism (Spence et al. 2018; Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt 2018; Levy et al. 2016), corporate (Wu 2020), economical (Özkazanç-Pan 2019) and elite migration (Cranston 2017; Millar and Salt 2008), management of self-initiated (Peiperl et al. 2014; Beaverstock 2017) and organisational expatriates (McNulty and Brewster 2017), teleworking from home and virtual work (Whittle and Mueller 2009; Hafermalz 2021), well-being (Gustafson 2014) and isolation among travelling workers (Axtell and Hislop 2008), commuting practices (Lyons et al. 2008), and more. Teleworking, for example, is often associated with digital working (Whittle and Mueller 2009) while business travel most often refers to executive-level travel. Much of this Chapter, then, is dedicated to defining work travel away

from other types of mobile working. *Work travel*, in particular, is the expression I adopt throughout the thesis since it is the emic term of ProQuippers for their form of work mobility.

The purpose of this Chapter is dual. First, it aims to define work travel as a particular instance of work mobility, distinct from the popular images of work travel in the media and different from other mobile working practices. Such images often capture the imagination of the public and lead to misconstrued understandings of work travel. Second, this Chapter aims to review the theoretical perspectives that previous studies of work travel and other atypical forms of work draw upon. I particularly consider Critical Management Studies (CMS) and Formal Organisation Studies (FOS) as relevant theoretical resources within organisation theory.

This Chapter is divided into four sections. The first section demonstrates how work travel differs from a range of media representations of work travel, where it is typically depicted as an elite management class activity, and from other archetypical forms of work, such as office and factory work. Through this, I also identify that work travel at ProQuip encompasses two forms of labour: the engineering work done *while* travelling, and the work done *to* travel. This section also considers the context within which work travel is produced, specifically, ProQuip. It compares the work ProQuip engineers are expected to do to the archetypes of 20th century labour: office and factory workers, which remains the standard to which 'new forms of work' are compared.

The second section reviews work-related mobilities literature that is closely related to work travel. I explain the origin of work travel within the broader interests of the social sciences in mobility and mobilities, drawing on sociology, International Human Resource Management (IHRM), migration studies, ICT research, and MOS. Using these bodies of literature, I delineate the concerns of this thesis based on three criteria: work travel is particularly concerned with mobilities for *work*, as opposed to for example, leisure or migration; it is of the nature of *physical displacement,* as opposed to digital forms, like digital communications; and the need for mobility derives from *placeness* as opposed to placeless-ness, that is, the requirement of being somewhere particular to perform work and not anywhere. This section concludes by outlining the first of two theoretical problems that emerge from the literature review: the lack of attention to the entanglement of organisation and work travel as co-constitutive entities.

The third section then moves on to review recent ethnographic studies on atypical research settings in MOS, focusing on the theoretical perspectives that these studies draw upon to make sense of their organisational processes. For example, Kunda and Barley (2004) focus on the working lives and circumstances of contracted workers, who, in a different way from travelling workers, do not have a stable workplace. Similarly, in Turco's (2016) ethnography, the lack of stability and permanence is produced by an enforced culture of openness and anti-bureaucratic sentiment among 'millennial' generation employees in a social media marketing company. Both these studies elucidate the informal and formal elements of organising, from contracts to networks of skilled employees (Kunda and Barley 2004), and vague company mantras to demands for hierarchical representations (Turco 2016). These studies draw on Formal Organisation Studies (FOS) and notions of expertise and community, which resonate with many of the issues that I came across at the field, specifically, the tension between formal organisation and social dynamics which both serve to organise the field and the work of travellers. Additionally, the most seminal study of work travel in MOS to date is Costas' (2013) account of mobile consultants, where she describes the façade of glamour of work travel and the paradoxical entrapment in continuous mobility, drawing on Critical Management Studies (CMS). In this section I give a brief overview of the theoretical perspectives upon which the thesis draws to understand how work travel is organised, focusing in particular on FOS and CMS. This Chapter concludes with the second theoretical problem which is that organisation is too often represented as a static, fixed, and bounded entity. The final, fourth section, summarises and concludes the Chapter.

2.1 Work travel in the media

Work travel is not an unfamiliar image, appearing in popular media and through anecdotal references. For example, in the film *Up in the Air*, George Clooney's character, Ryan, is an exemplar of an elite business traveller who praises himself for having little permanence in his life other than for the items in his carry-on bag. He is the imagination of a contemporary hypermobile, detached, constantly-on-the-move traveller, home in his mobility (Germann Molz 2008). In recent years, mobile work has gained a unique image of unattainability and prestige, belonging to an elite class of upper management cosmopolitans (Du Preez 2015; Costas 2013; Presskorn-Thygesen 2015). It is distinguished from the static, grounded class, who are stuck in the repetitive sameness of everyday life. In contrast, the social imagination of the mobile elites, as presented through art and film (Du Preez 2015), depicts privileged

individuals, who have the freedom to choose to live in the glamourous homelessness of non-places (Augé 1995), passing "through countries as through revolving doors" (Du Preez 2015, p.793). This imagination is part of the romanticising of the nomad cosmopolitan, where in the twenty-first century mobility attained an image of liberty from modernity's heavy industry, and its constraining and fixating notions of place and space (Sheller and Urry 2006). Due to media representations, mobility and work travel have become familiarised as the romantic, unattainable lifestyles of the free.

Nevertheless, as multiple studies have pointed out, mobile working comes with its own difficulties. Costas (2013) shows that while mobile consultants appear to enjoy the fluidity and exclusivity of their job, they also suffer from anxiety and loneliness associated with being 'nowhere'. Similarly, Gustafson (2006) finds that work travel has high correlation with stress and family-work conflict, and that it is unevenly distributed across the population, with men travelling more than women due to different gender-related expectations to do with childcare. Even in *Up in the Air*, Clooney's character comes to realise that perhaps his glamourous lifestyle has limitations that he is no longer comfortable with. Indeed, as Sheller and Urry (2006) point out, the celebration of nomadism neglects the reality of boundaries and the immobility that sustains mobile activities. The other issue of particular importance to this thesis, is that the media images of mobility are concentrated on executive or managerial travellers, or alternatively on the gruesome realities of migrant workers (Loacker and Śliwa 2016). These dominant discourses are important to highlight because this thesis deals with a different mobile subject. The everyday life of the non-management class professional, who does not travel business class or stays in luxurious hotels, is mostly neglected in media and academic literature (Hislop and Axtell 2007). For this reason, I find it important to acquaint the reader with the professional traveller who, in this case, is an engineer, and to show what their lifestyle is, thus breaking away from media images and metanarratives of travel.

2.1.1 The context of work travel: ProQuip and archetypes

This section has a threefold goal: firstly, it presents an idea of what work travel is like for the travelling engineers; secondly, it introduces ProQuip as the empirical setting of work travel; and thirdly, it draws a contrast between work travel and archetypical forms of work, such as office work. Therefore, I first consider the context of work travel, drawing on examples from ProQuip. Where some days in ProQuip are filled with travelling, airports, and car trips for mobile workers, some days 'travelling' encompass a trip between a hotel and the project site,

a full workday there and back to the hotel. Yet, hypermobile days (as will be shown in Chapter 4) are not atypical for mobile workers. Mobility, or in emic terms, *travelling*, is an everyday reality for this class of engineers, and while their work is varied, there are two constants. First, that when one project ends, the next one is guaranteed to have already began, and second, that you will always be required to travel to the project, the question is only *how far*.

Mobile work also takes another form than just being away from home; it is a more active performance of *mobile work* in the sense of the work put into *being mobile* (Cohen 2010). Travelling ProQuippers have practiced moves in airport security checks – laptop out, iPad out, belt off – like a choreography of the dance of the mobile person. They also own particular artefacts that make performing mobility more convenient, like lightweight cabin-sized suitcases that they know to purchase and use. At the end of my fieldwork, I too found myself in possession of several travelling artefacts, like a cable-bag, Plug-Bug (an artifice for different country-types of plugs), and noise cancellation headphones ideal for frequent flying. Mobility, in this sense denotes the state of being a mobile worker, meaning having to generally travel for work, moving between different sites where work is performed. But also, there is some extra work being done to *be* or enact the mobile worker.

Mobile working is an activity produced by ProQuip. ProQuip is the pseudonym of a segment of a large multinational company that deals in a wide array of factory equipment and project delivery. This multinational is based in Yland in Northern European, employing over 20 thousand people, among which 8,000 work for ProQuip's project work business while the other 12,000 work in manufacturing equipment, ManQuip. ProQuip is involved in the plastics industry, active in 175 countries, and it deploys over 1,700 mobile project workers across the world every year. Between September 2018 to September 2019, I was one of ProQuip's 8,000 and some employees. I spent 12 months working at ProQuip as a Research Specialist doing my ethnographic fieldwork and studying mobility related questions that ProQuip's management team presented to me. Over that time, I visited 6 organisational sites, half of which were offices in Europe, and the other half were inter-organisational project sites in Russia, the United States, and Germany. As I started travelling, I began experiencing what it means to *do* mobile work and *be* a mobile worker.

To do mobile work, travelling ProQuippers often travel outside of their home-countries, away from their home-offices, delivering projects on a recurrent basis and moving from one project to the next. As they say, when one project ends, the next begins. This form of work

deeply contrasts with the more archetypical forms of modern work, made familiar across the media. A typical story, perhaps seen in movies or read in books would depict a middle-class white-collar worker, usually a white male, leaving his wife and children at home early in the morning to commute from his suburban home to the city, where his office is located (Knights and Willmott 2004). Although archaic, it represents the very image of the desirable middle class: the office worker is dressed smartly in a suit, hair gelled back, a briefcase at his side. This image spans across the media, from the antics of *The Office* to the bloodthirsty capitalism of *Mad Men* in an imagination inherited from the 20th century Western, particularly American, ideals. This portrait of work exists within a clearly defined space, whether it is an office, hospital, police station or otherwise, pertaining the implied characteristics of clear career progression, stability, security, and predictability (Sennett 1998; Laurier 2002) which are deeply rooted in the central role work has come to play at the high of modernity (Bauman 2000). Indeed, even the classic image of Charlie Chaplin's manufacturing of the industrial period has a nostalgic affinity to the classic notion of 'work', symbolising the times when work has gained the status of the "axis of living" in a production rather than consumer society (Beck 1992, p.139). For mobile workers, work is different.

ProQuip's engineers inhabit both spaces of the office and manufacturing site, and various in-between space, while retaining the identities of professional knowledge workers (Nelson et al. 2017; Jarrahi and Thomson 2017). However, they are unlike the classic white-collar workers since they rarely come into their home-offices, and although they spend much of their time on factory-build sites, they do not engage in traditional factory work. ProQuip's engineers, then, are a part of a class of hypermobile knowledge workers (Nelson et al. 2017); they are formally educated professionals who routinely work across dispersed spaces, including in transit while travelling, and in unconventional settings outside of the classic office environment (Jarrahi and Thomson 2017). The state of liminality produced by being 'in-between' places and identities is not uncommon in project workers (Stein et al. 2015; Borg and Söderlund 2015) and it creates a unique identity for this type of work travellers, while also raising the question how this mobile subject is organised, managed, or controlled. The distance from the classic workplace, that is the employer's premises, is significant because the travelling project worker is typically outside of the boundaries of their employing organisation and their own control mechanisms (Barley and Kunda 2001). For example, Fabio is rarely present in ProQuip's offices, which raises the question of whether he is managed in a same way as the *Office Plankton*, who we will meet in future Chapters.

In addition to all the travelling ProQuip's engineers do, they also engage in mobile communications: speaking over the phone with co-workers, connecting to Zoom meetings, reporting to supervisors and line managers, writing emails. There is more to travelling than just physical movement between places. Although physical displacement is part of being mobile, there is also a significant virtual component to it (Urry 2000). Digital mobility allows travelling engineers to draw on digital connectivity to do work, keep in contact with one another, access the company resources and much more (Aguiléra 2008; Faulconbridge et al. 2020). Digital mobility, if not indispensable (I have met engineers who had to dial central call dispensaries to call home in the 1970s and 80s), is very convenient for doing mobile work. To understand and find our way among the many meanings of mobility, it is now important to consider this terms origin and its multiple aspects. For this, in the following section, I outline the main bodies of literature on mobility and what forms it takes in each of them, delineating this thesis' concept of mobility.

2.2 Theorising mobile work

The empirical phenomenon, work travel, is a form of mobile working. As mentioned before, mobile working encompasses a range of practices and behaviours related to travelling, commuting, or otherwise mobilising oneself for work purposes. In recent years, the focus on various mobilities exploded in the social sciences, following what has become known as the "mobilities turn" (Cresswell and Merriman 2012; Elliott and Urry 2010; Sheller 2014; Sheller and Urry 2006). As John Urry (2000, p.1) writes, there is "diverse mobilities of people, objects, images, information and wastes", making the concept necessarily multiple and hence by its nature both ambiguous and ubiquitous. This section provides a brief overview of the research on mobilities and delineates the particular position of work travel within the vast literature on mobilities. I pay close attention to the mobilities that concern fields close to MOS and I review the types of challenges they identify in regard to mobilities. Using these bodies of literature, I define work travel as a subset of mobilities using three criteria: 1) the focus on work-related mobility, 2) the necessity of geographical displacement, and 3) the indispensability of work to be done from a particular space that is not the employer's premises.

Mobility, in its various forms, emerges in geography as a concern about the movement of dynamic things over fixed spaces (Cresswell and Merriman 2012). People are among those dynamic elements, and over the last century our movements across space have become more

frequent and much faster (Lyons 2011; Larsen et al. 2006), now becoming a characteristic of the contemporary era (Elliott and Urry 2010; Larsen et al. 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2000; Barley and Kunda 2001). The acceleration of mobilities has not gone unnoticed in the academy. The last couple of decades have seen a "mobilities turn" (Sheller and Urry 2006), that is, an expansion in the research on mobilities in the social sciences. It defined mobilities as an omnipresent paradigm, establishing multiple strains of mobilities, and subjecting them to all forms of academic study. The geographers Cresswell and Merriman (2012), for instance, structure their inquiry by differentiating between practices of mobility, its spaces, and its subjects. The sociologists Elliot and Urry (2010) delineate two distinct kinds of mobilities: a spatial mobility, which is enacted through geographical movements across places (for example, transportation and travel) and a digital mobility, which is enacted through communications across space, where a person does not have to leave their location to speak to someone on the other side of the world (for example, a mobile phone). These images are familiar because they are our lives. Our lives are now *mobile lives* (Elliott and Urry 2010).

Needless to say, mobilities play a central role in our daily lives, whether in the form of travelling to Spain for a holiday, catching a bus to a shopping centre, walking across the road, or calling a family member. However, most of these mobilities are hardly relevant to the question of the organisation of work travel. By eliminating all mobilities that are not strictly *work-related*, the focus narrows to the "first shift" type of work, setting aside "second shift", such as mobilities related to domestic work like errands, and "third shift" such as mobilities related to leisure activities (Hochschild 1997). This means that travel for leisure, tourism, shopping at supermarkets, walking in cities, and other bodies of literature that study non-work-related mobilities fall away. There is, nevertheless, a significant body of literature that is concerned with work mobilities, among it are the studies of expatriation missions and visits to external sites in international human resource management (IHRM); permanent or temporary displacements among precarious migrant people, in migration studies; and human and interface interactions, as well as virtual teams in information and communication technologies literature (ICTs). I briefly cover these three bodies of literature, discussing their relevance to the thesis and using them to work out a concept of mobile work that this thesis deals with. Then, I proceed to the fourth body of literature, MOS, and outline the problem of stasis in contemporary organisation theory.

2.2.1 International human resource management (IHRM)

International human resource management (IHRM) is principally concerned with the management of humans in cross-national or international settings, with a focus on multinational organisations (Özkazanç-Pan 2019). The broad concerns of the discipline are on the management of people in static environments and the management of moving people. The first category was mainly instigated by the seminal work of Hofstede (1984) on cultural dimensions in multinational corporations, where he defined national cultures as an explanatory mechanism for behaviours and differences at work (Cairns and Śliwa 2008). This branch of literature regards multiculturalism in organisations as a consequence of globalisation, where mobility between nation states and company sites has created diverse working environments locally (Cairns and Śliwa 2008; Syed and Özbilgin 2009). The second focus is on the management of the movements of personnel between the multiple sites of multinational corporations. The main form of work travel investigated in IHRM is expatriate missions of different formats (McNulty and Brewster 2017), alongside other forms of mobility including short-term business travel for seminars, meetings, or other gatherings (Welch et al. 2007). Among both these perspectives, a common approach is to attempt to change behaviours through training, redesigning of the job, or altering the outlooks of employees on the job (e.g. Dimitrova 2020; Rattrie and Kittler 2020).

Work travel is considered one of the three pillars of global staffing strategy in IHRM, where the other two are expatriation and non-standard duration assignments, like short visits (Beaverstock et al. 2009). Expat missions include assigned expatriation, where employees are sent abroad by their employer to another organisational site, usually for several years for knowledge exchange or other 'pioneering' endeavours (Andresen et al. 2014; McNulty and Brewster 2017). Self-assigned expatriates are another subgroup, who move countries without an explicit contract of a multinational company for much the same reasons as an assigned expatriate (Andresen et al. 2014; Doherty et al. 2013). This raises the question of whether expatriation, which is generally accepted as the central mobility problem of IHRM, is at all different from migration (Andresen et al. 2014; McNulty and Brewster 2017). This makes a core difference with work travel, where no act of migration is required.

Expatriate missions denote relocation, often with one's family, for a significant time period (Doherty et al. 2013), often involving a management class of employees (Özkazanç-Pan 2019). Work travel, on the contrary, is done by professional employees, and it is often solitary and

one's home remains in their country of origin, yet they are scarcely there. Additionally, the expatriation mission has a singular location, generally also on the premises of the employing company, and when it ends one returns to their home country. The work site for the traveller is most often the premises of a client, and when one project ends another begins, meaning that travel is a permanent feature of the job unlike for the expatriate. A traveller may also be assigned to more than one project at a time, requiring more travelling yet. Therefore, in general the concerns of IHRM are with a different type of employee than the work traveller, with them differing in the nature of mobility, its frequency, and whose premises they work on.

2.2.2 Migration studies

In contrast to the IHRM general focus on the management class, the migration studies discipline studies migrants, either of a permanent nature who typically relocate from a home country to a Western one (Castles 2000), or short-term posted workers who temporarily reside in another country to earn money (Collins 2012). Both types of migrants typically end up in precarious working conditions and with relatively low wages (Collins 2012). While both bodies of literature, IHRM and migration, are interesting for an exploration of the conditions of mobile working, there is a significant difference between migration, as addressed by migration studies, and work travel.

The concern of migration studies is with the challenges faced by low-skilled migrants while IHRM studies the relocation difficulties of expats or the management of short trips of management class employees. Both of these differ from work travel since it requires no actual act of migration. Additionally, the perspective of migration studies seeks to diagnose the societal difficulties posed for migrants (Özkazanç-Pan 2019), while IHRM often aims to "manage away" the problems of expatriation and inconveniences of business travel (Cairns and Śliwa 2008). Therefore, the problems that migration studies and IHRM research are of a different nature to the difficulties faced by work travellers, and the lenses through which these disciplines study their subjects do not focus on organisation (nor do I argue they should), as I aim to with my study of work travel.

2.2.3 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become known as an alternative to work travel (Aguiléra et al. 2012). This substitution approach follows that ICTs can enable digital co-location and collaboration between physically remote people, effectively replacing

the need to travel (Stein et al. 2015; Faulconbridge et al. 2020; Jones et al. 2018). Despite the predictions and expectations of ICTs, multiple studies found that these technologies cannot smoothly or sufficiently replace the face to face nature of work travel (Aguiléra 2008; Faulconbridge et al. 2020) failing to reduce the levels of business travel (Haynes 2010). Olson and Olson (2000) show that virtual teams suffer from many disadvantages when compared to collocated teams, including failure to establish common ground, looser coupling of work, lower levels of collaboration readiness, and higher need for sophisticated technology and users. Indeed, multiple studies find that regardless of the advancement of technology, the need for face to face interaction does not diminish, but rather the use of ICTs and their improvement over time are complementary to travel activities (Aguiléra et al. 2012; Gaspar and Glaeser 1998). This is particularly important where work cannot be done remotely, which requires work travel. In the case of this thesis, factories cannot be built or commissioned without an onsite team, so while the debates on ICT substituting work travel are applicable in other scenarios, they are redundant here.

It is important to note that work travellers consistently use ICTs in their work, to connect to the office, the company intranet for resources, speak with other travellers across the globe, and generally perform regular tasks for their work. The main difference between work travellers and other forms of work mobility, for example teleworkers who are remote and use ICTs regularly, is the spatial element. While teleworkers are able to perform their job from anywhere in the world, and indeed, this creates many debates on the management of such remote staff (see Felstead and Henseke 2017; Whittle and Mueller 2009; Hafermalz 2021), the work traveller differs because they *must* be in a particular space to perform their work, namely: the client's premises (Hislop and Axtell 2007). A factory building project must have a team onsite at all times, therefore drawing the difference between teleworkers who are placeless but depend on ICTs for their work, with work travellers who need to be somewhere specific to do their work.

2.2.4 The three boundaries and Management and Organisation Studies (MOS)

The three boundaries that distinguish work travel from other forms of mobility are: firstly, that work travel is work-related, as discussed earlier. Secondly, work travel necessitates physical displacement, where people are expected to travel to locations other than their company premises. The differences with expatriation, short trips, and migration were discussed, defining work travel as frequent and regular travel away from home, for long durations of time to

conduct work on client premises. Finally, work travel must be done from a particular place as opposed to anywhere, since ICTs are insufficient to allow the work to be performed fully. In general, while the three bodies of literature outlined in this section are very important to the understanding of work mobilities, they do not touch on the topic of work travel directly and none of them are sufficient to define a complete image of work travel. More importantly, these disciplines have other questions about work mobility than the ones of concern in this thesis. They ignore the entanglement between the construction of work travel, and the necessity for and forms of travel it generates, and in turn, the form of organisation that work travel gives rise to (Faulconbridge et al. 2020). In other words, for migration studies, ICTs, and IHRM, the organisation and travel practices are treated as separate, unrelated entities.

2.2.5 Problematising work travel: Disconnect with organisation

This overview of literature points to a problem, previously diagnosed by Faulconbridge and colleagues (2009; 2020), where work travel and related practices are studied as independent entities. This theoretical perspective positions work travel, organisation, and other practices as 'discrete entities', starting with a "a deeply taken-for-granted assumption that technology, work, and organisations should be conceptualised separately" (Orlikowski and Scott 2008, in Faulconbridge et al. 2020, p. 196). In IHRM, for example, travel activities are regarded as a separate phenomenon from general organisation design, to be addressed pragmatically through organisational policy, staffing decisions, and other interventions where problems emerge (Widmier et al. 2008). The connections with organisational structure and its goals are overlooked, perceived as a different, if not unrelated issue to that of expatriation. This leads to a partial understanding of work travel, since it is viewed without its context or the corporate and strategic decisions that work travel is a product of. Following this, I argue that better understanding of work travel can be fostered by addressing work travel as a part of the organisation as opposed to studying work travel as an independent practice. The purpose of this thesis is to understand how work travel and organisation are mutually constitutive, therefore, the literature I mainly draw upon, going forward, comes from MOS.

In general, MOS literature on mobilities addresses a series of issues, among which the following are dominant: how mobilities relate to larger phenomena such as globalisation and multinational companies (e.g. Salt and Wood 2012; Spence et al. 2018; Beaverstock 2018), how demand for work travel emerges (e.g. Aguiléra 2008; Jones et al. 2018; Storme et al. 2017; Faulconbridge 2006; Faulconbridge et al. 2020), and what are the consequences of work travel

for individual employees (e.g. Costas 2013; Gustafson 2014; Felstead 2012). Another related concern among MOS scholars remains how ICTs impact contemporary work (Felstead and Henseke 2017) and whether they have the capacity to reduce travel thus lowering company spending and environmental costs (Gustafson 2012; Poom et al. 2017; Caset et al. 2018; Boussauw and Decroly 2021). Despite that, most studies within the MOS discipline appear to overlook the interdependencies between work travel and organisation, instead, addressing specific practices, such as use of time during business travel (Hislop and Axtell 2015), sourcing of social support among remote workers (Collins et al. 2016), factors motivating individuals to engage in travel (Jones 2013), and more. As Faulconbridge and colleagues (2020) explain, this attention, although important, is insufficient to reach nuanced levels of understanding of work travel, since it emerges as an organisational necessity and practice, and is inherently interlinked with the work organisation, 'producing' the global firm (Faulconbridge et al. 2009). For this reason, this thesis focuses on addressing the missing link between organisation and work travel, attempting to respond to the question of 'how work travel is organised?'. This, however, leads to a concomitant question, which the rest of this Chapter aims to address: what is meant by 'organisation'?

2.3 Theoretical perspectives

There are many organisation theories and a whole field dedicated to their study, that is, MOS. To avoid summarising a range of theoretical perspectives in a broad-brush manner, I structure this section based on, primarily, the theories that emerged as important explanatory resources during the fieldwork stage of my research, and secondarily, on the theoretical lenses that similar studies have utilised to understand how work in unconventional settings is organised. Therefore, this section firstly introduces ethnographies of Catherine Turco (2016) and Stephen Barley and Gideon Kunda (2004), both of which describe the organising of employees in unstable environments. Similarly to my ethnographic findings, Turco (2016) provides a glimpse into a contradictory state of affairs, where organising through bureaucratic and formal means are both rebelled against, but also requested. Her ethnography reveals the instability engrained in an anti-bureaucratic company that pursues radical openness, and the roles of employee networks and bureaucracy in attempting to structure that organisation (Turco 2016).

While Turco's (2016) ethnography reflects many issues that I faced among work travellers and the management of projects, such as simultaneous reliance and denial of formal

organisation infrastructures, I question whether the global and 'out-of-organisation' aspect of my ethnography creates different dynamics than the one-sited study of Turco, particularly considering the strong culture management initiatives exercised in co-located work sites (Kunda 1992; Turco 2016). The first part of the review of theoretical perspectives, then, focuses on organisation as an administrative unit, drawing on FOS.

To consider how work occurs outside of the permanent organisation I draw on Barley and Kunda's (2004) ethnography of expert contracted workers in the high-technology sector, who do not have a permanent workplace and are moving between companies using networks of contractors, agencies, and companies. While this is not a direct comparison with the nature of organisational work travel, it reveals the dynamics of project work in constantly changing teams and outside of the classic organisational setting. This study provides a CMS perspective onto contracted work, acknowledging the privileges of this form of working, such as increased autonomy and flexibility, while also makes a point about the challenges and burdens of it. I then introduce the seminal study of Jana Costas (2013) on mobile consultants, where she theorises why mobile workers continue to engage in travelling despite its hardships, explaining it through the metaphor of 'stickiness'. Her study is conducted from a similar stance to Barley and Kunda (2004), the CMS approach, which prioritises the perspectives of employees as opposed to those of employers, institutions, or markets, and generally highlighting issues in regard to power, identity, subjectivity, and inequality in these relationships. This approach also generally focuses on social organising and distinctions between 'the organisation' and its people.

The CMS approach provides an alternative lens to FOS, which studies organising from an administrative stance, whereas CMS draws primarily on the experiences of organising of organisational members. I study the organisation of travel from both perspectives as they emerge as significant during my fieldwork. In the following two subsections I introduce the premises of FOS and CMS, and the three mentioned studies that concern unconventional organising, forming a comparative frame for my ethnography.

2.3.1 Formal organisation studies and culture management

Formal organisation studies (FOS) conceptualise the organisation as a predominantly formal structure with social actors, where power typically lays within formal or legitimate structures. Throughout the thesis, I consider the organisation as both a social and formal entity, since both

these elements constitute a functioning corporation like ProQuip, however, in this section I focus on what formal organisation entails, and how it has been ethnographically studied.

Emerging from Max Weber's (1978) seminal work *Economy and Society*, "formal organisation" refers to a bureaucratically structured organisation, which could be for-profit or not, must have its own legal identity, and its general purpose is satisfy its primary goal for its existence, usually the production or provision of a good or service (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). Weber first described capitalist rational bureaucratic organisation following a trip to the United States, where he first came across large industries that contrasted greatly with the family-run business models in his native Germany (Weber 1988). The principle by which the large organisation offices were run was bureaucracy, where its "defining features included a strict vertical hierarchy, specialized division of labour, formal written rules and guidelines, selection and promotion of staff on the basis of their technical competence, and separation of personal from corporate affairs" (Turco 2016, p. 6). In other words, Weber (1978) observed formal rationality as the processes of organising built upon rational-legal authority as opposed to the more traditional authority such as patriarchal or even the charismatic authority of an inspirational leader. As Weber put it, bureaucracy was "resting on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issues commands" (Weber 1978, p. 328). That is, whoever advanced in the ranks to become manager, was in fact in command. Although many textbooks advocate that Weber found this form of office management efficient or even 'ideal', that is incorrect (Turco 2016; Cummings et al. 2017). Weber recognised the dangers embedded in the bureaucratic system to lead to an 'iron cage of rationality' thereby dehumanising the human subject, leading to people operating instrumentally instead of substantively making choice, and allowing bureaucracy to become so dominant that other systems would not be able to overcome it (Turco 2016; Grey 2017). Over the years since Weber's publications, however, he has become a caricature shown to advocate for this mode of organising, while many organisations have been shown to have 'progressed past' this archaic model to engage in more humane (and popular) practices such as culture management and even Turco's (2016) 'open' organisation (Cummings et al. 2017).

This invokes two important questions. Firstly, how is formal organisation different from social, because surely, social organising also has rules and roles and much else that formal organisation appears to be based on. Secondly, if formal organisation is indeed such a problematic system that management scholars have been adamant over decades to move past

it, then for what reasons is it mentioned in this thesis. I address the difference between formal and social organising first.

Formal organisation, if contrasted to social, can be said to be based on three main principles. Firstly, it must have a legal entity, which means that it is technically a corporation (Robé 2011). Being a corporation entails that such an organisation has legal power whereas social organisation does not, for example, in signing agreements any misconduct can be taken to court. Secondly, a formal organisation is legally established for a particular purpose (Blau and Scott 1963). Corporations do not spontaneously emerge, they are constructed for an explicitly articulated purpose and must, throughout their existence, serve that purpose (Barnard 1968). Finally, formal organisation is superior to social organisation in their information management. Formal organisation is constructed on the basis of information and for storage of information (Cooper 1992). They are structures of historic information upon which decisions can be made. The more past information, the more certain is the decision. It also operates on surprise value, where a formal organisation deals with it much better than social one; the more surprisingly a new situation is, the better the capacity of the formal organisation to deal with it, as opposed to a self-employed individual. If an event can be predicted, on the other hand, it holds little value. "Past experience becomes sedimented in an organization's structures where it functions as a guide to future events." (Cooper 1992, p.180). The more complex the structure of the formal organisation is, the more information they encode, the lesser is the unpredictability. Therefore, unlike social organisation, through effective information management formal organisation can attain better predictability and control (Cooper 1992), and render itself "reliable, foreseeable, and stable" (Barnard 1968, p.4).

Despite the multitude of critiques of bureaucracy and formal organisation, a number of authors defend formal organisation as an unjustifiably overly criticised and indeed, demonised organisational form (see du Gay and Lopdrup-Hjorth 2016). Du Gay (2000) explains that there are three main arguments against bureaucracy and the formal organisation, specifically: populist, philosophical, and driven by New Public Management (NPM). The populist argument equates bureaucracy to the 'red tape', perceiving delays as tropes of inefficiency by subjecting it to other logics and morals. The philosophical critiques share the same misconception as the populist, casting bureaucracy as having an inherently *instrumental* ethical domain while disregarding its *substantive* domain. Du Gay (2000) claims that the bureau must be assessed against its own ethical and moral code that is substantive to this institution. Finally, the third

stream of critiques comes from NPM and entrepreneurial governance literatures whose attack is launched against the bureaucratic paradigm in general. They claim that is has failed in response to the "era of constant and profound change" and hence any organization that is bureaucratic is bound to fail.

The latter is a large body of research, particularly of the mainstream kind, positioned strongly against formal organisation, implicating it as the cause of a range of organisational dysfunctions and being in the way of “creativity, inventiveness, flexibility, speed, and freedom” (du Gay and Lopdrup-Hjorth 2016, p.6). This anti-bureaucratic and anti-formal sentiment goes back to the 1950s where first branches of research indicating that, as Weber feared, formal organisation has dehumanising aspects. In later years, formal organisation became notorious for goal displacement or the ‘red tape’ (Turco 2016). Indeed, Merton (1940) and colleagues account that in real organisations formality did not function as efficiently as theorised by Weber, and in a later study Bauman (1989) holds the bureaucratic ethos responsible for having allowed the Holocaust to happen. This fostered a generally anti-bureaucratic sentiment, leading to the rise of post-bureaucratic forms of organisation, but as Turco (2016) learns in her ethnography of a radically anti-bureaucratic corporation, the formal organisation is not easy to escape, nor necessarily desirable to.

Turco’s (2016) *The Conversational Firm: Rethinking Bureaucracy at the Age of Social Media* is set in a social media marketing company, “TechCo”, in the 2010s. The founders, when she meets them, announce that they want “to give a lot of freedom to people”, and “to trust that people will use good judgement and decide for themselves” (Turco 2016, p. 14). The premise according to which the company was set out was to entirely ‘do away’ with formal organisation and its tropes; there is no human resources department, limited hierarchies, and no top-down rules to manage employee behaviours. Indeed, the founder’s vision was to create a radically “open” company. At the centre of Turco’s (2016) analysis is structure and organisation, focusing on the narratives of TechCo’s employees: modern American millennials, the ‘natives of social media’. Throughout the study, Turco finds out that although the company was set out to be explicitly anti-bureaucratic, replacing some of its mechanisms with social media and crowd sourcing of information, there was still a push to create some bureaucratic structures. Where typically decisions would be made by line managers or other formal superiors, in TechCo people would consult with one another on the company forums (the Wiki), share ideas and voice opinions.

While much of the openness strategy seemed to be liked by TechCo's millennials, including access to food and lounges, flexible hours, the ability to pursue own projects, rave-style pizza nights, and much more, the lack of formal structure seemed to create its own problems. One issue was the absence of a consistent maternity leave policy, where different line managers would give their employees different time away, maternity pay, and some would return to find their jobs have been reassigned. Similar issues occurred with performance reviews and terminations, where there was no standard across the company, making people anxious. Additionally, internal job changes too caused confusion, where no policy would stop people from 'working connections', leading to overt nepotism. Another issue became obvious when millennial employees admitted that while they liked the freedom to explore ideas and be on equal footing with colleagues, they hated taking personal responsibility over decision-making, and would prefer to assign that to a superior in the hierarchy (Turco 2016). Similarly, there was a push to make an organisational chart to clarify who to speak to when a particular professional or expert was needed, with one employee posting on the Wiki: "'Let's get real,' she wrote, "there IS a hierarchy, as TechCo'y as we want to be. The assumption that having an org chart changes all that is TechCo seems rather absurd to me. Can we please have one?" (Turco 2016, p.42). Overall, Turco's (2016) ethnography showcases that despite moves among management gurus and some academics to dispose of formal organisation in favour of more flexible and ad hoc forms of organising, even a company that started out in such a state over time became more bureaucratic to make up for problems resulting from radical openness. It is important, then, to consider the role of formal organisation in structuring work and, in my case, work travel.

Turco's (2016) ethnography reflects some of the findings of my own research, where employees were both against unnecessary procedures such as protocols for buying screws and listing 'approved suppliers', while also being dismayed that formal structures like the Project Review Board were not functioning as well as they should. Although many of my findings regarding the role of formal organisation are similar to Turco's, in that my informants kept referring to formal infrastructures and artefacts such as charts with reference to how the company and work travel are conducted, there is an important distinction between my ethnography and Turco's. Turco conducted her study in a single site where all employees congregated daily to perform their work, subjecting them to a 'culture of openness' and its practices.

Like Kunda (1992) recounts in his ethnography of technical professionals, being in the organisation subjects employees to culture management and concomitant forms of normative control which enforce social pressures to behave in certain ways. Kunda (1992) describes a culture of burnout and overwork, where eating breakfast at one's desk was perceived as a favourable practice demonstrating true commitment to the work. Much like in Turco's case, In Kunda's (1992, p.90) ethnography formal organisation was seen as hindering, with slogans like "culture to replace structure" thrown about to indicate that formality is unnecessary where personal conditioning, practising of company rituals, and romanticising of work can lead to higher productivity better than bureaucracy. However, culture management is highly dependent on exposure, that is, the architecture of spaces and specific practices propagated in companies enforce the culture, where the lounge spaces in TechCo, participation in the Wiki, involvement in pizza nights and restaurant dinners are all preconditions to belonging.

Whereas the cultures described in Turco's and Kunda's ethnographies are significantly different, they are both immersive through the single-sited-ness. However, it is unclear whether the same mechanisms of culture management would have an effect in a globally dispersed company such as ProQuip, and therefore, whether normative control works as effectively under these conditions. Furthermore, this also sets out the question of how formal organisation operates in dispersed conditions, since it becomes obvious that even in explicitly anti-bureaucratic conditions such as TechCo, it prevails. My ethnography indicates that engineers and managers both in offices and onsite draw on formal organisation infrastructures to organise their work, but also that there are social dimensions to it that appear to exhibit some culture management-like aspects. In this I turn to Barley and Kunda's (2004) ethnography of 'hired guns', who are a group of contracted Silicon Valley workers without permanent employment.

2.3.2 Social organising and critical management studies (CMS)

Social organising denotes organisational forms that are not formal. It typically involves spontaneous groups that come together for a goal or reason, which may change over time, and may indeed denote social or spontaneous organising within formal organisation contexts. Social organisation has two key elements by which it operates, the individuals that constitute it, and the 'social' that they form together as they become a group. However, as Cooper (1983) explains, the relationship between the social and individuals that form it is mediated by something else, something shared that creates a tension between these people that produces the relationship. Like in Mauss's (2002) gift giving custom, the gift is a median that produces a

relationship of co-dependency between the giver and receiver of the gift, thereby obligating the receiver to become to giver as well. “Social organization is a system of information exchange whose function, as we have said, is to defer the loss of itself. The actors in the social structure thus represent themselves to each other as lacks of a larger whole” (Cooper 1983, p. 70). In other words, the existence of a social structure like an organisation is to preserve its own existence for the sake of its members, who supplement what they are lacking through the social system. I explain the nature of social organising, as an alternative analytical lens to formal organisation within MOS, through the social organisation of expert worker in Barley and Kunda’s (2004) ethnography of technical specialists.

Barley and Kunda (2004) study a group of contractors working in Silicon Valley for different companies. These individuals hold no permanent positions and are employed on a project-by-project basis, across different companies, in line with their particular sets of skills. These individuals, on one hand, enjoy the autonomy and higher earnings that contracting gives them, but on the other, are in a more precarious state than permanently employed individuals who do not need to find new projects and opportunities on their own every so often. To deal with the precarity, many contractors used to rely on staffing agencies, but these were charging high fees for their services and offered few benefits. In recent years, the contactors have facilitated their own network of experts that connects them with companies seeking to appoint specialists. This social organisation exists in order to facilitate contact between professionals seeking employment (which is what they are lacking) and companies looking for temporary labour. The network, then, is the mediator that supports the relationship between the two, marketing “their expertise to a portfolio of buyers” (Barley and Kunda 2004, p.8).

Like in ProQuip, the technical experts in Barley and Kunda’s (2004) study do not have a permanent place of employment, regularly working outside of organisations. Their work heavily relies on the networks they create with other contractors, where they occasionally source their knowledge to solve problems, such as in online chat rooms (Barley and Kunda 2004). ProQuip’s engineers use a similar system, where they call other ProQuippers who are often in other countries and offices to consult on issues that come up in their work. Additionally, the project employment structure among Barley and Kunda’s (2004) technical experts mirrors how ProQuippers are brought onto projects; typically, previous experiences working with other people plays a role (like being on the team of a specific project manager), and indeed, the reputations of individuals precede them. Nevertheless, ProQuip employees do

not have to go through the same precarity as Barley and Kunda's (2004) technical experts. While the deployment onto projects is similarly acquired socially, ProQuippers remain employed within the institutional boundaries of a formal organisation, they work internationally (unlike the closely knit community at Silicon Valley), and they travel for work. While Barley and Kunda's (2004) ethnography demonstrates many aspects of social organising that are an important resource for this study, ProQuip's engineers' work is mediated through both social and formal organisational aspects, therefore this ethnography draws on both perspectives. Additionally, work travel is a practice that encompasses much more than allocation of expertise across sites and projects, and therefore needs to be addressed directly. For this reason, I move on to Costas' (2013) study of mobile consultants.

Costas (2013) describes the work of consultants at global operating management firms, where she conducted participant observation in an internal Human Resources team and conducted interviews with mobile consultants. Costas (2013, p. 1475) studies the "experiences of mobility, which need to be understood in the context of various spaces, such as trains, client sites, the office and home" where consultants, much like ProQuip's engineers, are doing work. The study mostly reports on the experiences of travelling consultants performing this form of spatially dispersed work, where Costas (2013) theorises their experiences through the metaphor of stickiness. The travelling job is initially described as a freeing enterprise from the dull 'nine-to-five', filled with exciting opportunities to visit locations "all over the country, all over the world", and bask in the glamour of belonging to an exclusive group (Costas 2013, p.1476). However, the appearance of fluidity and freedom is unravelled when consultants reveal the alienating experience of being 'nowhere'; moving through chains of hotels, client sites, numerous airports, and being stuck in the monotony of 'non-places' (Augé 1995). They describe being frequently away from home, in little towns and villages, and stuck 'on the move' from one project to another, mirroring some of the experiences that ProQuip engineers shared with me. Just like in ProQuip, the "mobile working life is experienced as a never-ending dynamic from one non-place to another" (Costas 2013, p.1479).

I argue in this thesis that it is vital to expand on Costas' (2013) study of mobile workers to understand the organisation of work travel and how it relates to the company that facilitates it. Therefore, as I mentioned before, I draw upon both the theoretical perspectives of social organising and formal organisation. The approach to social organising that Costas, Barley and

Kunda take in their research can be broadly described as Critical Management Studies (CMS), which I review subsequently.

CMS emerged as a project aiming to challenge prevalent forms of managerial thinking in the 1990s, addressing issues of power, rationality, identity, and ontological and epistemological questions relevant to management practice (Hancock 2008; Fournier and Grey 2000). There are numerous great introductions and overviews to CMS, and indeed it is a ‘broad church’ with a range of modes in which CMS is invoked however, it does have a common thread. CMS is critical of mainstream management discourse, taking an anti-managerial stance and criticising the instrumental and oppressive modes of organising in contemporary organisations (Hancock 2008). Across the different perspectives within CMS appears a commitment to “free individual subjects from the power relations within which they are inscribed, including their own subjectivity” (Fournier and Grey 2000, p. 20). Indeed, this approach is evident in both Barley and Kunda’s writing and Costas’ conclusions, both focusing on the conditions of individual workers and the hegemony of institutions that employ them. Barley and Kunda (2004) describe the conditions of working as a contractor, including the potential for autonomy and earnings, and other reasons for technical experts to arrive in this form of employment. They then turn their attention to the broader social scaffolding around this mode of employment, highlighting the inherent precarity and instability of this post-industrial era work and describing the rise of occupational organising as harmful for individual employees (Barley and Kunda, 2004). Costas (2013) follows a similar narrative, where she, too, focuses on the conditions of mobile consultants, expressing the liberty and glamour of travelling for work, but then reveals them to be more of a mirage, where the realities of mobile work appear to have their own monotony.

These two studies are representative of a general narrative that CMS takes, specifically, a narrative based on dualisms. Barley and Kunda (2004) derive a strong dualism between the individual contractors and the market in which they operate, as well as the forces they are manipulating and manipulated by. Costas’s (2013) dualism is seen in the expression of the good and bad sides of doing mobile work, on one hand escaping the dullness of everyday office work, but on the other getting stuck in a repetitive cycle of mobile working tedium. Over the course of my ethnography, I found similar sentiments toward work travel to the ones Costas describes in her research, yet despite these issues, ProQuip engineers nonetheless prefer the travelling life over the sedentary. I consider this development in depth in my empirical analysis, considering both the institutional perspectives on travel from a FOS viewpoint in Chapter 5

and the narratives of individual engineers in regard to social organising forms in Chapter 6. Although the CMS perspective, upon which I draw, favours the narratives of employees to those representing institutions or employers, I take both perspectives into account sidestepping the dualism by focusing on the formal and social *activities* of organising. That is, taking a dynamic perspective, as I explain subsequently.

2.3.3 Problematising organisation: The issue of stasis

Earlier in this Chapter I identify the first problem that emerges from the literature, which is the lack of association between work travel and organisation. I explain that this association is what I will be working out throughout the thesis. The second problem I identify is that much of MOS research has focused on static images of organisation, typically studying organisation as a cohesive administrative unit composed of permanent structures (Chia 1998), crystalised in fixed and bounded organisational spaces (Costas 2013; Hislop and Axtell 2007). This creates an imagination that organising is necessary happening in *an organisation,* that is, inside the boundaries of it as an institution and a place (see Ford and Harding 2004), resembling "total institutions" (Goffman 1961). Historically, the office and the factory or shopfloor merited most attention, and were hence most theorised (Felstead et al. 2005). In both, employees are regularly present on the premises of the employing organisation (Costas 2013) performing either non-manual work in offices, or manufacturing goods in factories (Felstead et al. 2005). Much of organisation theory comes from observations in such close quarters, revealing the types of control and organising mechanisms and techniques that are being employed, and divulging the effects of different forms of supervision, cultural influence, and company structuring on employees (Kunda 2006; Turco 2016).

However, with organisations becoming 'mobilised' in the manners mentioned previously in this Chapter, the conceptualisations of work, organising, and organisation within MOS are presented with a challenge. The organisation is no longer bound in the four walls of the office building allowing for alternative forms of working like part-time, from home, or travelling to emerge (Hafermalz 2021). Mobilities unsettle the classic image of an organisation in a place, showcasing it as a form of work done outside of organisational boundaries (Costas 2013; Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt 2018), which arise the questions of how such work is organised, how far an organisation really expands, and where does it end? The advent of mobile working, therefore puts to question the established modes of bureaucratic and cultural control, prompting a shift of focus from stasis and structure toward a more dynamic understanding of organisations

(Costas 2013). The main issue with static images of organisation in this context, then, is that mobility and motion are inherently processual and changing, and therefore static representation cannot capture the organising processes of these forms of work. As mentioned before, most studies of work mobilities take a static viewpoint, such as in IHRM, where subjects of mobility are viewed as departing from or arriving at organisational sites thus mobility is understood as always subjected to the permanent, fixed site. I propose that mobility needs to be understood as a practice and process within itself, as opposed to being studied from the perspective and against the silhouette of the institutional boundaries of the classic workplace. Studying work travel, then, as an organising work practice in its own right requires a different type of sensibility than typically found within institutional accounts of work. I address how this issue may be overcome throughout the empirical Chapters of this thesis.

2.4 Conclusion

This Chapter reviewed the literature on various forms of mobile working and organisation. It has worked out the concept of 'work travel' using a range of perspectives on mobile working and emphasised the need to study this phenomenon. I show that work trips such as the ones performed by ProQuip's engineers have receive far less attention than permanent forms of relocation, like migration or expatriation, or ICT-mediated work, and where they have been studied, the focus has generally been on optimising practices of administrative, managerial, or other business occupations (Axtell and Hislop 2008). Jobs such as engineering, which are arguably much closer to an ideal model of a mobile worker, who spends most of their time outside of the home and office, have generally been neglected (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Axtell and Hislop 2008). Indeed, within the abundant body of literature on mobilities, few studies address the phenomenon of work travel (Hislop and Axtell 2007) which, as outlined in the previous Chapter, entails working outside of one's home and employer's office for prolonged periods of time (Axtell and Hislop 2008).

In this Chapter, I also review a range of perspectives on organisations that have been adopted to study such phenomena. I review the theoretical perspectives of FOS and CMS which, respectively, study the formal and social aspects of organisations, both of which will inform this thesis. However, I identify two key problems in contemporary studies of mobile working. Firstly, work travel and organisations have been, to date, mostly treated as separate entities, therefore we lack understanding of their entanglement. Secondly, the static view of

organisations typically adopted within MOS does not account for the dynamic nature of work travel. Therefore, throughout the thesis, I aim to address these theoretical issues through an empirical investigation of work travel.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods in ethnographic research

"Ethnography is first and foremost a social practice concerned with the study and representation of culture (with a distinctly small c these days). It is an interpretive craft, focused more on 'how' and 'why' than on 'how much' or 'how many'. Ethnography claims a sort of informative and documentary status – 'bringing back the news' – by the fact that somebody actually goes out beyond their ivory towers of employment, libraries, class-rooms, and offices to 'live with and live like' someone else."

(Van Maanen 2011, p.219)

By this point in my writing, posing the question "*why ethnography*?" is stupefying. It prompts the counter-question: why *not* ethnography? It may be a justified reaction in an anthropology department but this thesis comes from the business school so it must explain its methodological choices. This Chapter introduces ethnography as the research approach most appropriate to study work travel and responding to the principal research question: "how is global work travel organised?".

In the first section, I start by explaining what ethnography is and its origin in anthropology. Following that I explain the nature of *organisational ethnography*, how it differs from its anthropological antecedent and how this thesis ascribes to this mode of ethnographic research. I also make note of the inception of this thesis in the business school and how this belonging shapes the thesis and my own thought as an ethnographer. Further, I address the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin my methodological choices. In the remaining three sections I reflect on four manners in which ethnography can be understood, namely: *doing* ethnography as fieldwork, *thinking* ethnography as a set of sensibilities, and *writing* and *reading* ethnography as a manuscript. It is worthwhile mentioning that this division is entirely artificial, since for example, thinking about ethnography occurs while doing fieldwork, and indeed, while writing one's monograph. Nevertheless, I find this compartmentalisation of the multiple meanings of ethnography instrumentally useful for the structuring of this Chapter. The rest of the Chapter follows through these four categories.

In the second section, on fieldwork, I show that studying global work travel requires performing a multi-sited and multi-lingual ethnography which creates particular conditions for the ethnography and ethnographer. I explain the practical details of what steps I took to

negotiate access to the field, under what conditions they were granted, who were my informants, what sites the fieldwork took place at, the methods I used for "data collection", and the outcomes from the field. In this section I also reflect on my position(s) as a research tool, body, and person at the field and make note of a series of ethical considerations. In the third section, I consider the processes of "thinking ethnographically" (Van Maanen 2011), where learning to do ethnographic research comes less from research guides or academic books but rather, from reading other ethnographies and doing fieldwork (Neyland 2008). I draw upon earlier studies of technical workers, professionally similar to my informants and enter into dialogue with these studies in relation to the question of how such work is organised. I then explain how the fieldnotes were analysed to yield the findings presented in future Chapters and how *knowing* is achieved in ethnographic research. In the final, fourth, section of this Chapter, I discuss the relevance of understanding ethnography as a manuscript both written and read, and how the way this thesis is written reflects some of the intricacies of my response to the principal research question.

3.1 On ethnographic research

Ethnography originates in anthropology as its dominant mode of conducting research (Cheater 1989). Over the last century this methodology and its methods migrated to other disciplines, including sociology, geography, law, education, linguistics, and many more. Organisation studies is one such discipline that adopted ethnography and has developed its own *organisational ethnography* (Neyland 2008). Akin to other methodologies, ethnography is aimed at knowledge creation, broadly embodying processes of data collection (typically through fieldwork), data analysis, and its reporting. All these research processes are included under the umbrella term ethnography, which some suggest has become overcrowded and is thus losing its meaning (Ingold 2014). Given the increasing ambiguity of what can and could be considered ethnography, I dedicate much of this Chapter to explaining what ethnography entails and how it has been conducted in the case of work travel and its organisation. I start by giving some background to its origin and evolvement.

3.1.1 Ethnography and anthropology

Anthropology, or 'the study of man' (Cheater 1989), originally developed as a result of 19th century European voyages to other continents after it became clear to European explorers that their world was inhabited by different people in its remote corners. It was established as a

discipline aimed at explaining (and often colonising) these ‘others’, its primary concern to understand people and their cultures around the world (Francisconi 2010; Williams 2010; Asad 1979). Over time various currents in anthropological research developed, some of which focus on biological, historical, or social and cultural aspects of humanity (Birx 2010). The latter, social and cultural anthropology, traces different social processes across groups and communities, aiming to understand their worldviews, lives, histories, traditions, and cultures (Cheater 1989) by studying various artefacts, family formations, power structures, practices and routines, rituals, and much more (Faubion 2001). Social anthropology, as Evans-Pritchard (1951, p.11 in Asad 1979) once wrote “studies primitive societies directly, living among them for months or years… [the social anthropologist] studies their ecologies, their economies, their legal and political institutions, their family and kinship organizations, their religions, their technology, their arts, etc. as part of general social systems.” Evans-Pritchard’s definition of social anthropology is that of a discipline aiming to understand *societies as wholes*. However, there is a problematic connotation in his formulation that defines “the others” as primitive, hence positioning European and Anglo-American societies as superior to the natives of non-European societies. This reflects the colonial history of anthropology which greatly impacts the way the discipline developed and the power dynamics that still exist between ethnographers and their informants. This Chapter returns to the issue of the colonial heritage in section 3.2.

The history of colonialism accounts for an early form of ethnography written by “armchair anthropologists” who rarely travelled to the destinations they wrote about and instead based their accounts of other cultures on the reports of missionaries, colonial governors, journeymen, and other travellers (Flemming 2010). These early accounts proved to be unhelpful for generating a thorough understanding of the foreign cultures since they were “unsystematic and unreliable” (Williams 2010, p.373), having few procedures or rules for gathering information or reporting it, and therefore no established or unified mode of doing anthropological research (Faubion 2001). The publication of Malinowski’s (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* led to a methodological paradigm shift in anthropology, establishing its methodological tradition: ethnography.

Malinowski’s contribution followed his extended fieldwork in New Guinea where he was stranded during part of the first World War. Malinowski’s new standard for anthropological research was based on extended contact with the studied culture and people. From thereon anthropological inquiry would be: “detailed, first-hand, long-term, participant observation

fieldwork written up as a monograph about a particular people" (Macdonald 2001, p.60). For the past hundred years, then, ethnography has become acknowledged as the primary form of inquiry and writing in anthropology, with a scaffold of standard techniques developed by Malinowski for gathering information about humans and their ways of life, especially in remote societies, to then systematically inform the people at 'home' about the 'exotic others' (Williams 2010). Likewise, ethnography became a rite of passage for anthropologists. Reproducing Malinowski's feat of going away on an adventure "beyond the ivory tower" has become an institutionalised route toward a legitimate ethnography (Van Maanen 2011, p.219). "Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village…" Malinowski writes (1922, in Gay y Blasco and Wardle 2007, p.13), invoking a sense of excitement, anticipation, fear. There is a clear distinction between the everyday life of a Western researcher and the adventurer anthropologist who goes to the field to be among the people they study. This has become the benchmark for anthropological research; Malinowski created a set of methods for research, predominantly participation observation, but more importantly, he set a precedence for venturing out to the field for long term immersion in a native culture (Gupta and Ferguson 2002).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that there has been a range of methodological innovations since Malinowski's writings a century ago. Much of the ethnography research has moved on from realist accounts such as Malinowski's, with critical, feminist, postmodern, and many other traditions developing (Neyland 2008). Indeed, even the settings in which ethnography was done changed. Classic anthropological ethnography is difficult to come by these days; it is rare for anthropologists to pack a bag and be off to a remote part of the world with no mobile data to completely immerse themselves in a remote or isolated culture (Francisconi 2010; Pratt 1986; Gupta and Ferguson 2002). As globalisation and the spread of Western capitalism removed the anthropologist from the banks of the Amazon River and mud huts of central Africa, anthropologists found themselves frequently dwelling in corporate boardrooms, airport lounges, and tracing Bitcoin blockchains online (Maurer 2016; Monaghan and Just 2000; O'Doherty 2016; Pratt 1986). Many of these ethnographers are actually organisational ethnographers, a hybrid discipline that developed on the margins of MOS and somewhat in parallel to anthropological ethnography (Neyland 2008). Indeed, this ethnography of work travel at ProQuip is an *organisational ethnography*, which diverges from anthropological ethnographies in that, that it is explicitly interested in organisations and its people as opposed to indigenous communities, urban sub-groups, or other non-organisational

populace (Van Maanen 2011). In the following section I explain the nuances of organisational ethnography, and where and how it diverges from anthropological ethnography.

3.1.2 Organisational ethnography

Being embedded in organisation studies, it is almost an afterthought to mention that "organisation" in this disciplinary discourse typically refers to a bureaucratically structured formal institution (Watson 2012). The organisational ethnography (OE) genre, then, is predominantly interested in such *organisations* usually denoting formal organisation, but at times also referring to social organisations such as, for example, the organising of cities (Latour and Hermant 2006; Ansenberg 2019). However, as I mention in the first Chapter, OE is also about processes of *organising* ongoing in social and formal organisations. As I argue later in the thesis, formal organisation is only part of a more general organising process of work travel, and indeed there is another organisation of travel that occurs on the margins of the formal organisation. It is then, both, organisation and organising, formal and social, that are the concerns of OE. Despite that, the setting in which organisational ethnographies most commonly take place is within formal organisations, more often than not studying a temporally and spatially bounded organisational practice or phenomenon (Neyland 2008).

Organisations are also studied because of the interest of organisational ethnographers in work and work organisations. Classic organisational ethnographies are generally about explaining and understanding work processes, such as in John van Maanen's (1979 in Neyland 2008, p.7 emphasis added) definition of OE as aiming "to uncover and 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". This focus on everyday work situations can be explained by tracing the heritage of OE, from anthropology, through to sociology, and into management and Organisation Studies.

The sociologist, unlike the anthropologist, aims to study their own (particularly Western) societies (Van Maanen 2011), for example, researching the lives and practices of communities or sub-groups, like Goffman's (2014) street youth. Similarly, sociologists are typically interested in patterns and grand theory, as opposed to the isolated lifeworlds of a far-out people (Neyland 2008). Hence, sociological commentary is usually on society in a broader scheme than anthropological analysis. This is illustrated very well in Watson's (2012) anecdote about a student talking about her fieldwork at a hotel where her supervisor interrupts her to note that

what she is describing does not only apply to that particular hotel, but rather that is the case across the whole hotel and catering industry. Watson (2012) hence stresses that what may be perceived as unique may actually indicate to broader social institutions and their characteristics. The ethnographies within MOS share the characteristic of sociological ethnographies in writing more generalised observations about society, but while sociological ethnographies encompass all manners of social groups, activities, and practices, OE specifically focuses on work and work organisations.

This thesis is an OE since its fieldwork site is on the premises of ProQuip, a formal organisation, and other organisational sites where ProQuippers work, like clients' premises. The interest, too, is in the organising of work, in particular how work is performed in unusual spaces, and how control by the formal organisation is maintained over the travelling ProQuippers. These are some of the questions that underly the interest in 'how work travel is organised?' as a social and formal organisation. As defined earlier, a "formal organisation" refers to a bureaucratically structured organisation, which could be a for-profit or not, must have its own legal identity, and its general purpose is satisfy its primary goal for its existence, usually the production or provision of a good or service (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). ProQuip is a formal organisation, having its own legal identity with the capacity to employ personnel and its principal goal is to create factories. However, it also has social organising processes, that is, organising of work that occur outside of the formal organisation, for example, attaining frequent flyer programmes or participating in out-of-work activities onsite with colleagues (this will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 6). Although these are not essential for the ProQuippers' jobs, they make up an important element of the organisation of travel. For example, while ProQuippers have a travel agency formally contracted to provide travel booking services, ProQuippers also create their own communities that aid travel, for instance the aforementioned frequent flyer programmes or 'headphone clubs' where ProQuippers advise each other which headphones are most suitable for flying. Both these infrastructures contribute to the possibility of work travel, therefore social organisation also, like formal organisation, significant for understanding work travel. Hence, OE is a type of ethnography that is primarily about work, organisation, and organisations in their various forms.

3.1.3 Context and the business school

This organisational ethnography, as mentioned previously, is within the discipline of organisation studies and hence its format and content vary significantly from the formats of

anthropological or sociological ethnographies. This thesis is based in the business school and its concerns, questions, and the way it is written reflect that belonging. In fact, the thesis is founded upon some of the questions about management and organising that remained unanswered in my bachelors' education, which I then set out to answer myself. In this section, I explain the intellectual heritage of this work, positioned in MOS but particularly stemming from the Critical Management Studies (CMS) tradition. Acknowledging the concerns from which this thesis stems and the heritage of the ideas that inform the thesis enables one to reflexively address the assumptions the ethnographer makes throughout the research process (Coffey 1999). The intellectual traditions in the "arsenal" of the ethnographer greatly impact the way one experiences the field as has been widely acknowledged across the methodological literature about ethnography (Atkinson 2017). For this reason, I dedicate this section to Manchester Business School and CMS.

My academic background actually encompasses three disciplines: management for my BSc, sociology for my MSc, and anthropology for my doctoral training. All these inform the thesis, but the personal experiences beyond the intellectual are also significant for the ethnographic project and making sense of oneself and the field. Hence, emotional resource (Gherardi 2019), identity work and embodiment (Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt 2018), and discourse around the (re)construction of self also become important in the field. Particularly, the experience of performing work travel, like my informants, allows me to bodily experience the work conditions of informants. In later Chapters, I recount tales of illness, confusion, being stuck, and waiting, and more, of my informants and myself, as work travel takes a physical toll on our bodies and reconstructs our understanding of the self. This I open up more in section 3.2, whereas for now I explain the academic lineage of my thinking and its evolvement.

I attained my bachelor's degree in management in 2016. Most of my education was what could fall into the so-called "spoon-fed management education" (Raelin 2009, p.401) where I was taught many abbreviation-style analyses, such as SWOT and PESTLE, and greatly criticised archaic models like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. While I became sceptical of this form of learning early in my education, mostly thanks to modules like CMS, once I began my fieldwork, I became aware of how much of the business school I actually internalised. I found myself quite comfortable at ProQuip's headquarters because I understood and spoke the language. It was not simply a matter of understanding English or local languages, but rather the business jargon that was thrown around casually; terms like *cutting margins*, *business*

model, and *target performance* were all familiar to me. Very often, they were spoken fairly meaninglessly, seemingly almost to fill in a silence and lead to head nods: "we need new measures for team maturity," one manager would announce, and the other four in the room would nod, "yes, and it should focus on five different areas." After the meeting, a manager would admit to me that they were not entirely sure what this team maturity really meant, but it would lead to 'best practice' and 'continuous improvement', and that really *was* the goal. This path would then lead to queries like 'but what do they mean by best practice and continuous improvement?', but as I suspected, they led to more business jargon, and indeed, it was a language I spoke fluently. The use of these terms made me comfortable. I felt like a fish in water.

On the business side, it was easy for me to "fit in" and keep a conversation going about what kind of milestones and targets are being implemented in the project governance plan. The business school taught me that this is what management and organisation is, and being in it, one could be tempted to accept that as the 'objective reality'. 'But yes, the "road map" to success could definitely be through the formula: process x people x tools = performance,' one might agree, convinced. The role of the ethnographer, however, is to defamiliarize the familiar, to be a professional stranger (Agar 1980). Being comfortable, then, is not the right condition for an ethnographer – because the danger of being a fish in water, of course, is that a fish might ask "what water?".

Throughout my fieldwork I came to notice and reflect on my position as a business school graduate. My concerns emerge from and are embedded in the business school. Some of them are ones that can even be captured on a first-year management and organisation studies course: Taylor's (1911) obsession with efficiency and productivity, Weber's (1978) preoccupation with the ethos of office, hierarchical organisation and role delineation, which set a precedence to the ways we think about organisations. It would be reductionist to say that these are still the principal concerns of the business school, of course, a hundred years on from the articulation of these theories, but it would not be wrong to note their heritage. The business school is still interested, perhaps more than ever before, in profits and performance maximisation (Parker 2014; Jones and O'Doherty 2005), and in providing a digestible education composed of simplified frameworks to its 'customers' (Raelin 2009). My concerns, I found, were not too far removed. My question "how is work travel organised?" seemed to have a background, unspoken concern for "how *to* organise…?". In my research proposal, I ask "how is control

exercised over remote engineers? And how successfully is it exercised?". The 'successfully' part, I suppose, was aimed at the funding bodies, reflecting the inherited need for efficiency.

I explain this situatedness in the business school now because in future Chapters, specifically in Chapter 5, this managerialism is intentionally probed at and engaged with. I deliberately utilise the language of my informants and present their images of organisation. What I want to point out already, then, is that my engagement with managerialist narratives throughout the thesis does not come from blind belief in it. I maintain scepticism toward it but in order to gain a holistic understanding of the organisation of travel, I engage with managerialist images of organisation as presented by my informants. The management narrative also points to a secondary problem in ethnography, which O'Doherty and Neyland (2019, p.460) diagnose as the coming face-to-face with our own academic knowledge economies in the field: "Ah, well this is Erich Fromm territory, right?" says an informant. The concepts that were once created in universities are circulating in the field and the ethnographer is confronted with what to do with the resulting tautology. This is a problem I start analysing in the next Chapter.

On this note, I want to return to my earlier point in saying that my business school education also encompassed a profoundly critical tradition (Rowlinson and Hassard 2011) which I was academically "brought up" with. CMS, in particular, lay the foundation to my thinking, setting questions of power, identity, uncertainty, insecurity at the forefront of my mind for many years (Knights and Willmott 2004; Grey 2017). Even so, having spent some of my term at the field I came across a very problematic assumption in management research that prevails across all the traditions, from the positivist conventions right through to CMS. There is an underlying assumption at the business school that there is 'organisation'. To rephrase that, the business school with all its variety of traditions appears to assume that businesses are organised and there is a management class with agency to manipulate these organisational processes. In studying work travel and practising multi-sited ethnography, hopping from one organisational site to another, I became less and less convinced where this organisation really is, how it manifests itself, and whether work travel is indeed *organised.*

In part, this thesis (like I imagine many ethnographies go) is a story of a fish poking its head out of the water. In my case, it was moving past the explanations of CMS, which, I found, could not answer my questions about work travel, and finding myself in another, less well-defined, area of MOS. As I explained in section 1.4.2 in the First Chapter, the research starts

with general questions about work travel but after a while I come to realise that I too make many assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon I study and its organising, leading me to a set of more fundamental organisational questions. The way I structure and write the thesis is set out to tease out such assumptions, relying on the narratives of the ProQuip 'natives' and letting them guide us through the organisation of work travel. This will involve some experimental writing which I will introduce in more detail in section 3.4 in this Chapter, but for now, having introduced some of my assumptions that follow from my academic background, I move to address the philosophical assumptions that underly this study.

3.1.4 Ontology, epistemology, and methodology

As Burrell and Morgan (1979, p.xii) note, all social theorists "whether they are aware of it or not, bring to their subject of study a frame of reference which reflects a whole series of assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it might be investigated." Ethnographic research can be conducted in different manners while relying on the same mode of fieldwork and ethnographic writing, as different assumptions about the natures of reality and knowledge can be made (Neyland 2008). Realist accounts, for example, assume an authoritative, often disembodied narrative voice (Van Maanen 2011), reporting on a culture in a manner that "reflects and inscribes a perspective that appears relatively detached from the scenes and actions it describes and analyses" (Atkinson 2015, p.155). The underlying ontological assumption of realist accounts is that the world is out there, independently of the researcher, and it can be understood through rigorous application of research methods and hence can be assessed for reliability or accuracy (Neyland 2008). The epistemological traditions that emerge from this view are based on 'triangulations' and other forms of ensuring validity by, for example, asking multiple informants the same questions to "verify" organisational histories like in Lubet's (2018; also see Monteiro and Roulet 2018) *Interrogating Ethnography* manuscript. However, this approach has been criticised for skipping over the actual experiences of the organisational "natives". In an attempt to formulate an objective image of the organisation, such studies often lose ethnographic sensitivity and "a subtlety whose organisational properties cannot be made evident through any other research method", thereby rendering the ethnographer no longer able to capture the "difference between a 'nod and a wink'" (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019, p.456). As I show in the Fifth Chapter, inconsistent images of the organisation can be very revealing of the dynamics at the studied company.

In contrast to the realist account, much ethnographic research, particularly recently, makes the contrary ontological assumption, adopting the stance that cultures and societies are constructed socially through the complex intertwining of people, artefacts, and meanings (Birx 2010). These forms of ethnographic research, often referred to as interpretivist and social constructionist, among other labels, do not aim to communicate a seemingly impartial or ‘objective’ image of a social reality. Positioning the studied phenomena as inherently subjective allows ethnographers to draw on their own experiences, observations of and tales of their informants, to then produce an account of the organisational (or communal) ‘reality’ (Neyland 2008). Where a gift giving may be interpreted as handing over a material artefact in objective terms, Mauss (2002), studying the Maori people, finds that gift exchange is actually a set of complex social processes involving reciprocity and obligation, which in a way, create a ‘gift economy’. While the local Maori community would probably not speak of a ‘gift economy’ or even use the term ‘gift’, it is the work of the ethnographer to interpret indigenous or local expressions and practices to broader concepts with the capacity to explain particular, localised practices. In that sense, the ethnographer works to translate events from the particular to the general, from instance to theory. For the ease of argument, I shall refer to such accounts that privilege understanding the perspectives of individuals (subjectivities) over creating of universal laws (objectivities) as ‘relativist’ (Winch 1964).

Relativist ethnography does not seek to provide an all-encompassing image of a society or community. On the contrary, they embrace the partial nature of their accounting (Clifford 1986); they do not claim to reveal truths about the world, since ethnographic truths are “inherently *partial* – committed and incomplete” (Clifford 1986, p.7, emphasis in original). Rather, ethnography aims to uncover what truths would be to groups of people, and by what means they construct and maintain these truths (Winch 1964), to then reach an understanding of the worldviews and lifeworld of the studied community to the best of the ethnographer’s abilities (Marcus 1995). For instance, Evans-Pritchard’s (1937) ethnography of the African Azande tribe uncovers the critical role that witchcraft and oracles play in forming their social reality. Whether witchcraft is ‘the truth about the world’ is completely irrelevant to this study since its purpose is to discover what constitutes truth for the subjects of the ethnography (Winch 1964). The commitment of the ethnographer then is to “understand their [informants’] behaviour from their point of view – to see how it is sensible and rational to them, not wrong or absurd – is to achieve real ethnographic understanding” (Turco 2016, p.199).

It is important to note that this ontological and epistemological stance positions the ethnographer, and their informants as co-constructing the narrative (Cunliffe 2010). Both subjective experiences on the part of the informants and the experiences and understandings of the researcher are informing the ethnography. The assumption is that closeness and frequent interaction between the ethnographer and their community will lead to insights that other methods are incapable of generating. This also involves a commitment to refusing to take anything for granted, asking questions, probing and inquiring, assuming that the ethnographer knows little to nothing. In an organisational environment, Neyland (2008, p.7) recommends that "[in] the same way that anthropologists encountered exotic locations, tribes and customs, the organizational ethnographer can shift the everyday into the exotic, by carrying out detailed and close examination of their subject matter."

This broadly subjectivist type of ethnographic inquiry usually adheres to a "pragmatist epistemological tradition" (Watson 2012, p.15) which sets out theorising from active exploration of the field, by continuously asking questions of why and how. The purpose of this form of research is to generate ideas from the data about what is going on at the field, rather than repeating the institutionalised, well-trodden 'grand theory' once articulated by European "dead men" (Atkinson 2015, p.56). As Paul Atkinson once said in a seminar, a student declaring they will go out and do a Foucauldian ethnography is nonsensical since they do not yet know what they will find. The methodological approach then to generating knowledge is that of abductive reasoning which simply means, when encountering a new phenomenon or situation, one should ask oneself "what might this be a case of?" (Atkinson 2015; 2017). Thus the fieldwork becomes that starting point of analysis as opposed to putting the fieldwork into servitude to academic theory (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019).

In this particular ethnographic project, I follow the ontological assumption that work travel is constituted through and by the travelling ProQuippers, and indeed, that this phenomenon is as much a work practice as a *way of being* in the world. Furthermore, my epistemological assumptions follow that through practicing the same lifestyle and direct interaction with the travellers I would be able to attain a glimpse into what is emically known as "travel". On the methodological level, then, I adopt an abductive research strategy which sanctions an exploration that is aiming to initially describe and explain of the social realities of the travellers (Blaikie 2000). In practical terms, for my data collection I did ethnographic fieldwork, which "implies some degree of participation in and observation of everyday life in

naturally occurring social settings" (Atkinson 2017, p.10). I employed a "palette of methods" for data collection which include participant-observation, archival and documentary research, and field interviews (Boellstorff et al. 2012; Williams 2010). Over the course of the ethnography, I wrote up 8 full fieldwork notebooks which serve as my primary data source for the analysis and writing. I explain how I went about the fieldwork in detail, in section 3.2.

3.1.5 Work travel as an organisational ethnography problem

There are many reasons to study work travel ethnographically. As explained earlier, the ethnographic approach is aimed at gaining an in-depth, rich understanding of a culture or community via a range of methods and particular writing style. While ethnographic research typically takes longer to conduct than other research methods, it has a series of important advantages. For example, ethnographic accounts are considered holistic in nature (Boellstorff et al. 2012; Francisconi 2010) involving 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) with detailed narrations of activities, people, and places embedded with interpretations of their cultures, rituals, and beliefs (Spencer 2001; Williams 2010). Nuances of political, social, and cultural nature that are evasive and considered intangible in other methods are rendered accessible ethnographically (Neyland 2008). Additionally, it is crucial to note that ethnography is not in itself a method, but rather its fieldwork draws on multiple methods. The participative feature of ethnography also allows for the informants to comment and provide feedback on the ethnographer's data, hence increasing the power of the informant in a relationship where generally the researcher is privileged. Finally, ethnographic writing comes to play a crucial role in the way these lifeworlds are expressed. Among other things, ethnographic writing aims to invoke emotion (Strathern 2004), suspend moral outrage, and allow an appreciation of the cultural context in which the described practices exist (Gay y Blasco and Wardle 2007). Some of the stories may be shocking or difficult to comprehend within the categories one has learnt to think in (Winch 1964), and so ethnography employs techniques of writing that seek to allow access into the others' world (Clifford 1986).

Where it comes to work travel, the practice may be entirely unfamiliar to the reader of the ethnography or worse yet, be riddled with misconceptions borne out of exaggerated media representations such as the ones I address in section 1.2 of the First Chapter. While there is a significant body of knowledge on mobile working and particularly work travel (see for example, Costas 2013; Aguiléra 2008; Faulconbridge et al. 2020; Saarenpää 2018; Borg and Söderlund 2015), much of the empirical research is conducted through interviews. Paying

ethnographic attention to the same phenomenon, in addition to the interview method, can expand our understanding of how travel is performed and experienced. The ethnographer, spending more time with their informants and experiencing their work conditions can attain an 'insider' status that is generally not accessible for research done solely through interviews. Furthermore, engaging in participant-observation as commonly done in ethnographic research, leads to a deeper understanding of the experiences of travellers, having partaken in the practice. The capacity of ethnography to 'become the phenomenon' opens a possibility of not only providing an account of work travel, or even representing it, but entertaining the possibilities of *being* work travel (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019). One way to begin exploring work travel is through the questions of ProQuippers, like "where am I?", "when am I going home?", "how long will we be stuck like this?" as well as other modes of enacting work travel, like following streams of product (see Chapter 7).

Furthermore, the descriptive nature of ethnography has the capabilities to showcase not only that work travel is a socially constructed phenomenon, but also how it is constructed, by whom, using what means, and what are its consequences (Atkinson 2017). While Costas (2013), for example, reports that her interviewees disclose a sense of dissatisfaction with their lifestyles and the demands of the travelling job, Costas explains their continuing participation in the practice as a form of "stickiness", that is, feeling stuck in the lifestyle. My ethnographic fieldwork revealed much of the same complaining that Costas (2013) describes in her interview extracts, but when confronted with idea of, for example, taking an office job, the travellers responded with: "Never! The site is where everything happens. My place is here. I would die of boredom in the office." Observing the activities "onsite", as they refer to the factory production sites, and at offices reveals significantly different attitudes, work practices, routines, and one dare say, cultures.

As I later discuss in Chapter 4, the misery that Costas (2013) and other researchers (e.g. Borg and Söderlund 2015) account for among mobile workers does not seem to exceed the difficulties reported in other professions, and indeed, my informants explained that they find many more advantages to the travelling work life. More so, narratives such as Costas (2013) article seem to be constructed by the writing style of CMS which, typically starts from positive experiences (glamour of travelling) but then privileges negative commentary (misery and exhaustion). In other words, ethnography has the capacity to go beyond the narrative conversation, involving additional resources for the ethnographer who, over long term

exposure to their informants, learns to read subtle cues, understand local colloquialism, comprehend references to specific practices, people, and things due to sharing more common ground (Olson and Olson 2000) with one's informants, and the ethnographer may also be treated with more trust than an interviewer given the 'insider' status resulting from extended acquaintance or other 'belonging'. The ethnographic approach, then, can allow in-depth understanding of phenomena, even revealing things that are not considered significant by the members of the organisation (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019). It is then also capable of informing the reader of the phenomenon in a manner that reflects it and delivers the reader to work travel.

Ethnographic narrative is, more often than not, interesting to read. It tells stories that not only inform about the lives of informants, but may be evoking in a similar vein to classic storytelling, allowing one to experience alternate lives (Van Maanen 2001). For example, in employing 'thick description' (Geertz 1973), detailed descriptions of events that are embedded with interpretations of their studied cultures, rituals, and beliefs, one can provide a rich and engaging imagery of the different world (Spencer 2001; Williams 2010). One of the many strengths of ethnographic work, then, is the writing in itself. While the previous sections give a rationale for ethnographic research in general, explaining that as a form of inquiry or fieldwork, it allows the researcher to reach a nuanced understanding of their informants through long-term immersion in their culture and through asking the right questions (Atkinson 2017). Ethnographic writing, too, is a significant reason for conducting this form of research. In the next section I provide an overview of the remainder of this Chapter and suggest four ways in which ethnography can be understood.

3.1.6 Four modes of ethnography

There is debate about what ethnography is. Some researchers, for example, argue that ethnography is only a mode of writing. For example, Tony Watson (2011, p.202) asserts that "ethnography is not a research method. It is a way of writing about and analysing social life…", whereas John Van Maanen (2011, p.218), on the contrary, argues that "ethnography is both a methodological approach to and an analytic perspective on social research." From a range of definitions, I chose to refer to ethnography as an approach to doing research, which encompasses within itself many of the elements I already wrote about in previous sections.

In general, ethnography is considered to have three main facets. First, fieldwork, where one collects their 'data' (Agar 1980). Second, 'headwork' (Van Maanen 2011), or analysis, which is a particular sensibility and way of thinking about the field to comprehend the lives of their informants. Third, ethnography is a manuscript, requiring a mode of writing through which one seeks to explain the understanding of the 'others' to 'their own people' (Watson 2011). Ethnography, then, is firstly, fieldwork which must be done following very few but strict rules: one must engage with their community directly, usually for at least a year, and fieldnotes are the common manner in which ethnographers collect their 'data'. How one does that is a question of opportunities and ethics. The next section explains all the practical elements of my fieldwork, how I did it, and what choices I made, and why.

Ethnography is also a way of thinking and analysing what happens at the field. Moving to a different country is not, in principle, ethnographic fieldwork. An ethnographer comes in with a question that serves to guide the research, at least at the beginning of the fieldwork, where everything may appear strange and unsettling (Neyland 2008). The research question or focus of one's research can change throughout the fieldwork as new interests may emerge as significant or central to the community or culture, but as a general rule, one needs to know what their primary focus lest they get lost in the realm of possibilities (Atkinson 2017). "We bring ideas *to* the field as well as draw them *from* the data and our experiences… Exploring does not mean being directionless" (Atkinson 2017, p.4 emphasis in original). Ethnographic thinking, then, is centred on comparison between what the researcher already knows and the 'otherness' they encounter in the field, and between our field and previous research. This analytic process is addressed in section 3.3.

Finally, ethnography is a manuscript. I write this thesis in order to inform the academic community about the lived experiences of global work travel that predominantly engineering professionals engage in routinely. In the fourth section, 4.4, I explain that the way the thesis is written is set to move between organisational sites in a discussion of modes of organising, starting at the organisational headquarters and moving to the "site". It is also to written to move between different conceptions of organisation, from formal, to social, to 'other'. However, aside from an ethnography being a *written* manuscript it is also a *read* one. I offer a fourth way of thinking about ethnography, as something to be read. I propose that the journey of the manuscript does not end when it is articulated by the author, but it becomes an active participant in its discipline as it is being read, and thus influencing research and debates. Examples of

seminal ethnographies that changed the trajectories of disciplines include Malinowski's (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Evans-Pritchard's (1937) *Witchcraft, oracles, and magic among the Azande*, Geertz's (1972) *Notes on the Balinese cockfights*, and many more. I argue that ethnography needs to be understood as all of the above: fieldwork, analysis, writing, and reading, because all of these elements are essential to arrive at ethnographic understanding and articulate it to others.

3.2 Doing ethnography: fieldwork

There is nothing more central to ethnography than fieldwork. Although I argue that there is a multiplicity of meanings to what constitutes ethnography, without a doubt, fieldwork is the most central of all. It serves to validate the ethnographer as *an ethnographer* who has corporeally experienced the field – put their body and through the pains of being an ethnographer – going elsewhere and back (Pollard 2009). Fieldwork is also a point of anxiety for ethnographer since one needs to negotiate access to a community, leave their home to venture into a different world all alone, gain the trust of their informants, and navigate whatever occurs when they are there. Multiple books on ethnography state that there cannot be a recipe for fieldwork since the ethnographer must be able to adapt to their environment and its demands (Neyland 2008). Often, the advice for prospective ethnographers leaving for the field can be summarised as "don't forget to take a notebook and a pen." In this section, I describe my fieldwork.

3.2.1 Access and negotiation

The journey toward my access to ProQuip starts in the summer of 2013, when I was employed as a translator on a factory construction project by ProQuip's client ChairCo. During that summer job, I was attended meetings between the ChairCo and ProQuip, translating what was going on in Russian to the English-speaking ProQuip managers. In 2016, when I decided to pursue a PhD, I contacted one of these managers to ask whether they would consider allowing me to do my Master's research there. The manager promptly responded, transferring me to his HR manager, asking her to find me a space. The HR manager, Pam, would occasionally correspond with me or have calls to talk about my plans, even meeting with me once on the company premises. However, as large organisations go, my research would often get swept under by more important tasks. My Master's degree came and went without any empirical research at ProQuip.

Near the start of my PhD, Pam contacted me again, apologising for the delay. ProQuip was undergoing some reorganising that kept her occupied, but now she had time to discuss my ethnographic access for the PhD. We had a few calls over the first year of my PhD, addressing my interest in studying work travel, and ProQuip's interest in understanding work travel among younger employees; ProQuip had trouble with 'millennials' internally moving from travelling positions to office-based posts after several years on the job. The problem of travel, then, was not only that of academic interest but also emerged as a practical concern in a real company. Pam explained that she wanted me to investigate how the millennials can be motivated to continue travelling, since it is essential for ProQuip's business. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement: I would do research for ProQuip, addressing their problems, while I would also collect data for my PhD. They offered to hire me for a fixed contract of a year, hence legitimising my presence on client sites, and allowing me into "the system" which included access to the intranet, travel agency, having a company phone, and all other manners in which I would be a full employee. The other privilege I acquired this way was a "blue card" of an employee, differentiating me from the colourless visitors, and the "green cards" of "consultants" (the ProQuip name for fixed-contract workers on more precarious but higher paying posts).

Pam and I agreed that I would begin my employment/fieldwork around June 2018 – on that basis I estimated that it would then start in September 2018. In reality, I entered the field in the second week of September 2018, where I met my managers, Kristina and Anna, with whom I was continuously re-negotiating my access throughout my fieldwork. I spent the first half-year travelling alongside engineers to various company offices and project sites. In the second half of my fieldwork, my travelling was sparser with my efforts mostly concentrated on analysing the collected data for the purpose of producing insights and recommendations for ProQuip. I spent much of the time in the headquarters, making sense of the travelling worlds, engaging with people in the offices many of whom I met before onsite, and writing reports that I was then "translating to strategy" in relation to the 'Millennial Problem'. Throughout this time, I continued collecting data for my PhD.

3.2.2 Conditions and the "Millennial Problem"

I was hired as a Research Specialist at ProQuip to assist in solving the 'Millennial Problem'. At its core, the problem was that ProQuip would hire engineers to travel for work who would, after several years on the job, typically move to office-based positions. This problem, in

particular, became a phenomenon among the younger engineers, usually up to the age of 35. Since ProQuip's business is highly dependent on travelling, given that they produce fully functioning factories through project work that requires onsite presence, the new trend became very concerning. Pam, the HR manager who served as my gatekeeper into the company, asked me to help in finding ways of "changing the mindsets" of this new generation of engineers, whereas Kristina, my manager at the company, asked me to explore how travel could be "optimised" for this generation of employees. As per their requirements, toward the end of my one-year contract at ProQuip I presented a 'findings report' to the company with recommendations as for how to react to the Millennial Problem. I introduce the Millennial Problem and its relation to travelling at ProQuip in further detail in Chapter 4.

3.2.3 Sites, multi-sited-ness and being multi-lingual

My fieldwork took place over six countries. I was employed by the head-office in Yland, which for the duration of my fieldwork remained my 'home office'. Throughout my 12 months employment at ProQuip, I visited five other organisational sites, two offices of specialised business areas and three factory construction sites. The offices I visited were in the Belgium and in Finland, where I spent a week and three days respectively. In both locations, everyone I met with spoke English, though not necessarily everyone in Belgium, for example, was Flemish or French. In fact, there was several British people, a Brazilian manager, a few German, Dutch, and French engineers, and a sufficiently sized Russian community. ProQuip's offices, like project sites, are international environments.

In terms of the project sites, I visited projects at different stages in Russia, Austria, and the United States. I spent three weeks in the US in a commissioning stage factory in rural Colorado. I also visited Austria and Russian on two occasions each, in order to be able to compare the sites upon my first and second visit to each. I spent two weeks onsite, in each visit, amounting to a month in either country. In total, that means that just over three months of my fieldwork took place outside of the headquarters, with much of my analysis being on the basis of the differences between the different places of ProQuip, similar and different all at once.

I also want to note that all this moving about required multiple language skills, since, despite the company language officially being English, different sites of ProQuip had different languages that were predominantly spoken there. The headquarters was a very international place, attracting employees from all over the world for meetings, trainings, events, and visits

for various other reasons. It was as typical to hear English as Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian with a range of other languages occasionally overheard in corridors, a pair of Polish natives speaking to one another, a Mexican group meeting a Colombian colleague, and so forth.

The headquarters mainly spoke either in English, or a range of Nordic and Germanic languages. The official company language, however, is English. Having grown up in Sweden, I understand the Scandinavian language group fairly well, though I no longer speak it well. In the case of Scandinavian languages, then, I was not unlike a fly on the wall, mute but understanding nearly all that was going on around me, all the while attuned to the national cultures and their subtle cues.

The English spoken in the headquarters, as well as other parts of the company, was unlike the ones spoken in London or Manchester. People spoke with a range of accents, with few other than the natives speaking with perfect grammar, but even they seem to have adapted to other forms of expression over the course of their employment at ProQuip. The head-office, in many ways, had its own English; it was spoken through engineering or management terms, with an occasional incorrect verbal form, and with an accent. Interestingly, this ProQuip English was spoken nearly everywhere, with the exception of North Americans on a site in the US. Other nationals on the same site, such as Argentinians and Indonesians, spoke ProQuip English.

In the Russian and Austrian sites, the situation was somewhat different. English was not spoken by everyone, and the national language was dominant enough to create saturated sub-groups. Austrians would be among other Austrians, and everyone else would be with everyone else. The same division appeared in Russia, though there an attempt to invite the non-Russians to afterwork dinners was discernible. In the US, a similar division to the Austrian occurred where Americans held themselves mostly apart from non-Americans despite, on first appearances, speaking the 'same' language: English. I found it surprising since there was no strong language disparity. In terms of my presence on these sites, I fit in easily with the Russian community given that that is my mother tongue. I also speak German to a basic level, which was not enough to allow me into the Austrian community, but it was enough to communicate with the non-English speaking ProQuippers. Finally, in the US, although I speak English with a relatively neutral accent, I was invited into the Argentinian, Brazilian, and Indian groups, but the local Americans only spoke to me when it was necessary. I got a few comments that suggested that I had a "Spanish-speaking-like" accent in English, which makes me wonder if that affected their perception of me.

Aside from general national languages, there appeared to be interesting differences between sites in terms of what *forms* the languages spoken on site took. For instance, in the US there was a strict prohibition on swearing on sites, whereas in Russia the engineers seemed to speak almost exclusively in swears. This was called *industrial Russian* that I had to pick up fairly quickly to follow up. This format of communication made things simpler for me in the sense that engineering-specific terms were rarely used, instead being replaced by roughly translated into English (but with much less creativity), terms like: "that shit", "this whatsamathingy", and "the piece of crap". In general, though, this ethnography was conducted in English, Russian, German, and some Swedish as that is the only Scandinavian language I speak to an extent.

3.2.4 Informants

My informants were predominantly engineering professionals, most of mechanical or similar backgrounds, some automation engineers, and some welders with no formal engineering education. The management class of ProQuip was also previously working in engineering or welding posts, eventually going up the ranks. Most of my informants have worked in ProQuip for many years, usually at least a decade, but I also met some people who have been with the company for over 40 years. In general, people who come to work in ProQuip stay there for a long time period, usually changing posts within the company every 5 to 6 years. Over my year at the field, I acquired some 'permanent contacts' but for most of my fieldwork, I spent sporadic periods with my contacts. Kristina and Anna, being my managers, were permanent points of contact but I saw them rarely, having been travelling myself or when I was at the office, they were often away for meetings or events in other countries. Similarly, to that, many of my informants, being travelling engineers, were moving around. Although on first glance this may seem like a disadvantage ethnographically speaking because everyone being constantly in motion allowed me less time to form long-term meaningful relationships with people, this kind of dynamic was authentic to the field.

Having travelled between six locations, my informants kept changing, where in some cases I would meet the same people in different locations, such as meeting Max, a Russian automation engineer, on the Russian site first and later on, unexpectedly, in the Yland head-office. Other people, I would meet only once on a trip. This, however, was not problematic for my fieldwork since this form of travelling was normal for ProQuippers. Max arrived onsite the same day that I did in Russia, and although he came from the same office as many of the others

onsite, he did not know many of them. This is normal, since most travelling ProQuippers spend little time in offices, hence their acquaintances often come from collaborative work on different sites, over time acquiring a network of contacts worldwide. Because of these dynamics, ProQuippers appeared to be used to accepting new people (especially other ProQuippers) easily, often taking the new ones into their 'care' onsite. On the same day that Max and I arrived onsite, one of the installation managers, Ilya, took us to dinner. The 'swift trust' (Bechky 2006) between travelling employees helped me in securing fairly good relationships and rapport with the travellers. However, as I noted before, my position as an employee with a "blue card" was fundamental to achieve that trust.

3.2.5 Positionalities

I did not fit into the organisation seamlessly. Most people at the field were men, mostly middle-aged, and nearly everyone was an engineer. I stood out as a female, obviously young, and a social scientist of some obscure discipline. Such physical and discursive attributes affected my place in the field and organisation, how I was perceived and regarded, where I was allowed, what relationships I developed with my informants, and much more. The issues of positionality were made even more complicated by the multi-sited-ness of my fieldwork, which meant that I had to negotiate my position multiple times, in different places, with different people, sometimes with little time to define my purpose clearly. In other words, identity work and politics (Coffey 1999), and processes of 'becoming' (Pullen et al. 2017), as well as the performativity of roles (King and Land 2018), predominantly of the management consultant, have become important to understanding my place in the field, and in respect to that, how I may 'represent' my participants in my writing later on.

Information that was disseminated about me, for example, by my manager to let a project manager know about my impending arrival on site, would sometimes lead to misunderstandings. My manager would write an email, the project manager would let their team know, but everyone would be filling the gaps on their own. This was particularly the case when people did not understand some expressions, like 'ethnographer'. For example, as I found out right before my second trip to Russia, the engineers at the site thought I was a corporate spy from the head-office, sent to single out the good and bad workers to then report them for promotions to the senior management team. I did not find out where this rumour came from, but it indicated that they did not understand what I was meant to do on their site. I attempted to remedy the situation, explaining that I was not unlike a corporate anthropologist, trying to

understand the practices of global work travel. They nodded, "so you study human bones and things?". In Russian, anthropologist apparently referred to the archaeological strain of anthropology.

Similarly, in the US, the North American community assumed I was there to take interviews, so they did not appear to understand my presence in installation areas. Instead, they visited me to chat in my designated container-office. Thus, my participant observation on that site was limited to the South American community, who seemed to communicate with the other group infrequently (one of the reasons seemed to be that the South Americans used WhatsApp, as most of ProQuip, while the North Americans used the iPhone messenger app). In other circumstances, I assumed unexpected positions, being called and somehow becoming a child, at times becoming invisible, ill, lost, a bystander, or even an escapee. The changes in my position affected the data I could gather. Following being called a child in a large meeting (to rebuke an engineer who was swearing), I found that people spoke to me more freely than before, which I assume meant that I was perceived as non-threatening or powerless. My position as an "interviewer" on the other hand rendered standard responses and stories with little depth. Given the many places and conditions of my research, which are impossible to capture in this section, I explain the circumstances of the tales of my field as I tell the stories throughout the thesis.

3.2.6 Methods and outcomes

My main strategy for data collection throughout the fieldwork was participant-observation. I spent time with my informants in offices, work sites, and when travelling I also went to dinners with them, walked to work, stayed in the same hotels, and spent weekends with them. In work settings I took notes in my fieldwork notebooks, and in out-of-work situations I either took quick notes on my mobile phone or jotted quick reminders in a small notebook I carried with me everywhere. Since my training is not in engineering, there was a limit on the activities I could participate in. I was often invited to meetings with manager and clients, as well as internal meetings among the ProQuippers and subcontractors. Additionally, I joined site and project managers on their site inspections, one time climbing through a "forest of pipes" on a morning inspection of the pipelines. However, when equipment was being commissioned, delivered, or installed, I stood aside, sometimes, when safe, observing the activity, and other times chatting with or doing field interviews with unoccupied ProQuippers.

I collected a full 8 fieldwork notebooks, which were filled with my writings on the day on one side of a page, and analysis or extra annotations on the other side. This way, I was able to keep quick notes while being involved in the field and add any more information in the evenings or nights. I also collected close to 40 field interviews, of which the first 7 were recorded (as well as taken note of) but the remaining were written down in my field notebooks since industrial noise made much of the recordings inaudible. Finally, I also collected demographic data, company information, and other documents such as news articles from the intranet and PowerPoint slides, as well as photographs from the field. All this data informs the thesis.

3.2.7 Ethics and anonymity

To ensure the anonymity of my participants and the company, I created a pseudonym for the company, and I employ composite narratives throughout the thesis for my informants. ProQuip denotes projects and equipment company, indicating at the industry that the company operates in. All the names in this manuscript are made up, not one corresponding to an individual I met at the field. In order to avoid Westernising the participants, I used names corresponding to or typically used across the nationalities of the groups I interacted with. Where the events I am describing mostly took place in Russia, I use typically Russian names, where my informants were of Indian background or decent, I used Indian names. This is important to capture the global dimension of global work travel.

3.3 Thinking ethnography: analysis and sensibilities

There is a complex relationship between theory and data in ethnographic research. We must, in order to generate valuable insight, engage with theory. As we analyse data and arrive at findings, we must be in dialogue with theory, “producing” it in the form of theoretical contributions or “using” theory to explain events in the field. Yet we need to be wary of theory, careful not to draw on it too heavily prior to engaging with the field. Entering the field with preconceptions is dangerous because we may be looking to confirm a ready-made theory instead of trying to understand what is going on at the field. A “feminist” or “Marxist” lens that occurs before the entry to the field is bound to produce is a bad ethnography (Atkinson 2017). This then, arises the questions of how to engage with theory, how to analyse one’s data, and how to arrive at theoretical insights from specific events.

The analysis of data is driven by one's research questions and corresponding research design (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). I explain in Chapter 1 that my study was driven by the research question "how is work travel organised?", positioning the idea of 'work travel', an emic expression denoting a type of mobile work, as the central phenomenon to be investigated, alongside whatever 'organising' processes that this phenomenon is going through. Therefore, the 'data' I collected was predominantly stories about travel and experiences related to travel, as well as narratives about the organisation of remote employees, of work travel and infrastructures that enable that. I found that my 'research design', that is the strategy of doing multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork and the types of data that I collected (as described in section 3.2.6 above) suited the research question, providing an exploratory approach but keeping the focus on a clear phenomenon to be studied. In terms of the analysis of this data, I follow Atkinson's (2017, p.8) suggestion to engage in *ethnographic thinking*, treating data as "the stuff to think with" while theory takes the role of "tools" used to think. Therefore, I avoided adopting any 'grand theories' as theoretical perspectives before collecting the data, instead opting to engage my collected data in conversation 'concepts and ideas' once I entered the field, throughout my time there, and long into my 'analysis' stage of the doctoral degree.

At the field, I soon found my informants drawing on what could be considered 'formal organisation artefacts'. In my analysis of the fieldnotes, trying to work out the organisation of work travel and ProQuip, I noticed that my informants kept providing me with organisational charts. I counted over 50 of them only in the first notebook (mostly containing notes from the headquarters and Belgian office), which led me to compare this with the charts provided in other notebooks, such as ones containing notes primarily from the factory building sites. The engineers and managers (most of whom were engineers before going down a management route) would often draw charts and maps of ProQuip. When onsite, some would invite me to look at the factory engineering drawing that was hanging on the wall, explaining how the factory would be coming together, which areas have open or closed access, and so on. I found that there was a big gap between the ways in which engineers onsite and office-based engineers perceived or articulated the organisation, with the latter drawing pseudo-formal charts and the former speaking vaguely about structures appearing more concerned with the 'nits and grits' of everyday site work. Among the charts, I found that there was no consensus as to how the organisation was organised, leading me to the theories around formal organisation (in Chapter 5) and social organising (in Chapter 6).

In general, documents, charts, tools, and other bureaucratic staples would be drawn upon by my informants, indicating the importance of these items to them. In my analysis, I applied this discovery – of the centrality of formal artefacts – to the question of work travel, asking how the practices involving these artefacts, like charting, were serving to organise work travel. I focused on a few of these items, aiming to understand why, for example, ProQuippers found it important to draw organisational charts, what they were trying to achieve through this exercise, and how did that relate to work travel. I found, as I describe in Chapter 5, that charting was an outcome of the uncertainties associated with the dissolution of the permanent organisation of ProQuip amidst organisational restructuring, leading to ProQuippers reasserting control through representing the company on paper. This, then, relates to the general state of ambiguity that transcended ProQuip's offices into the sites, casting doubt onto the coherence of ProQuip and their ability to support travelling. My research, then, was primarily conducted by focusing on the practices associated with work travel that appeared significant to my informants, including charting, going to dinners, and producing factories.

Throughout my analysis, I focused on practices or activities of organising work travel, some of which are noted above. To make sense of the activities that stood out as central based on the stories and actions of my informants, I categorised them according to pre-existing notions in the field of MOS. Indeed, calling artefacts such as charts 'formal' is an etic turn. Charts to ProQuippers are not related to formal organisation, nor does the expression 'formal organisation' hold much meaning to them. Casting charting as formal organising, however, is a traditional step in the analysis of ethnographic data, where a comparison is drawn between existing knowledge in a particular field, and the experiences of the field of the ethnographer. This is what Atkinson (2015) refers to as 'ethnographic thinking'.

Ethnographic thinking is, by most part, a comparative exercise (Atkinson 2015). To make sense of the world, people draw on pre-existing ideas and "typificatory schemes". For example, when one identifies oneself as a Christian or a goth, their conversationalist would usually already have an idea of what these terms mean and what attributes are associated with them (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Then the conversationalist might change their assessment and "update the typificatory scheme" on the basis of the new information. That said, in anthropological and ethnographic research, one may come across an event and phenomenon that are unfamiliar to the ethnographer, in which case they may use etic, or non-native, terms to comprehend this event. The point is that people make sense of the world in reference to their

pre-existing knowledge, whether academic or not, which is also why acknowledging one's background and philosophical assumptions is very important for reflexive research practice. "We do not pull theories and hypothesis out of thin air. We derive them from a variety of sources: our own prior exposure to phenomena, the work of others (published or otherwise) and our engagements with our own research field." (Atkinson 2015, p.56). Therefore, being aware of the assumptions we make helps us, researchers, understand where the ideas that we compare our data with come from and how they affect our analyses. That said, there is a difference between drawing on one's experiences to comprehend the events at the field, and adopting a 'lens', as mentioned earlier. The 'lens' research typically means that one goes into the field looking for particular events, whereas allowing oneself to draw on one's history and experiences is a matter of allowing oneself to be surprised by the unexpected and then work to make sense of it. This difference is subtle but significant.

I address two forms of comparison in ethnography that are relevant to this thesis. First, comparing events or observations with prior knowledge in the field, asking "what might this be a case of?" (Atkinson 2017). This comparison draws on previously articulated phenomena, finding a theorised umbrella term or relatively generic process that provides an explanation to what is going on at the field. An example of this is Mauss's (2002) explanation of Maori gift giving as a form of exchange economy. These terms are outside of the lexicon of the Maori community and would not be understandable to them, yet they are ideas familiar to the Western researcher and their community. It is the process of translating emic into etic. I do so in my analysis of organisational charts, briefly described above. Second, comparisons are also made across one's fieldnotes and other forms of data, which, especially in multi-sited ethnography, can lead to insights about the events, for example, what organising processes are local and which are organisation-wide.

In this sense, the data was collected, and the research was designed with reference to the research question. During and after fieldwork, I kept reading and re-reading my fieldnotes and other resources (as mentioned in section 3.2.6), looking for how organisation manifested in relation to work travel and ProQuip, leading to the famous 'Ah-ha! moment', "in which our very basic sense of the world gets overturned or refreshed in and through which we have occasion to see things again, as if for the first time" (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019, p.454). As I just described, one such moment was when I realised that I have not one but very many organisational charts, and indeed, none of them seemed to match. This was curious, since my

knowledge of formal organisation would indicate that an organisational chart should be *one*, or if there are many, they should match and at most elaborate on one another. Multiple contradictory charts, then, were an 'ah-ha moment' since that would mean that an artefact of formal organisation was not entirely, if at all, formal. As mentioned above, one of the manners of conducting ethnographic analysis is following inconsistencies and contradictions: that which does not make sense. The inconsistencies in charts were one such moment that led to the discovery of disorganisation at ProQuip, prompting me to question whether 'the organisation' was organising work travel, as I initially assumed based on my business school education. It seemed that these charts, which found a central space in this ethnography, have their own social life that was *organising* the company, but not as formal organisation theorists would generally argue. Therefore, that was one thread to follow toward an answer to my research question.

3.4 Writing and reading ethnography

Writing is widely acknowledged as the main output of an ethnography, which etymologically means 'culture-writing' (Boellstorff et al. 2012). Writing ethnographically is about delivering the reader to and acquainting them with the researched culture by reconstructing that 'social reality' into a textual form understandable to the reader (Atkinson 2019). Choosing how to write the ethnography is an act of ontological and epistemological positioning, as mentioned in section 3.1.4, however, it is also an act of analysis and theorising. In writing, an ethnographer chooses techniques and textual methods to convey an interpretation/representation of a society, both making sense of it through the writing and attempting to convince the reader of this understanding. This univocally means theorising and drawing on existing theory to explain how work travel is organised. Throughout the next four Chapters I draw on multiple organisation theories to discuss different processes of organisation in pursuit of understanding how work travel is organised. In particular, I draw upon formal and social organisation literature, and engage with Robert Cooper's works on dis/organisation to understand how work travel and organisation are entangled.

The process of writing these Chapters reflects an organisation of the work travel but also the representation that I inscribe onto the field. In Chapter 4, I start by introducing work travel, its practices, and its multiple meanings for the organisational actors. I describe the organisational problem, the 'Millennial Problem', that managers have with work travel, initiating my participation in the organisation. In Chapter 5, I introduce ProQuip in more detail,

showcasing it as the context which enables and constricts work travel. I describe the formal organisation, headquarters, and organisational structures and regulations that govern work travel. In Chapter 6, I inquire into the logics of control over work travel, focusing on both formal and social modes of organising, studying the institution logics and social pressures that enable work travel and make it into its contemporary form. I also consider how this practice has become dominant and indispensable for ProQuip historically and propose the existence of a Travelling Organisation. In the final empirical chapter, Chapter 7, I bring the formal and social organisation narratives and theoretical perspectives together to discuss how the organisation of work travel is managed. This Chapter draws on Cooper's work on dis/organisation, noting the inseparability of order and disorder, and formal and social organising, which had to be separated throughout the empirical Chapters to try to make sense of work travel. I also discuss the possibility of Organisation by Product, moving away from the preconceived categories of formal and social.

Indeed, as the final Chapter argues, the organisation of work travel does not happen in a dissected manner, but rather, the formal, social, other, organised, and disorderly are all happening together in a concentrated mass of practices, procedures, expectations, conversations, changes, and much more. In writing the account of work travel, I am manipulating the events to seem more structured than they were in my experience at the field. In such writing, I inevitably create a paradoxically stable version of work travel, thereby "organising work travel". Alas, this cannot be helped. Writing "is the process by which human agents inscribed organisation and order on their environment" (Cooper 1989, in Chia 1998, p.4) and I am restructuring the events of the field into an organisational and organised representation. However, I want to clarify that I am not in pursuit of creating a realist account of the 'facts' of that happened in the field nor do I aim to 'speak for' my informants (Clifford 1986). My intention is to make the reader aware that in writing this monograph, I exercise the power of 'authority', in structuring events and narratives into an analytic format that seems to me to capture the practices and organisation of global work travel. I also aim to highlight that the reading of this monograph is, in a way, a venue to participating in global work travel, and work travel is a multifaceted phenomenon, therefore there will be different readings of it.

Chapter 4: Travelling for work

This Chapter aims to introduce work travel empirically and explain how it presents a practical problem for ProQuip as well as a theoretical one for Management and Organisation Studies (MOS). In earlier Chapters, two theoretical problems were derived from the literature. The first problem is that the entanglement between work travel and organisations is scarcely studied (Faulconbridge et al. 2020). Specifically, work travel and organisation are studied separately, meaning that accounts of work travel and other mobilities do not pay attention to how organisations may foster or affect work travel. Whereas I argue that situating work travel in the context of the employing organisation may give more insight into how this global practice is constructed and organised (see Chapter 2). The second problem derived from the literature is that organisations are typically regarded as static entities, bound in specific spaces and enacted through them. This is an assumption I challenge given that much of the work of ProQuip happens outside of its institutional boundaries such as offices, instead taking place in international inter-organisational project sites.

To begin addressing these two problems, I introduce work travel empirically as it occurs at ProQuip, showing that a static conception of organisation cannot capture the global inter-organisational dynamics within which work travel is embedded, and therefore contending that a different perspective is necessary. I also introduce the issue that ProQuip has with work travel, namely 'the Millennial Problem', indicating that there is an inherent connection between work travel and organisation that needs to be studied. In this sense, the Chapter has a dual purpose: firstly, providing a rich description of work travel as it is enacted at ProQuip thereby delivering the reader as close as possible to the experiences of the local studied community and presenting a detailed analysis of their lives (Neyland 2008), and secondly, presenting the Millennial Problem and describing how it led to this study. Thus, this Chapter is the first of four empirical chapters throughout which I reach a response to the principal research question: "How is work travel organised?".

The Chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explains what work travel is, illustrating it through ethnographic narratives that shows it as a lived every-day activity for travellers. While in previous Chapters work travel was defined in relation to contemporary literature, differentiating it from other forms of mobility, such an approach alone is insufficient to attain a nuanced understanding of work travel. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter 3, ethnography

is uniquely positioned for the purpose of apprehending travel in depth, where prolonged presence within a community allows ethnographers to begin comprehending complex systems of meaning. In the second section, I introduce the Millennial Problem as it was articulated to me by ProQuip's managers. I describe what the problem is and why it is important for ProQuip's management to have it resolved. In the third section I consider the Millennial Problem in relation to recent studies on travelling, and in light of the meanings of work travel defined in the previous section. I also find that the management approach to dealing with the Millennial Problem is driven by Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organisational Psychology thinking, which sets out to treat the symptoms of the Millennial Problem without getting to its roots. Therefore, in the final section I conclude that a MOS perspective is necessary to identify the underlying issues causing the Millennial Problem.

4.1 The meanings of travelling

"In the early 2000s, I always had a suitcase packed and ready to go because there could be an issue with a pipe in, for example, Bangladesh, and they could send me there on the first flight," Dan, a former service engineer shared with me over coffee one morning. He moved to an office position around 2005, after his first daughter was born, stopping the hectic life of travelling. Such a story, where an engineer is required to travel at the drop of a hat, is not atypical in ProQuip, especially among field service engineers who often have to deal with urgent issues immediately. In ProQuip most employees either frequently travel for work, or have travelled at some point in their career, with many starting out as service engineers and later taking other jobs at the company. The work routine for travelling engineers does not match with the archetypical image of a workday, commuting for a daily 9-5 from one's suburban homes to the cubicle or open-space office, wearing a suit and a tie over a neatly ironed light blue oxford shirt. Instead, these engineers are frequently deployed from their 'home offices' to distant locations, often abroad, to work on-site to install and commission equipment, or on occasion, to run full projects and sites. The travelling engineers may be situated on a project site from a few days to several years per project, having to be away from their national culture, company offices, and family and friends.

Multiple scholars in mobilities research suggest that mobility of goods, people, and information are among the defining features of contemporary times (Urry 2012; Cresswell and Merriman 2012). However, as I explain in Chapter 2, few studies have been conducted to

explore the role of travelling in management and organisation studies (for exceptions see Costas 2013; Faulconbridge et al. 2009; 2020; Jones et al. 2018; Hislop and Axtell 2007; Axtell and Hislop 2008). This section aims to illustrate work travel and how it is enacted by ProQuip's engineers by addressing how the practice of work travel is constructed, by whom, using what means, and with what consequences (Atkinson 2017). I do so by introducing the vignette of Raymond, a site manager who moves between different projects as well as sites, working for ProQuip but outside of it. I describe a day in his life and following that, I delineate different elements of the travelling job, drawing on Raymond's narrative (section 4.1.1).

The vignette of Raymond serves the purpose of explaining work travel in lay terms to provide an overview of work travel and its features at ProQuip. Raymond is a travelling engineer and like Fabio, who was introduced in the First Chapter, he is a composite narrative, representing the everyday of thousands of ProQuip employees. Raymond is based on multiple stories that ProQuippers told me about travelling over my year at the company. I use these stories to provide an example of a workday using my informants' words, expressions, and descriptions. In that sense, Raymond is a fairly generic traveller in his early 50s, who followed the 'travelling career route', advancing through different positions of travelling jobs as opposed to moving to an office job. The vignette depicts some of the practicalities of doing work, specifying some activities that travellers engage in while performing work travel, including going through airports, renting cars, engaging in work calls, and finding spaces and time to work in transit. It also notes the different places that a specific trip can start and end at, such as client offices, project sites, and one's home. As defined in Chapter 2, the form of work Raymond is doing is categorised as work travel because this class of engineers are expected to travel to locations other than their company offices and hence also reside outside of their homes for prolonged time periods (Hislop and Axtell 2007).

The narrative style I adopt in the vignette seeks to invite the reader to momentarily divorce from the scientific norms of academic writing and to allow oneself to 'become' traveller (Beavan 2021). In particular, in this vignette I engage in a form of experimental writing that aims to disrupt masculine factual narratives and abstracted accounts, instead favouring a more unsettling but embodied *experience* of Raymond's life and travels (Gilmore et al. 2019). I hope, through writing differently (Gilmore et al. 2019), I can encourage the reader to understand travel as an affective practice that is written onto the body (Vachhani 2019), causing various discomforts, illnesses, injury, but also pride and exhilaration. In becoming Raymond, I also

hope to evoke a feminine proximity to the other, different from the distanced factual conventions of masculine academia (Vachhani 2019) which can thereby inverse the representation of organisation as cold objects or models, so often propagated by conventional management writing (Beavan 2019). The vignette is written in second person for organisation and travel to be felt, conceiving of travel as an organisational practice of living differently and occurring through some yet undiscovered form of organising. To find our way to this form of organising, I believe it is time to become Raymond.

4.1.1 Raymond

You are Raymond. You are a site manager at ProQuip, a projects and equipment multinational and this year in June you will have worked here for 20 years. It is late at night, or early in the morning, however you wish to look at it. You are waiting outside the Premier Inn for the taxi, which you pre-ordered the previous evening, to arrive and take you to the airport. It is cold in the early hours of the day and your breath condenses as you exhale. Your nose tip grows cold and you huddle into your jacket and grip the handle of your cabin-sized suitcase. The taxi arrives and you place your bag in the boot and climb into the backseat. Being a mobile project worker, this is the way of life. Nothing is out of the ordinary.

Earlier this week you have been called to resolve an issue with the client of a past project. It's part of a post-project benefits package, so you are temporarily leaving your current project site for a couple of days. You leave Sven in charge. You've worked with him on many projects in the past twenty years and you joke that you know him better than your wife. Sven will keep the site in check and communicate all the noteworthy events to you.

To be honest, you don't like being away from your project, but of all ProQuippers you have the best rapport with this client, having worked closely with them for four years so you are the best person to send if the company wants this resolved quickly. And they do. At ProQuip, engineering means efficiency; getting things solved quickly *and* effectively.

Customer management is one of the core aspects of your job and it is a delicate business. You often describe it as a good-cop bad-cop game, and in it your role as the site manager is to be the good cop. The project manager is rarely onsite so he's often the bad guy and you need to ensure that the client sees you as a victim of the hierarchy. In their eyes, you must always remain the one trying to do the best for them, but whose hands are tied by higher-ups. The cab arrives at the airport, and you reflect that this is the outset of another very long day.

The airport is busy at 5AM. You tread between sleepy tourist families, standing in groups, looking around for signs and indications. Airports are your territory; you know them well. After all, they are all very similar, and a few visits to a particular airport is all you need to learn all the quick routes and shortcuts. You are only beaten by the quick-paced flight attendants as they rush past with their cabin-sized suitcases prancing on miniature wheels behind them. You get through the security check quickly since, like many of your colleagues, packing your hand luggage in an "airport efficient" way is done on autopilot. Laptop on top, iPad right under, and travel-sized liquids in a pre-arranged sealed plastic bag. By the time you're at the conveyer belt, your jacket is in your arms, the passport is put away, and your belt and watch are ready to be placed in the plastic tray. You go through the duty free, picking up a bottle of water and arrive at the lounge. At the entrance, you present your golden frequent flyer card and finally sit down with some morning coffee. You open your email and start working.

Over the time you have been working at ProQuip, you occupied multiple roles and positions in the company, but whichever role you have had has always been in the business of delivering projects. Except for a few months after the Global Financial crisis, and more recently, a couple of months after the start of the pandemic, you have always been travelling. Travel is indispensable in a company that specialises in this type of project work. When signing a project, ProQuip promises to deliver a fully functioning factory to the client, producing and installing industrial equipment and bringing it to a fully operational state. Someone has to oversee the project: the development and creation of the factory, taking into account everything from the holistic flow of raw materials to the final product, to the minute details of parts storage and assessment of the quality of welding. As a project site manager, that someone is you – you oversee all that. If the welding is not smooth, a cavity can lead to build-ups of product and blockages, which can stop the full production system. You need to ensure that does not happen.

Like yourself, many other travelling project workers have roles on the project that require them to travel. You all talk about the excitement or exhaustion that comes from being onsite, but never dullness or boredom. Those are the domains of the office. But the issue with frequent flying is that every now and again things don't go smoothly. Transition flights are especially tricky when there is a short layover period. You hear your name being announced through the speakers, calling you to final boarding as you race through customs. There are times when you don't make short transitions, but today you did. The arrival at the next airport is before noon local time, but it feels like a large portion of the day has already gone by. Your pre-booked

rental car is waiting for you when you arrive at the Car Village at the airport. Anton greets you. Since you travelled here very often in the past, you got to know the car rental agency workers pretty well. Anton selected the better car of those available in the booked category, and you are soon on your way to the local office on the ever-busy highways around the European capital of Tallinn.

It is 4 hours' drive to the meeting place in another city, but you have enough time to go to the company's office at the outskirts of Tallinn and grab a quick lunch with your colleagues. The regional office is only a half-hour drive from the airport, so it is basically *en route*. After you eat, you review engineering drawings for your current project, send comments to the installation managers, and embark on the 4-hour drive. During this time, you attend a couple of Zoom meetings and have a debrief with Sven. When you arrive, you go directly into the client meeting and then you also attend the 'after-meeting' dinner where work-talk continues in a more relaxed atmosphere. Quite a few decisions are reached over beer and whiskey.

The next morning, you report back to the post-project lead in an extensive email and then you have a brief phone-call with your line manager. This day is spent embarking on a trip back, with intervals of work on the laptop as you are reversing your steps to arrive back at the village near your project site by nightfall. It will be two full days of work on site before the next trip. On Friday afternoon, you will drive your local rental car through three countries, over a couple of bridges and take a ferry to spend the weekend with the family. Perhaps you'll even visit the headquarters on Monday to submit several documents and talk to a few colleagues face-to-face, depending on who is making a stop through the office too. Then you will be travelling again. This is routine.

4.1.2 Five dimensions of work travel

This section identifies five perspectives on work travel, all of which were noted by my informants to be relevant to the practice and planning of work travel. This identification is important to make since these facets of travel serve to reveal the different ways engineers think and act upon travel. By integrating multiple perspectives onto travel, I aim to provide a more holistic account than separate disciplines have so far (reviewed in Chapter 2). First, I introduce the *physical dimension* of travelling known as 'the trip', which is the geographical movement between different sites that lasts until one returns to their starting point. I draw upon geography, which studies movements and their meanings (Cresswell 2010). Second, I introduce a *static*

dimension of travel, usually referred to as 'being onsite', which is where travelling engineers engage in little geographical movement but remain away from home and their home offices for the duration of the trip. This, in sociology would be referred to as immobilities within mobility research (Sheller and Urry 2006). Third, I account for the *reasons* or *motivators* listed for travelling, explaining why it was necessary or even inevitable for ProQuippers to go on trips. While some scholars engage in this research, including in MOS (e.g. Jones et al. 2018), it has been shown that different forms of mobility have different reasons for travelling and conditions of possibility to reduce or replace travel (Aguiléra et al. 2012). Fourth, I provide an *embodied dimension* of travelling which comprises some of the implicit behaviours that travellers adopt over their work-life, telling them apart as 'travellers'. This in sociological, anthropological, and migration studies terms has been studied as 'subjects of mobility', determining travellers as a group whose identity or practices are determined through mobility practices (Skeggs 2004; Wong 2006). Fifth, I address *other modes of remote working* that complement travel. This perspective draws on the ICTs literature that compares physical travel and digital resources that may either replace or complement travel (Aguiléra et al. 2012; Gaspar and Glaeser 1998; Stein et al. 2015). All these elements of work travel constitute work travel as it was introduced to me throughout my ethnography via stories and examples, advice from seasoned travellers, and participation in work travel alongside ProQuip's engineers.

Across the *physical dimension*, Cresswell (2010) suggests that mobility in geographical terms can be thought of in three different ways: movement, representation, and practice. First, physical *movement*, which constitutes a trip, denotes the displacement of a person, item, or idea between two spaces, typically in a manner that can be mapped and measured (Cresswell 2010). In the case of Raymond, the movement occurs between his current project site and client meeting. Raymond utilises a range of resources for this movement, such roads and transportation lines for humans and items to depart from point A (the project site) and arrive at point B (the client meeting). When travelling for ProQuip, there is a range of arrival and departure points, but the primary departure point is the home country. Administratively, work travel is accounted for through a company-wide digital system where home is considered point zero, meaning that expense reporting starts from the moment an engineer leaves their home to go on the trip and ends when they arrive back. The work travel trip ends when a ProQuipper returned to their original departure point, no matter how many stops they make on the way. In Raymond's case, the trip to the client is encompassed within a larger trip that he intends to end on the weekend. Typical destinations for travellers include project sites, other ProQuip offices,

and client visits. Movement in work travelling can be accounted for through different means, such as the distance travelled, the speed in which this distance was covered, and the financial costs associated with the movement. Where plane travel, for example, is too expensive, trains and cars are prioritised over the speed of movement. ProQuippers make different decisions regarding their travel arrangement based on costs, speed, and personal preferences. For example, Sven usually travels by car where possible because he dislikes air travel.

The second meaning of the physical dimension is *representation*, which is what turns movement into travel. Travelling, as a company-wide activity, is more than just movement between places. Moving has a purpose and it is generally to fulfil one's formal role in the company (Orr 1996). For example, Raymond is travelling to meet clients in a different country to resolve their concerns. In this sense there is an important difference between travel and 'a trip'. A trip is a singular instance of travelling whereas travelling is a constant state which is halted when ProQuippers return home, to be resumed soon after. Travelling also may consist of multiple trips such as Raymond leaving of his project site to go to the client meeting, embedding a smaller trip within the larger trip away from his home. In that sense, travelling is versatile; it can be from office to site, home to site, site to site, and serve different functions, from client management, supervision of work onsite, commissioning of equipment, and even minor tasks like delivering a pressure pump to site.

The third meaning of the physical dimension is *embodiment.* Cresswell (2010) points out that mobility can be painful, but it can also be enacted with a spring in the step. Travellers move differently from other groups through common spaces of transit. For example, by going through multiple airports, Raymond becomes familiar with their structures and orients himself quickly, soon learning the quicker routes through them. In this sense, mobility leaves an imprint in Raymond's body by altering his movements to become efficient at airport settings; learning a choreography at the security process and techniques to make use of idle time (Bechky 2006) where waiting is required. In other words, in comparison to a tourist who travels infrequently, Raymond's movements through the airport are confident, practiced, and at times, automatic. The physical dimension of travel is all of the above, then: a physical movement between organisation and inter-organisational spaces, entailing getting from one place to another; a representation, where shared meanings regarding what travel means are created across ProQuip, and; an experienced and embodied practice of movement that differentiates the

experience of travel of regularly travelling engineers from other people who travel through the same spaces.

Travelling is not only the dynamic process of moving between places; it also has a *static dimension*. Throughout travelling, Raymond and his colleagues go through multiple transit spaces, where they remain for different durations. One may ask: what differentiates a layover flight where one stays overnight at an airport hotel from a two-week stay at a hotel near the project site? The static dimension of travelling refers to a state of staying still during a trip, where ProQuip's engineers stay in hotels, temporary apartments, and live out of suitcases. As multiple mobility authors remark, mobility in many ways is about immobility (Cresswell, 2006; Urry 2012). Within this immobility, travellers set up 'the mobile offices', hence thus extending the workspace to wherever they are through engaging in work in mobile spaces, like the informal settings in hotel chains, airport lounges, backs of taxis as well as formalised spaces like in company offices or the clients' office (or indeed, project sites) (Beaverstock 2002; Beaverstock et al. 2009). Raymond goes through multiple such transit spaces, for example, waiting in the airport queues for passport control or at the gate for his flight. He also stops at the local office on his way to the client meeting, making use of the extra time between the flight and meeting to do some work. Although technically Raymond is not in motion at those instances, and hence does not strictly adhere to the geographical displacement definition of travel, he is, in ProQuip's terms, still travelling.

Similarly, staying in hotels, apartments, eating at hotel restaurants are all experiences of static travelling. Augé (1995) refers to these as non-places, that is, unidentifiable places which are similar no matter where one is in the world. Arriving in Tallinn, Raymond is able to recognise it as that particular city, for example, due to its ancient city walls or unique architecture, much like Paris becomes a landmark known through images of the Eiffel Tower, ideas of romanticism, Croissants, and high fashion. However, a Premier Inn hotel in Tallinn, Paris, or any other city or village would look remarkably similar, creating a sensation of place-less-ness (Augé 1995). Many of ProQuip's engineers, particularly when on shorter trips that involve living in hotels instead of apartments, are routinely going through non-places, and even where they rent more comfortable places, they rarely feel at home. Costas (2013), finding similar experiences with non-places among consultants, reports that they are associated with feelings of restlessness. Consultants lack stability and permanence in unidentifiable places,

leading to people feeling devoid of resources to construct or maintain their own identities, feeling generic like the items surrounding them (Augé 1995; Costas 2013).

Some travellers expressed mixed feelings about the uniformity of airports, hotels, and other transit spaces, referring to them as both impediments and resources. As Costas (2013) identified, frequent presence in non-places leads to a sense of loneliness (addressed in further detail in section 4.3). However, the uniformity of transit spaces is also a resource for Raymond because over time travelling, he acquires the skill of being comfortable in these spaces, learning how to move through them fluidly. Raymond knows intuitively when to go to boarding, how much time he has in a lounge and how much work he can get done; he is in control where others are frantic, for instance, at the security check. The similarity of non-places to one another eases the lives of travellers, some engineers told me. Andrea, an automation engineer in her late 20s from Italy, told me that on her first visit to Bangkok she thought she would be overwhelmed, but since she has been in so many airports before and dealt with many taxi systems, she felt surprisingly at ease. In that sense, the static nature of transit spaces in travelling, although associated with instrumental homogeneity and solitude, actually anchors many travellers in the familiar rhythm of travel work.

A third dimension of work travel that multiple engineers emphasised was the reason or purpose of the trip. As Jones and colleagues (2018, p.3) observe, "the 'need' for travel is most often explained by what it enables, what cannot be achieved at a distance", which in ProQuip is the physical construction of factories and the management of these projects. Throughout the project life stages, the work done toward the project requires different levels of travelling. In the pre-project state, for example, the sales team creates proposals for clients and liaises with them mostly over emails, calls, and other digital communications. Travelling at this stage occurs in three predominant forms: first, the salesperson in charge of the potential project travels to meet with the client. Second, the client travels to meet the salesperson at one of ProQuip's workshops or offices to see the equipment or discuss the proposed solutions. Third, on occasion both ProQuip's salespeople and the client travel to another factory, which is similar to the client's needs, like another kitchen plastics factory that was recently built by ProQuip. In this situation, prospective clients can see the production lines in action, how the installed equipment is operating, and assess the quality of the product they will be getting from ProQuip. However, it is important to note that most travelling done at ProQuip is at the project stage, when ProQuip's engineers are deployed to the customer site to deliver projects.

The fourth dimension of work travel is the *embodiment of travel*, that is, the work put into being a traveller. It is the behaviours that engineers learn over time through experiencing travel, becoming part of their normal patterns, body movements, decision making processes, and more. In this sense, it is not unlike the embodiment aspect of travelling from space to space, but it encompasses more tacit know-hows related to the other dimensions of travel already mentioned. Travelling ProQuippers adopt habits and purchase artefacts that ease the practise of work travel. It is a form of labour that one puts into being or becoming a traveller which is distinct from the engineering work that one has to do while travelling. For example, the way Raymond packs his suitcase in a travel efficient manner makes it easy to unpack at airport security and grab what is necessary from the bag quickly and easily. Similarly, experience in travelling enables ProQuippers to buy artefacts that make travelling more efficient, like headphones. At ProQuip, there is a friendly rivalry between two social groups, one advocating for Bose headphones and the other for Sony. They chat about the newest releases, discuss current models they own, compare their noise cancellation functions, foldability, durability, fit, and so on. There are multiple items like this that ProQuippers commonly get, including cabin-size trolly bags, cable bags and other organisers, plug accessories for international travel, and memberships in different organisations such as airlines (for travel benefits and lounges), hotel chains, airports, rental companies, and more. In other words, ProQuippers often work out specific know-hows that make the travelling job more manageable. These know-hows are often shared by experienced travellers with newcomers by giving them advice and answering their questions.

The fifth, final element of work travel is the *other mobilities* that ProQuippers engage in to support work travel (Aguiléra et al. 2012; Gaspar and Glaeser 1998). As mentioned in Chapter 2, travelling employees engage in mobile communications frequently while on the move. During waiting times at the airport, for example, Raymond checks his emails and does some work, he then visits the office in Tallinn to work there on some drawings – which are located on an internal server shared by ProQuip's engineers who are currently working on this project – and then, Raymond makes calls and connects to Zoom meetings. While on the move physically, Raymond is constantly connected to ProQuip digitally. This aspect of work travelling cannot be discarded since having stable internet connection and access to company software and communications is imperative for project work. Since projects are conducted by many individuals with different roles across the world and organisation, they need to maintain regular contact, where for example, it is not uncommon in ProQuip to pick up the phone and

call a colleague in a different country to consult on an issue onsite that one knows the other has expertise in. Additionally, there is a range of digital infrastructures that ProQuip's head offices create to support work travel (these will be discussed in Chapter 6) that aim to 'optimise' travelling work (in the sense of work onsite) by making information more easily accessible and creating more cooperative engineering tools. Therefore, there are five main elements to work travel: physical movement between sites, being in-between or in transit points, motivators to travel, practices that make one a traveller, and finally, complementing digital mobilities.

4.1.3 Work travel: An integrated concept

This section provides an overview of five ways that ProQuip's engineers commonly talk about travelling. The first two dimensions of travelling are physical and static, both of which refer to doing work outside of the formal boundaries of ProQuip. In the first case travelling means moving between the organisation and other place on work, and in the second, it is the practice of being away from the 'core' of ProQuip, in a marginal place such as the project site. The third dimension refers to the reasons, purposes, and needs for travelling, which affect how travel is managed by the engineers. The fourth dimension refers to the embodied practices of travel and artefacts that travellers utilise, effectively making the difference between any commuter and an experienced travelling engineer. The final element relevant to understand travel is the other set of mobilities which complement physical/static travel.

This section, then, contributes to the current knowledge about work travel in two ways. First, it provides an integrated account of work travel derived from the ethnographic research conducted at ProQuip, considering multiple dimensions of travel where previously research focused on one above others. Secondly, it highlights that the workplace of travellers is often outside of the formal boundaries of ProQuip (or its premises) taking place in transfer or on client sites where international inter-organisational project work takes place. This not only means that work exceeds the formal boundaries of the workplace (a fact well known in the literature, for example on teleworking see Whittle and Mueller 2009), but also suggests that we need to reconsider how *organisation* is conceptualised in light of work travel (Costas 2013). As I explained in earlier Chapters, work travel as a dynamic, multinational practice puts to question how organising occurs outside of formal organisational spaces, which in this Chapter is also revealed to be a challenge for ProQuip's management. I address ProQuip's issue with travel subsequently, introducing the Millennial Problem.

4.2 The Millennial Problem

In my first meeting at ProQuip, Pam, a Human Resource (HR) manager, met me at the reception and led me into the offices. I corresponded with her about my research over the past six months. With my acceptance into the PhD programme, I reached out to Ian, a department manager at ProQuip for whom I interpreted a meeting some years ago on an international project during my internship at a chair factory. Ian forwarded me to Pam, and we have been discussing what I can do for ProQuip and what ProQuip can do for me since. After a tour of the offices, Pam and I entered a glass office and sat down to discuss the mobility issues that ProQuip wants addressed.

As I explained in previous Chapters, ProQuip is a North European engineering company and its core business is in designing and delivering factories for client companies, specialising in projects and equipment for factories in the plastics industry. To construct these make-to-order factories, ProQuip employs a large cohort of engineers some of whom work in offices, focusing on drawings or sales, and some work at the construction sites, supervising and delivering project work. Most employees, however, engage in work travel at least to some extent. ProQuip's engineers come from a variety of specialisations: from mechanical experts to automation specialists, to the versatile marine engineering graduates. They must work collaboratively to deliver projects on time and within budget, performing a range of engineering tasks onsite and visiting for varying durations of time at different stages of the project lifecycle. There are four categories of projects, ranging from smallest that can take several weeks, to largest that typically take about three to four years to complete. At its core, work onsite (as ProQuippers call it) entails the execution of various engineering tasks, all geared toward the factory building goal.

Given the centrality of work travel for ProQuip's business, Pam and senior managers were understandably concerned when a new trend started to emerge in recent years, first appearing in the early 2000s and becoming more and more common as time went by. They named it the "Millennial Problem" and asked me to consult on how to resolve it and in exchange, I could collect data for my PhD project. The Millennial Problem refers to employees under the age of 35 who are hired to perform jobs that require travelling, such as field service engineering, installation, commissioning, automation, and others. After about five to ten years on the job, these individuals would typically internally move to office positions, creating a deficit of

travelling people and understaffing in project work, leading to a range of issues in allocating engineers to projects. This meant that ProQuip would need to hire more travelling workers, who would again move to office positions, with office staff growing in proportion while projects remained understaffed. Pam also noted that hiring new engineers requires more training, hence more resource expenditure. Furthermore, aside from causing understaffing on projects this problem also created a shortage of experts. Typically, after ten years or so on the job, engineers would usually gain expertise in something, for example, becoming specialists in continuous moulding machines. However, with Millennials moving to offices and older people retiring without someone to replace them, ProQuip started seeing a decline in such specialist staff.

When describing the problem to me, Pam and Kristina classified ProQuip's travelling engineers into two groups: Millennials and the 'Older Guys'. When I asked what sets these groups apart, Pam and Kristina explained that the Older Guys generally have been working at ProQuip for a while, some even from the early days of ProQuip, when it was purchased by QuipCo in the 80s (more on this in Chapter 5). These men (and a few women) have experience in the industry, are typically between 40-60 years old, and they travel until retirement. They have gone through different positions onsite and are usually experts in their areas. Kristina also highlighted that they generally have more 'traditional' family structures, where the wives take care of the household and childcare. The millennials have joined ProQuip more recently, often coming directly from universities and their age range is up to about 35. For ProQuip's standards that is a very young employee, with over 70% of the European ProQuip employees being over the age of 35. On top of that, more than 90% of ProQuip's engineers are male, with other departments such as HR and legal employing more females.

While there is a debate in the literature about what constitutes generational groups and how they are discursively constructed (see Pritchard and Whiting 2014), my use of the term is linked to how ProQuip's managers describe and characterise this group. Indeed, Pam, Kristina, and other managers conceptualised the Millennial Problem as a generational problem, although its precedents started appearing some 20 years ago. Dan, introduced earlier in this Chapter, is 52 years old; he is a former service engineer who now heads one of departments at ProQuip's headquarters. He told me that he moved to an office position in 2005 after his first child was born. He explained that he felt that this was enough travelling, now was time to focus on family. However, Slava, an installation engineer from Russia roughly of the same age as Dan said that

he believes that his role is to provide for the family, earning money, and the job of the woman is to take care of children, since "they are more naturally predisposed to it. We, men, need to build." Although the option to move to the office was always a possibility at ProQuip, few of the Older Guys generation did it, some because they followed traditional family structures like Slava, and others for different reasons, for example, financial benefits to the family since travelling pays extra from the daily allowances engineers receive.

The Millennial Problem, then, occurs because the younger staff behave differently from the Older Guys, with the millennials are far more likely to move to the office. The Older Guys were typically hired to travel and remained in those positions until retirement, moving from field service engineers, to installation managers, to site managers, and even project managers – or alternatively product specialists – in a nearly linear career progression. Their career paths were within the "travelling route", with very few switching to the "office route". Since now fewer engineers follow this classic career trajectory, ProQuip found themselves lacking in site managers and other senior project staff, trying to disperse the few people they have across many more projects, making this an urgent management problem.

After describing the situation, Pam asked me if I could work out a way to change the behaviour of 'the Millennials', perhaps 'incentivising' them to continue travelling. Similarly, Kristina, my manager at the company, asked me to explore how travel could be 'optimised' for this new generation of employees, or how individuals could be selected for the job who were more likely to continue travelling. These two approaches reflect the HR and engineering thinking, respective to my informants. Although the management class had their own explanations for why this trend has begun and accelerated, I started my own data collection to see the perspectives of younger engineers and the Older Guys on the topic. In the following section I address the core problems with travelling discussed in management literature and related fields, and I consider how well they describe the experiences of ProQuip's engineers, drawing on narratives from the field.

4.3 Stopping to travel

Mobile work (among which is work travel) is known as a challenging form of working across the literature, where organisational scholars note the negative personal consequences such as feeling disidentified, lost, and lonely (Costas 2013; Jones et al. 2018; Beaverstock et al. 2009), psychologists emphasise the exposure to negative affect leading to stress and burnout (Jensen

and Knudsen 2017; Mäkelä et al. 2021), and sociologists remark the difficulties managing transitions and trips (Ojala and Pyöriä 2018). In this section, I consider some of the reasons ProQuippers in general may decide to cease travelling, both drawing on accounts of travellers and on contemporary literature on the topic. Across the mobilities literature, the predominant issues with travel can be divided into two categories: mental strain like stress and isolation, and physical strain like discomfort and illness. I consider these in the following section and after that, I examine the perspectives of managers on travel and through what mechanisms they discuss solving the Millennial Problem.

4.3.1 Maladies of travel

Rafael is a 33-year-old 'Millennial' process engineer from Lima, Peru, and during his first year at ProQuip he got caught in a series of unexpected predicaments during his trip back from home after working in New Zealand for eight weeks. His trip began on a rainy afternoon, which is not particularly exceptional in New Zealand, he clarified. The drive to the airport was the beginning of a 40-hour journey, where he must first board a domestic flight to the northern island of New Zealand, and from there catch a connection flight to Sydney, Australia. There he would board a long-distance flight to Santiago de Chile from where he will, finally, fly home to Lima. However, on his trip to the airport he encountered a few delays: road works created a slow and narrow one-lane carriageway adding Rafael an hour in traffic, and the heavy rain caused a few floods along the road that kept him locked in traffic for an additional two hours.

Rafael arrived at the airport to see his flight depart without him, however, an airport worker reassured him that if he boards the next flight directly to Sydney, he could still make his connection to South America. Upon landing in Australia, Rafael was told that in order to have layover in Australia, even without entering the country, he would need a visa. His travel agent, contracted by the local branch of ProQuip was, apparently, unaware of that. Rafael spent some time calling his travelling agency in an attempt to arrange a passage through the airport to his next flight. After a few rounds of explanations, he was allowed through and arrived at his boarding gate where he was faced with another problem: his flight seat was no longer available. By missing his first flight his entire journey was cancelled, meaning that the only way to get home was to buy a new ticket for the same flight. Rafael then called his agent who purchased a new trip from Sydney to Santiago to Lima.

I asked him if this changed his view on travelling, or at all put him off the practice; it sounded like a stressful and frustrating incident. He admitted that “it’s the worst on the way back, when you just want to get home.” A few colleagues at ProQuip echoed this thought, telling me their stories of missed flights or the regularly missed connections in the dreaded airports Frankfurt and Charles de Gaulle. Others had stories about flights diverted due to weather conditions and extreme delays. Nearly unanimously, ProQuip’s travellers seemed to agree that on the way to site (or other travelling destinations) problems are unpleasant. However, a setback on the way home is a lot more distressing. Rafael told me that for him, the most aggravating part of the misadventure was the possibility of missing his pregnant wife’s obstetrician appointment which was booked within 24 hours of his arrival. I asked Rafael how his managers reacted to seeing three extra flights on the reimbursement form in his travel report. “The company understands,” Rafael responded, explaining that this kind of situation happens every now and then, and that most managers have been caught in similar circumstances. The company compensated both sets of tickets once he submitted his travel report and received approval.

Rafael’s story is by no means uncommon at ProQuip; similar situations happen to Millennials and Older Guys, and both groups seem quite adept at handling these situations. “In these kinds of situations, you have to keep calm and collected, if you panic, it’s done,” Rafael told me. He explained that this is just a part of work travel, and you need to keep yourself level-headed in order to respond in the most efficient way. Similarly, Raymond mentioned that he makes the best of delays and lost suitcases. A delay, although inconvenient, means that you simply work in a different place, be it an airport hotel or lounge. The upside of Raymond’s luggage getting occasionally lost in connecting flights is that the travel insurance allows him to buy clothes for the next day, so, he takes such events as ‘compulsory shopping experiences’: “these are the only times I buy new underwear anymore”.

This story also shows that travelling involves dealing with stressful unforeseen situations. For example, Rafael has never travelled to Australia before, and hence did not know that he would need a visa for having a transit in the country. The travel agent was also unaware of the restriction since travelling to New Zealand is not commonplace from the Peruvian office. Much of the travel in ProQuip is delegated across five geographical regions (which will be introduced in further detail in Chapter 5), where engineers who are employed within the region of North, Central and South Americas more often than not travel within these boundaries, unless there is

need for more manpower or specific expertise in other regions. That said, it is not uncommon for engineers to be deployed to a completely new part of the world for them. In the year of Rafael's travels, the region that includes Oceania was in overcapacity with projects, so Rafael was sent there. Having to travel all over the world is, therefore, normal at ProQuip, but one cannot have knowledge of the administrative requirements, rules of airlines, and other bureaucratic caveats in every country so situations where engineers get stuck or stranded happen. In doing work travel one learns to expect unexpected situations, and as Rafael emphasises, the issue becomes learning how to deal with the stress and frustration of whatever comes the way of the traveller. Keeping calm is a skill that is developed over time, when such situations become less of a novelty and more routine. In that sense, both Rafael and Raymond, representative narratives of the two generational cohorts of interest to ProQuip's management, respond similarly to travelling mishaps.

Rafael's story shows the kinds of events that travelling engineers go through regularly on the job, such as delays, being stuck, bureaucratic mishaps, and so on. Across the mobilities literature, common causes of strain on travellers are considered to be of psychological and physical natures, and Rafael's story demonstrates one aspect of psychological strain: stress. Indeed, stress and isolation are a well-known phenomenon among mobile workers. Beaverstock and colleagues (2009), for example, report that business travel is associated with stress emerging from working on the move, not being at home, and security risks when away in other countries. For example, Rajesh, a field service engineer from India, recalled that his first trip was quite traumatising. He had just graduated university and "scored a job" in ProQuip. Before this trip, Rajesh's line manager vaguely warned him that his destination, Cairo, where he was supposed to help commission a plant, may have commotion and riots. Rajesh emphasised how different it was to be told that there are riots and facing the actual unfolding of the Arab Spring; walking down the streets accompanied by hired guard and seeing people with guns and rifles stand at doors or walking around in groups.

Stressors in travel can appear while in transit and at the destination, ranging from not knowing the local language (and since projects are at remote destinations, few of the locals typically speak English) to the breakouts of national conflicts like the Arab Spring or the Ukrainian Maidan. It is important to note, however, that national conflicts like this are unusual even for ProQuip's travellers, and in Rajesh's case, this occurring on this first trip may have cause additional stress. Engineers who were present during the Maidan in the Ukraine told me

that ProQuip was very effective in evacuating their people once the conflict started and only allowed their engineers back into the country when the situation became clearer. Across the company, the stress stories were usually those of the first trips, possibly because they left stronger impressions, but it is also likely to do with the novelty of the experience being emphasised more than the stress of it.

Another psychological strain often addressed in the literature is isolation, with multiple studies linking work travel and feelings of isolation (Beaverstock et al. 2009). Isolation is a typical experience among employees who work alone, often identified among teleworkers working from home (Axtell and Hislop 2008; Collins et al. 2016). Previous studies observed sensations of disconnection and cynicism toward the employing company (Whittle and Mueller 2009), feeling of being an outsider (Koroma et al. 2014), and fear of being overlooked, forgotten, or left out which shifts the responsibility of being seen and noted onto the employee (Hafermalz 2021). Costas (2013) too notes solitude, isolation, and loneliness as a consequence of passing through bland non-places among mobile consultants, leading to feeling a loss of sense of identity. In their study of service engineers, Axtell and Hislop (2008) observe that mobile engineers report some feelings of 'being alone' and isolated from their colleagues, specifically among newcomers into the company. Similarly, according to Brown and O'Hara (2003) the role of the office space is central since mobile workers regularly visit it to facilitate knowledge exchange and social networking. However, as Axtell and Hislop (2008) note, long-term experience in travelling (as well as individuals' personality) allows them to cope with the demands of work travel better, also noting that while some isolation feelings were recorded, they were minor and did not seem to be affected by the presence or absence of an office. What mattered more to these engineers were the social and communications networks that they had in place of the office spaces (Axtell and Hislop 2008).

Indeed, it is important to note that isolation among travellers is contingent to their circumstances. Field service engineers typically travel alone, as do Costas' consultants and Hafermalz's (2021) teleworkers, meaning that these groups do not get the social interaction aspect of the job. Similarly, Collins and colleagues (2016) find that teleworkers experience more isolation and lack social support in contrast to office-based staff. This, however, is unlike the travelling engineers of ProQuip who work on projects collaboratively. In that sense, the state of isolation may not be applicable to work travel due to the communal nature of the project, with isolation only have been noted on a few occasions such as in Fabio's in the

vignette in Chapter 1, where he mentions that travelling is more difficult for newcomers since they need more support from their managers, and not being co-located affects their work and well-being. Instead, many travellers and ex-travellers referred to the community at the site as one of advantages of the job. For example, Per, a 47-year-old former process engineer who now works at the headquarters office, says that what he misses the most about travelling is "the long nights that me and the boys would pull; we'd work 8-12 nonstop, 6,7 days a week for months at a time."

Similarly, Bianca, a 31-year-old commissioning engineer said that the connectivity between ProQuippers is one of the things she values most about working for ProQuip. "Working alongside the guys is great, everyone is friendly, we are renting rooms in an aparthotel where we share a kitchen and cook together, we go for lunch during the workday, and on weekends we go out in a big group," she told me. It appears that for Bianca, the comradery and team spirit is what makes the job "fun". I was curious at the word choice and asked what she considered fun about it. "It's the guys, being all together in this, but also I like learning, you know? This is the biggest responsibility I have had yet. And everyone is so nice, I asked to send me someone to come and help me, supervise me for commissioning the moulder. It's my moulder, I did everything from the drawings to now. The guy that's coming is the senior guy, he's no longer commissioning, but he can give advice and help if it doesn't go to plan."

Bianca also mentioned that aside from the financial benefit and learning experiences of travelling she likes the cultural diversity: "you meet a lot of people, different cultures, you can learn a lot from others. You become a better person." It would seem that issues of isolation are mitigated when engineers find other methods of communication, replicating the contact they would usually have at an office space (Axtell and Hislop 2008). Similarly, Rafael notes the role of experience as well, suggesting that exposure to misadventures in work travel makes one more prepared for them and able to manage them better. However, it is vital to mention that work travel has detrimental effects not only on the mental but also on the physical state of engineers.

Previous research has shown that travelling is linked with physical discomfort, injuries, and trauma over time, caused by inhabiting uncomfortable environments while on trips such as tight airplane seats, carrying heavy suitcases, working in very hot or cold weather conditions and more (DeFrank et al. 2000). The working conditions are not the simplest onsite, for

example, it was just November when I arrived at the Austrian site, Austrian Sound and Electric Plastics (ASEP), but the temperature already fell below zero and the heater was not doing enough to warm us up in the metal container that housed our office. Despite my winter gear, I caught a cold. Although it made me miserable, it turned out to be enlightening in terms of my fieldwork, where I found that illness is not a rare occurrence for ProQuip's travellers. When I got ill on the way to the US, for instance, Jack, the project manager, said not to worry about that, "we're ill all the time." Bianca later echoed the thought, explaining: "I think it's all the dust in the air, makes us always ill. It was the same in Kansas, dusty and dry." Transit was cited as another reason for illness due to bad air ventilation on planes and many people in airports; "it's so easy to catch a bug in the air."

This was not the only type of illness prevalent onsite. The day after my arrival at Russian Aerospace Plastics (RAP), Russia, a group of three engineers arrived from Belgium. The next day they were meant to come to site, but only two arrived. During lunchtime Ilya, an installation manager for the ventilation section, returned to the hotel to give Rueben, the ailing Belgian, medicine. Turns out that when they arrived in the village late that evening, they went to eat at the hotel restaurant and one of them got food poisoning. "Ha! What would you expect, it's Russia!" Frank, one of the European ProQuippers commented. Rueben was on site a day later, still looking somewhat sickly. The day after that he was claiming to be feeling "100%!" but he will never ever eat at that restaurant again.

Throughout my fieldwork, I found that it is considered normal to get ill and that it was waved off as an expected issue; Rueben getting food poisoning was explained as being unsurprising because of the country we were working in, getting ill on planes and in transit was typical, as was getting ill while onsite because of dust or extreme temperatures. The body appeared to be held at almost a reluctant distance by ProQuip's engineers; an inefficient machine that they have to work with for the lack of alternatives. Getting ill was an inconvenience to go through, much like a delay at an airport, but the sights always seemed to be focused on the engineering job as the primary goal of the trip. Curiously enough, Mäkelä and colleagues (2021) confirm that it is the act of engaging in a work trip that causes exhaustion, not the work done during the trip. With both the narratives and previous research indicating that travelling results in physical and psychological strain, and difficulty balancing one's professional and personal life (Gustafson 2014), the question of why travellers continue to engage in this practice arises. Over the next section I review some of the reasons ProQuippers

mentioned for continuing and stopping to travel, and how the managers at ProQuip view the Millennial Problem.

4.3.2 Perspectives on the Millennial Problem

While stress, isolation, and physical discomforts are highly cited as detrimental effects of work travel and other mobilities, these issues did not seem to affect the travellers' attitudes toward travel. Even Rajesh, who recounted a strongly distressing first travelling experience, decided to continue travelling. Indeed, Rafael explained that dealing with unfavourable circumstances becomes part of the job and Raymond mentioned that certain advantages can be pulled from situations that at first glance appear problematic. It would seem that frequent travellers like ProQuip's engineers have built a resistance and coping mechanisms to common work travelling pitfalls. The maladies of work travel derived from the literature do not explain why ProQuip's Millennials are reducing their travelling, as it would appear that they cope with the challenges of the job equally well to the Older Guys. In this section, I draw on my informants' perspectives on work travel to explain why Millennials stop travelling, including engineers' and managers' views.

To try to understand the reasons why travelling is in decline, I spoke with a few of ProQuip's office-based engineers who moved to office positions fairly early on, in the mid-2000s when the trend was just starting. Per, the engineer from the headquarters, was one of them. When he told me that travelling was one of his fondest times working at ProQuip, and now, at the office "a year turns into another year", I asked why he stopped. Turned out that prior to his marriage his partner was fine with his travelling, but she was explicit in saying that once they get married and start planning a family, he must stop travelling. Indeed, after getting married, Per's wife gave him an ultimatum: to stay at the office or seek another job. This is very similar to the story of Dan, who decided to move to the office after his firstborn arrived. This turned out to be a significant and gendered point. Family and household structures have been changing significantly from the high of modernity to contemporary times (Sennett 1998; Laurier 2002; Bauman, 1998), with a greater participation of women in the workforce, where the proportion of women compared to men in the UK workforce increasing from 40% to 47% between 1978 and 2019 (OECD 2020) and increasing participation of men in household tasks and childcare particularly in high income countries (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Roberts 2017). As mentioned before, most engineers (and especially travellers) at ProQuip are male, with many of the Older Guys taking fewer responsibilities in household and childcare tasks in

comparison to the Millennial population. These 'early adopters' of a more general social change toward greater equality in households (Sullivan, 2000; Altintas and Sullivan 2017) indicate that decisions to travel are affected by it.

Indeed, gender inequalities were highlighted as another source of tension in the mobilities literature causing stress and conflict among contemporary workers, and more specifically, difficulty balancing travelling work with home responsibilities. Espino and colleagues (2002) find that work travel affects parent-child relationships and childcare arrangements, and Gustafson (2006) indicates that the practice of work travel is disproportionally distributed among men and women, where men engage in work travel a lot more than women, who are typically expected to perform the home and childcare responsibilities. This also forms one of the key differences between the Millennial group and the Older Guys.

In the First Chapter, Fabio makes a point about being away from home and feeling guilty about his girlfriend dealing with the refurnishing of their house. Stress from these sources can affect one's work performance, with studies showing that travel has negative effects on one's well-being and relationships. For example, Jensen and Knudsen (2017) find that travel leads to work-family conflict, which is then associated with emotional exhaustion and burnout. Kristina told me that the Older Guys and people who are not from Western Countries typically have more 'traditional' family structures (not unlike Slava, mentioned earlier in this Chapter), where the wife takes over the household responsibilities while the husband travels. The Millennials I have spoken to, however, by the most part have a different perspective to the Older Guys, where girlfriends and wives are typically more assertive about their partners staying at home (that is, at office positions) after they get married or have a child. In many cases, Millennial men also expressed the aspiration to be an active parent. The few female engineers I encountered never spoke of an option of continuing to travel routinely after having a child, further emphasising the gender inequalities persistent in this industry.

There is, then, a detectable societal trend that, at least in part is responsible for the Millennial Problem. Globally more women participate in the workforce and concomitantly there is greater participation of men in housework. The Older Guys could continue travelling because their wives would take over the 'second shift' work of the household (Hochschild 1997) while it becomes less acceptable for Millennials to behave the same way. It is important, however, to mention that 'Millennials' from different countries are not the same; younger employees from Russia, Peru, Italy, and India, all had different perspectives on their career

progression and immediate goals, but even in countries where it is more expected of women to take childcare responsibilities, young male engineers were talking about planning to change their travelling schedules to accommodate for more time at home or taking paternity leaves.

Identifying this as the main source of the 'Millennial Problem', Pam and Kristina were asking me how I think the ProQuip headquarters could influence the Millennials to continue travelling. The attention of Kristina and Pam was on how to improve practice, with Kristina asking how to 'optimise' travel for existing Millennials or choose more suitable recruits, and Pam asking how to 'change their mindset'. In other words, Kristina was asking how to change work travel, and Pam was asking how to change the travellers. In regard to Kristina's question, when it comes to contemporary literature on work travel, it is divided between two main camps. One notes the disadvantages of travel in terms of environmental costs (Beaverstock et al 2009) and personal costs (Costas 2013), typically turning the conversation to how travel could be replaced by technological alternatives (see Faulconbridge et al. 2020). The other perspective studies the advantages of travel, mostly for corporations, and focuses on how to improve the practices of travel (Rattrie and Kittler 2020). With work travel being essential to ProQuip, the first option – replacing travel with digital technologies – is unthinkable. Although ProQuip's offices do focus on designing effective digital tools for engineers to use at site (see Chapter 6), the perspective is not to replace travel but, to use ProQuip's engineering and management lexicon, to *optimise* it. However, the investigation so far shows that ProQuip's engineers do not have a problem with the contents of the travelling job. Rather, the influence to stop travelling comes from outside the practice and organisation, sometimes even against the traveller's wishes. Therefore, we turn to Pam's question about changing employee behaviours.

The approach Pam is suggesting is to attempt to alter behaviours through trainings and rewards, commonly found in human resource management (HRM) practice and literature (Steyaert and Janssens 1999). Since it was developed in 1980s, HRM has remained a frequently used practice and mode of organising in companies, aiming to extract most potential from one's employees (Steyaert and Janssens 1999) following the general belief in companies that it is good for the employees (Wright and Geroy 2001). However, management research has since widely criticised HRM approaches for treating people like resources, as well as "the normative character of the models and techniques, the continual hammering on human values without any sort of ethical or philosophical research, and the lack of a self-reflexive character", which all served to reduce the credibility of these approaches (Steyaert and Janssens 1999, p. 181).

Moreover, HRM approaches to organisational change, including Pam's suggested course of action, have been critiqued for implementing generalised and decontextualised solutions, generally developed through 'universal' research (see Cooke 2018).

A decontextualised approach is highly problematic since attempting to alter behaviours and 'mindsets' toward travelling without understanding the context of the problem or how it emerges would either have little effect or serve to treat some of the symptoms of the problem without understanding its causes. Instead, I argue that an organisational perspective is necessary to understand how the Millennial Problem emerges and what are its underlying issues. It would appear, from the narratives of the managers and the stories of engineers presented in this Chapter, that there may have been a mode of control organising of work travel that was effectively working with the Older Guys but no longer works with the Millennials. Indeed, multiple organisational theories have accounted for normalising certain behaviours through cultural control (Kunda 1992) and setting out clear bureaucratic rules and expectations (Weber 1978). In this sense, I assume that there are different modes of organising currently in operation at ProQuip, and that one of them, which effectively governed travel, is now failing with the new generation. Therefore, the next Chapter delves into the organisation of travel at ProQuip, attempting to pinpoint how work travel was and is organised across the company. I start by looking at the formal organisation, as it creates a scaffold within which both generational cohorts of interest must operate.

4.4 Conclusion

Throughout this Chapter, work travel has been described empirically and following that, the Millennial Problem has been introduced. By defining five facets of work travel empirically, I provide an integrated account of work travel using ethnographic narratives that shows a set of perspectives that engineers have onto the practice, reflecting how they plan and make decisions about their trips. The integrated concept of work travel mirrors a series of perspectives onto travel discussed in Chapter 2, for example, mobility or travel being conceptualised as movement in geography literature and digital mobilities being studied in ICT studies and sociology. The integrated account of work travel brings together a range of perspectives that are usually studied in isolation, showing that the practice of work travel encompasses movement, being away, using digital technologies, and more. This integrated concept feeds

into the analysis in subsequent Chapters, emphasising that managing work travel is much more than managing geographical movements of employees.

This empirical definition of work travel also highlights that travellers often work outside of the formal boundaries and premises of ProQuip, suggesting that the static conception of organisation, as organisation being in an office, may be outdated and that we need to reconsider how organisation is conceptualised. Work travel, as a dynamic practice taking place beyond national borders and within inter-organisational settings creates a theoretical problem for organisation studies, putting to question how organising occurs outside of formal organisational spaces. In this Chapter, work travel is also revealed to create a practical challenge for ProQuip, when they struggle to manage their 'Millennial' employees.

Following that, I introduced the 'Millennial Problem', explaining that ProQuip has noted a concerning trend where employees under the age of 35, hired to perform travelling jobs started moving to office positions at an accelerating rate within their first five to ten years at ProQuip. The Millennial Problem led to project staffing issues and the lack of new experts in certain areas of industry or project work to replace retiring experts. ProQuip asked me to consult on this issue and help them determine what can be done to solve it. In order to understand what was prompting travelling engineers to move to office positions, I started the investigation by considering the dominant issues highlighted in travelling literature as detrimental to mobile workers' physical and mental health.

Comparing ethnographic narratives from the field and mobilities research, I found experiences which should trigger negative affective states, like stress, present in the field, do not generally cause these reactions among ProQuip's travellers. The narratives highlight that work travellers go through many unpleasant incidents while on the move, including loss of control and independence, infiltration of the body by bacteria and viruses. The literature highlighted that such experiences typically lead to psychological states such as stress and isolation, and physical discomfits and illness that have been found to lead to unwellness among mobile workers (DeFrank et al. 2000). Despite experiencing unforeseeable events, getting ill, and regularly being subjected to extreme situations onsite, ProQuip's engineers did not seem to be strongly affected by these difficulties. Instead, the detrimental effects on the physical health of engineers seem to be accepted as the norm, while events that would usually be categorised as stressful appear to be treated pragmatically as routines among ProQuippers, and isolation does not become an issue due to belonging to a community of travellers. Hence, while

stress, isolation, and ill-health appear to be leading explanations for people to potentially stop travelling in contemporary literature, these explanations did not appear relevant to work travel at ProQuip and could not explain the trend of reducing travel.

I found that the reduction in travelling was not related to the internal characteristics of the job, but rather influences from the outside. The engineers that stopped travelling or were considering stopping talked about their family commitments as a driving force to their (or in some cases, their wives') decision. With greater participation of women in the workforce and men in household work (Altintas and Sullivan 2017; Roberts 2017), this societal trend accounts fairly well for the difference between the Older Guys and the Millennial population at ProQuip. I was then asked by managers at the company to consult on what interventions should be implemented to change aspects of the travelling job or the 'mindsets' of individuals. I, however, argue that in order to understand the underlying causes of the Millennial Problem, instead of treating its symptoms, an organisation studies approach is needed.

Other ethnographies, discussed in detail in Chapter 2, note different modes of organising and control that companies employ to keep their staff engaged in the work. However, it would seem that whichever forms of control employed by ProQuip, which have been effective with the Older Guys, are not equally effective with the Millennials. Therefore, I suggest enquiring what organisational control mechanisms ProQuip has been and is currently employing at the company. Considering that travelling engineers spend most of their time on projects away from the offices, it remains unclear how ProQuip's travellers are controlled at a distance from ProQuip's core. In the following Chapter, I start with considering the formal organisation as it creates the scaffold within which both the Older Guys and Millennials have to operate. Formal organisation is constructed at the core of ProQuip, such as the headquarters, where the governance of projects is established and disseminated across the company, standards are created, and rules as to how they are to be upheld are administered. In other words, formal organisation seems to be a logical place to start understanding how work travel is organised from the centre out, given that travelling engineers are subjected to it even when away from ProQuip's formal spaces. Hence, in the next Chapter I introduce ProQuip's formal organisation and its modes of formal control over projects and their inhabitants.

Chapter 5: The formal organisation of ProQuip

This Chapter introduces the *formal organisation* of ProQuip, addressing it as the setting which enables and produces work travel, and as a mode of organisational control. Work travel, as I explain in previous Chapters, is the practice of engineers travelling to other sites than the company offices to engage in project work, mostly building factories for client companies. Since the core output of ProQuip are these projects, the practice of work travel is indispensable to the company. However, in recent years, ProQuip's managers noted an increasing trend of younger employees moving to office-based positions after some years on the travelling job, a trend they branded as the "Millennial Problem". In Chapter 4, I found that this trend is not motivated by the intrinsic characteristics of the travelling job, as previous research suggests, but rather it is based on a greater societal trend of increasing equality in households, where men (the larger demographic of ProQuip's engineers) take a larger proportion of household and childcare work than in previous generations. ProQuip's managers are concerned about the effects this may have on the company given that work travel is essential for its survival. I was asked to aid in finding ways to incentivise the Millennial travellers to continue travelling by changing their "mindset" or helping redesign the intrinsic characteristics of the job. As I argue in the previous Chapter, to address the Millennial Problem, one needs to identify its origin by first finding what forms of organising and control are employed at ProQuip, and then which may be failing.

In order to understand how control is administered in ProQuip, I begin studying work travel from the 'centre' of the company – the headquarters office – since it is generally accepted that much organising effort in companies stems from centralised offices (see Parsons 1951; Mintzberg 1979; du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). This relates to a common dichotomy in the social sciences known as the core/periphery structure, where it is assumed that each system, such as a company, has a centre or core with other more distant structures orbiting around it (Borgatti and Everett 2000). Such a model is commonly adopted in IHRM research in order to render the study of distant subsidiaries manageable (Peltonen 2012) and more generally account for global and local differences, especially where organisational centres are located in Western Countries, seeking to manage non-Western localities (Westwood et al. 2014). This approach, although problematic in ways that will be explored later in the thesis, allows one to understand the goals of the 'central' (or 'formal') organisation, to then comprehend its relationship with

peripheral factory building sites and the engineers who are circulating between these sites at the 'outskirts' of the organisation, and thus how these individuals are managed.

In terms of organisational control mechanisms, I consider two dominant perspectives in MOS: studying the *formal* or *social* organising processes in companies. This Chapter begins with the formal organisation as a mode of organising since it transcends physical organisational boundaries and affects employees who are outside of the organisational premises as well as the ones in them. Both office-based employees and travellers must adhere to the formal organisation, which, as I explain in Chapter 2, generally refers to the bureaucratically structured organisation, typically featuring hierarchical governance forms, specific job roles, and set rules. Therefore, in this Chapter I introduce ProQuip's formal organisation through a series of narratives and I draw upon organisational charts that aim to demonstrate how ProQuip is supposed to function. This Chapter aims to capture how ProQuip is organised as a multinational corporation which also organises a global work travelling practice outside of its own premises. Hence, ProQuip is the *empirical setting* of the ethnography and the *context* within which the story of work travel unfolds for both office-based and travelling employees. I argue that to understand work travel, the broader context within which work travel is situated and enacted, and by which it is produced, needs to be accounted for. Considering the broader context of ProQuip and current trends in the company may also reveal previously unaccounted for aspects of the Millennial Problem, hence showing whether the Millennial Problem is taking place in isolation or whether it is linked to other trends or issues at the company.

This Chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section I describe the empirical setting of ProQuip. This approach is commonplace in organisational ethnographies, in which ethnographers typically describe the *organisation* within which events take place through narratives of the *formal organisation* (see Kunda 2006; Watson 1994; Monteiro 2017; Casey 1995). Whether organisational ethnographers are interested in formal aspects of organisation (e.g., Monteiro 2017; Turco 2016) or in social behaviours, customs, and cues (e.g., Kunda 2006; Casey 1995), the formal organisation is introduced to inform the readers of the general characteristics of an organisation. In some cases, then, where the focus is on social organisation and its activities, formal organisation is introduced as a 'scaffold' around these points of interest, whereas in other cases it becomes meaningful on its own to the ethnographic account. In this thesis, I find formal organisation and in particular its artefact the *organisational chart* very revealing. On one hand, charts depict how ProQuip is related to other companies, how it

is organised globally to produce projects, and what changes it is going through. On the other hand, they also reveal inherent inconsistencies in the formal organisation, where frequent organisational changes and restructuring appear to indicate that the problems of control at ProQuip may be deeper than the unwillingness of Millennials to continue travelling. Therefore, in the second section, I analyse what charts mean in organisations and particularly at ProQuip, and what it means for the organisation of work travel.

In the third section, I consider an alternative perspective onto charts, viewing them as more than modes of *visual representation* of the company, but as an active way of *re-presenting* the company to act upon it. In this perspective charts cease to be seen as abstractions of what exists, but instead, charts are viewed as technologies of representation being created to compensate for the limited rationality of the lived organisation (Cooper 1992). In that respect, charts are used to act upon the company to regain control where it appears to the charters to be lacking, suggesting that the formal organisation is more dynamic and less stable than originally thought. In the final, fourth section, I conclude that ProQuip's formal organisation is more fluid than originally imaged, with employees drawing different images of organisation, and organisational restructuring becoming routine. This puts to question whether the permanent organisation at ProQuip's offices is more stable or concrete than the temporary organisations of project work and dynamic practices of travelling that the travelling engineers regularly engage in. Indeed, ProQuip, although embedded in physical premises with clear geographical boundaries and formal borders, appears disorderly and confused, indicating that the problem of managing the Millennials may be consequent of a wider set of control issues. This prompts the question of where organisation is and what it means for something to be 'ProQuip'.

5.1 'You are here': The maps and charts of ProQuip

This section describes the empirical setting within which work travel unfolds: the company ProQuip. I start with a short vignette which sets the scene for the reader, introducing ProQuip's head offices as situated in a physical space with specific characteristics and people. This vignette aims to disrupt the images of clarity and order that workplace ethnographies usually propagate in accounting for 'the context of the study', instead, showing the confusing and disorienting beginning of fieldwork and acquaintance with the organisation. This confusion reflects the state of my informants who are grappling with several form of organisational restructuring and change at the time of my entry to the field. I also present the current

reorganising taking place at ProQuip and its consequences for both travel and formal organisation at the company.

Further, I depict some statistical information about the company, signalling its size and demographic composition, and I then proceed to define the organisational structure mostly through charts and maps of the company. These charts are significant because they were, by most part, voluntarily drawn up by ProQuippers seeking to introduce me to the company, meaning that charting is an important device for disseminating information for my informants. Interestingly, none of the charts were identical to one another, creating an eclectic and multiplied image for the organisation, showing it as more than one coherent structure. In this section I consider all charts equal, since no formal charts existed at ProQuip at the time of my fieldwork, with old charts being outdated and new formal charts not having been drawn up yet. In the following section I enter a discussion about the significance of these organisational artefacts.

5.1.1 Vignette: Entry to ProQuip

It is a warm early autumn day when we arrive at QuipCo, a few minutes' walk from the centre of a medium-sized North European industrial town. As we walk onto the campus of this historic complex, the noise of the road dulls, and birdsong begins to be heard from the tall, old trees. A cool breeze billows past, trapped between the tall red-brick buildings, compensated by gently beaming sunrays. This September day marks the 'entry to the field', and the 'field' is actually a cluster of buildings. They are spread across a large territory of industrial era factories and office spaces, all still in operation today. The campus is also dotted with a set of new buildings made of white panelling and glass that are spread between their older counterparts, transforming QuipCo's campus into a mosaic of the old and new. We are on our way to one of these newbuilds.

Walking down a cobblestone road lined with trees, we can take a moment to appreciate the scenery. The day is bright and cool and the light blue morning skies are reflecting in ProQuip's glass office building, rendering it almost invisible yet paradoxically also strikingly bright. I find it difficult to look at it, perhaps from the glare, perhaps from my nerves.

The headquarters of QuipCo, a North European multinational equipment company, are located on this site: a large campus with both industrial and office segments. There are a couple of car parks, including one for lorries on the far side of the production area, and one for guests

and employees, under the largest building on this campus: a multistorey red-brick structure. QuipCo's reception, canteen, conference areas and workshops are all located within that grand building. There, speciality equipment and industrial parts are made, and tested, and various chemical substances are held. However, that is not our destination today. I walk past it and down a wide staircase and toward ProQuip’s office building, the projects and equipment company that resides within QuipCo.

ProQuip, not QuipCo, is the company that I have been admitted to study. The building housing ProQuip is new, having been built within the last decade, right across a small green area from the imposing QuipCo headquarters. I am buzzed into the building and withstand a few agonising minutes of wait on a low armchair before I am greeted by my new manager, Kristina. We quickly ascend two floors, get past two sets of doors with Kristina’s access card, and attend to the heart of the office. Over the next year I would find out that ProQuip does hot-desking, encouraging employees to sit in a new space every day. This resulted in circular rotations of the same groups moving around the same few desks. Nonetheless, this policy reduced clutter and personal belongings in the offices. I also learnt that the coffee area, with at least one present on each floor of the nine-storey building, is visited every morning by all ProQuippers, regardless of their opinion of coffee. They socialise with their colleagues before collecting their beverages and heading to their desks. Incidentally, that is also where I meet my ProQuip coach, Anna, before we all pile into a small meeting room to initiate the first meeting.

This meeting was rescheduled a few times. Pam, my gatekeeping into the company booked it from another time zone, sending us all invitations for 6am. Kristina later corrected that to 9am, saying that no one would be expected to attend so ridiculously early. We set our paper cups on the table and Kristina and Anna take seats on one side of the table opposite me. I pull my fieldwork notebook out of my bag, Anna opens her computer, and Kristina leans back in her chair.

“The first thing we need to do is get you an access card,” Kristina informs me, “it’s dangerous business not having one of those, you might go out to the bathroom and never come back.” As the meeting proceeds, further practical details of getting a work computer and phone, and scheduling meetings for the next few weeks are worked out, and the conversation turns to my role at the company for the following year.

“Let’s start by giving you an introduction to ProQuip,” Kristina offers, picking up a whiteboard marker, standing up, and turning to the board. In a moment she frowns and turned back, looking at Anna. “How are we organised today?” she asks, half-joking. “I don’t remember,” Anna responds, frowning, “let’s check the structure,” she adds, shifting focus onto her computer. Then, looking up at me, Anna explains: “we’re reorganising.”

5.1.2 Everything changes: Organisational restructuring

The vignette starts by demonstrating QuipCo’s campus. QuipCo stands for “Equipment Company” and as will be demonstrated in *Chart 1*, it is an overarching structure that ProQuip falls under, alongside a number of other companies. On the industrial campus are the offices and workshops of QuipCo, which consists of two companies, which will be demonstrated in *Chart 3.* ManQuip have their headquarters in the largest historic building on campus, and ProQuip is separate from them in their own, more modern, complex. This division is not coincidental. ProQuip has been acquired by QuipCo, at the time only consisting of ManQuip, standing for “Manufacturing Equipment Company”, in the early 1980s and has since retained its independence. ProQuip is in a different business to ManQuip, and that division has never been a problem until recently. In the last few years ManQuip encountered a crisis, where new competitors emerged in the east, plunging them into a ‘competitive environment’ for the first time since the company’s establishment in the 1920s. QuipCo contracted a consultancy firm to get advice on how to cope with the situation.

I got a few versions of this story from ProQuip’s managers and engineers, one saying that the consultancy diagnosed the problems of QuipCo as “being different companies”. Another manager said that ManQuip was not used to operate in competitive environments, having set the prices and conditions to their customers for decades and the consultants advised to utilise the competences already in place at the company, at ProQuip, to deal with competition, instead of developing these skills at anew ManQuip. As Kristina said, the new organisational change is about integrating ProQuip and ManQuip to learn from each other. In fact, ProQuip’s core function, project leading, is one of the skills that ManQuip was set to learn from ProQuip to improve ManQuip’s capabilities in responding to the competitive market environment. The reason ProQuip’s offices are in another building, is because ProQuip was operating fairly independently from ManQuip, and they only recently moved into the new building.

All ProQuippers I spoke to, engineers and managers, agreed that the crisis was the reason for the organisation change that Anna and Kristina refer to in the vignette. Over the course of my ethnographic fieldwork, I discovered that while this launched a general organisational change process which aimed to integrate some aspects of ProQuip and ManQuip, there was other more subtle changes ongoing in the background. One such important change becomes noticeable at the offices: a drive toward digitalisation. When I asked for books about the company history, Anna told me that they got rid of them all before moving to the new premises, and that this office was paper-free. Through conversations with engineers, I found that ProQuip was amidst a programme of digitalising everything and putting it on the company intranet and other software. Teresa, who has worked at ProQuip for 37 years, told me that the purpose was to 'decentralise expertise'. She explained that most of the project-work competences and know-hows were kept in Northern European, with project managers and other project leaders coming from this region to do projects all over the world. The new strategy of ProQuip is to grow that expertise in regional offices, which meant putting everything on digital devices. Although Teresa framed it as decentralising from the North European hubs, this trend appears like an effort to centralise knowledge. In a later section of this Chapter I consider how this relates to work travel.

In general terms, then, ProQuip and ManQuip are both dealing with issues emerging from the environment outside of their control. ProQuip has the Millennial Problem, resulting in a lack of travellers, and ManQuip is dealing with new competition, leading to the organisational change in both companies. This reorganising put ProQuip in an ambiguous state, where the old company structure has been dismantled and a new structure was being announced periodically, from the top levels of the company leadership down. At the time I entered the company, only the top three levels were known, and those only at the headquarters organisation. The first level accounted for the CEO alone, the second level was the heads of businesses (ProQuip and ManQuip, see *Chart 3*), and third level was the heads of the main departments in each of the businesses, who report directly to the three heads businesses. I did not manage to attain the official versions of these charts because they were circulated some months ago in PowerPoint presentations that announced the change and were since lost in the all-consuming spaces of the intranet and non-essential computer files of employees.

It is important to note this organisational change since both Kristina and Anna (and over time, other employees too) seemed unsure about how to introduce the company, and indeed,

what and where it was. From an organisational perspective, it seemed unclear to me how project work continued operating while the core organisation (the headquarters) was upheaved. This puts to question the role of the head offices in terms of organising and controlling the business. In the following sections I introduce the formal organisation of ProQuip through different organisational charts that ProQuip's engineers and managers drew for me. The interest then, based on this section, is in what the role of formal organisation at the company is, especially where it has been at least partially deconstructed.

5.1.3 Within bigger structures: ParentCo and its daughter companies

ProQuip was presented to me as a structure within a structure (see *Chart 1*). ParentCo is the overarching company that has seven companies in different businesses. MetalCo specialises in providing equipment, services, and solutions to the metal industry. GlassCo does the same for the glass industry, PaperCo for the paper industry, WoodCo for the woodwork industry, ClayCo for the clay industry, and SiliCo for the silicon industry. QuipCo, which is the focus of this thesis, specialises in the plastics industry; they produce technical equipment for manufacturing plastics. QuipCo was founded in the 1920s, it is active in over 175 countries and has offices all around the world. While it is one company, it has two separate businesses, Kristina and Anna explained. They have the plastic polymer processing technology business that involves the manufacturing, research and design of plastic processing technologies, ManQuip. ManQuip brings most of the revenue into the company, predominantly from selling new technologies and routine specialised equipment for plastic processing. They also have the projects and equipment company, ProQuip which plans, produces, and implements factory lines. The latter is where I was employed.

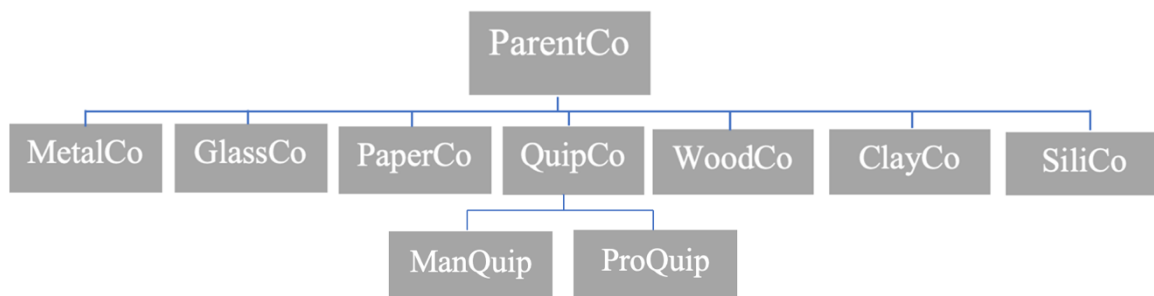

Chart 1: ParentCo structure, sketched on a whiteboard

"Our difference with ManQuip is that they make homogenous products," Kristina told me during our first meeting, "the equipment they make is so complicated that no one tried to

change it since it was first invented." ProQuip's business is in creating make-to-order equipment and delivering full projects to clients, Kristina explained. ManQuip and ProQuip, however, differ on more than just the logic of their sales business, or in emic terms, their 'business models'. Since the business of ProQuip is make-to-order as opposed to the mass manufacturing of ManQuip, it is also much more complex, the managers explained. ProQuip's supply chain can be unpredictable, orders to key suppliers are often made on predictions, and on occasion, staff assignment to projects mirrors bidding behaviours. All this uncertainty affects how work travel is practiced as will be explained in Chapters 6 and 7. More importantly, the competition in the business of ProQuip is fierce. While ManQuip has been dominating its market for over half a century, ProQuip is regularly in bidding wars against competitors in its industry. Contracts are sometimes won by small margins, and other contracts come from long-term partnerships with powerful clients, which are not always profitable for ProQuip over the long term.

As it turned out, there was some flow of employees between the two businesses, but one's belonging strongly depended on having a clear identity; most employees were either proud ProQuippers, or self-assured ManQuippers (who often referred to themselves as QuipCoers, appearing to forget about the project and equipment business altogether). Circling ProQuip on the board, Kristina told me: "You are here."

5.1.4 About leadership and legal matters

Later the same afternoon I had a meeting with Joanna, a health and safety professional, who was asked to familiarise me with the procedures in the company. Following the induction, Joanna asked me how much I know about the company - and with my ethnographic purpose in mind, I told her, quite truthfully: not much. For the second time that day, I watched a ProQuipper pick up a marker and start sketching a chart on the board (see *Chart 2*). I was expecting to see an identical sketch to Kristina's earlier in the day, but to my surprise, only two of the two organisations were drawn encapsulated in boxes.

"QuipCo actually has two legal entities," (in this North European country) Joanna excitedly pointed to the board. QCM Ltd. (Standing for QuipCoMan, or ManQuip in everyday terms) and QCP Ltd. (Standing for QuipCoPro, otherwise known as ProQuip) are two companies headed by the same CEO, she clarified. He is actually leading ManQuip and has a set of directors and senior managers that are reporting to him. While QCP Ltd. is formally

headed by the same CEO, practically it is Penelope Heis who manages this business. This is reflected in other organisational charts, such as the one Dan, the head of the PMO department (*Chart 4*) and former service engineer who I mentioned in the previous Chapter, provided me with. He drew an approximation of the official *level 2 chart* of the heads of businesses (*Chart 3*), confirming the leadership of Jan Nilsson, the CEO, over ManQuip, as well as Penelope's position over ProQuip.

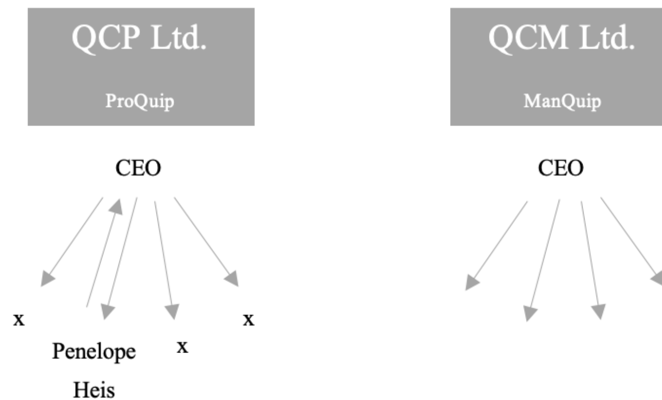

Chart 2: Legal entities

In every diagram, at one point or another, my informant would circle ProQuip to indicate my position. Over time, it started seeming like the charting of territories. An indication of a safe zone to roam around in; they can show me what is over the fences to the other sides of QuipCo, but really, the boundaries of where their concerns lay were demarcated quite clearly. Focus on ProQuip.

5.1.5 Into ProQuip: The Projects Organisation

Sandra Berg is one Penelope's board of directors. She is level 3, occupying one of the known positions in the field of unknowns. Sandra is in charge of the projects function of ProQuip, and as of September 2018 she was redesigning her department alongside a group of senior managers to "restructure the companies into a centralised system, removing and retiring old tasks." The project organisation within ProQuip, aside from office-based staff, oversees 1,783 travelling engineers working to deliver projects, 1,445 of whom are "own employees" from ProQuip and 232 are "borrowed" from ManQuip. The remainder are 'consultants', which is the QuipCo term for staff on fixed-term contracts and usually slightly higher salaries.

Despite the clarity about who falls under the governance of the Projects department, the structure of the projects department is only hypothesised. Some of the departments that existed prior to the organisational change were expected to remain; perhaps under new leadership, perhaps with new assignments, perhaps with some new manpower. There was some conviction that the Project Engineering and Automation (PEA) department, in which I started working, was indispensable, as was the Project Management Organisation (PMO) that two years ago was known as Project Management Coordination (PMC) (see *Chart 4*). As no structures were confirmed, Dan and others kept operating under an assumption that their departments are still going to be there tomorrow.

Chart 3: Heads of businesses (level 2 structure)

As Dan explained, the PMO and PEA departments are two sides of one coin - one is focused on the nuts, bolts, and all the technical details (PEA) - and the other is dealing with project governance and "the big picture" (PMO). Similarly, the Quality Management function is also deemed imperative to the everyday operations of the company, dealing with quality assurance. While the company continued operating in uncharted territories, the drawers of chart did leave spaces for the potentiality of new departments to arise from the reorganisation, as indicated in *Chart 4*.

The entire Projects department operates on a 'strategic' level, Dan told me. The headquarters create the frameworks with which all other regions, offices, and projects should comply. Valter, a senior manager at ProQuip who has worked here for nearly 45 years, explained that the idea behind the Projects department is to pave a road; "to get somewhere you need infrastructure, right?" he asked. "But building a road is not enough. To make it efficient to drive along, you need gas stations, you need signs, you need a map!". Valter explained the roles of the divisions within Projects, where PMO paves the road toward the goal of a simpler, more efficient (and standardised) way of doing projects, and other departments such as PEA providing the tools to make the trip down the road smoother. He sketched out a formula: process x people x tools = performance, where process is the job of PMO, tools are

administered by PEA, and people are the aforementioned 1,783 travelling engineers. If this pathway is followed, Valter maintained that high performance outputs can be achieved.

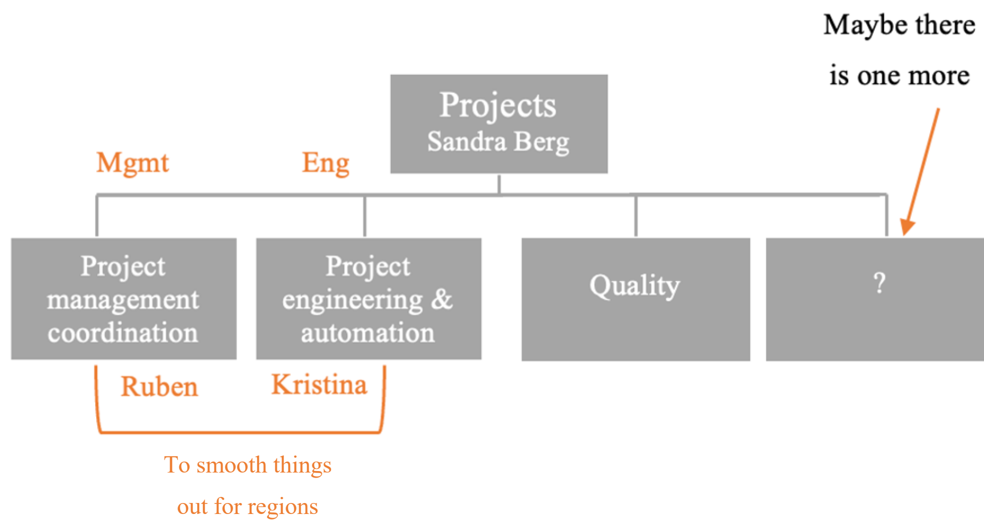

Chart 4: Projects department

Valter's comment under the PEA and PMO boxes in *Chart 4* tells that there are "regions" for which these two departments are supposed to "smooth things out" for. These regions are geographically demarcated offices, introduced in *Chart 5*. Anna told me that in past projects would be led locally in the regions. One of the reasons for organisational change was was that the top management found it problematic that big projects would typically be led by the headquarters in the past, making expertise 'too concentrated' in the headquarters. As Teresa was saying in section 5.1.2, ProQuip started a drive toward 'decentralising' project work activity from the North European hub into the rest of the offices, but also centralising information digitally. A separate issue was that each of the regions, offices, and headquarters would follow their own systems and processes for conducting projects. The task of the "two-headed new organisation" of PEA and PMO (which has not yet been formally announced) is to coordinate the managerial and engineering sides of projects and bring them into cohesion across the company. Anna emphasised that this was especially important to coordinate the "Business Areas" (BAs) of ProQuip, introduced in *Chart 6*. The BAs are smaller organisations within ProQuip that result from ProQuip's acquisitions of smaller companies, which were enacted to expand the range of equipment that ProQuip can offer their clients and develop knowledge about specific machines and processes of production. These acquired companies had their own systems of project management prior to becoming part of ProQuip. While the Project department aims to control travel and projects across the company and its worldwide

reach, the question remains as to how ProQuip is organised globally. This has been explained through the parallel structures of BAs and Market Enterprises (MEs).

5.1.6 Geographically and functionally dispersed: "Market Enterprises" and "Business Areas"

Stefan, a senior manager of one of the departments in the Project Organisation, provided me with not so much of a chart, but more of a list of the regions (see *Chart 5*). These regions are geographically distinct areas within the company, later sub-divided into a series of countries and a number of offices within these countries (with the exception of BAs). The areas include Oceania, Southeast Asia, and Australia (OSEAA), Europe and Northern Asia (ENA), Africa and the Middle East (AME), Central Asia (CA), and South, Central, and North America (SCNA). All these areas would then be divided into regions, for example, ENA can be subdivided to Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg) and Frites (France, Italy, and Spain) among others. Each region would have an office that would be considered the central hub of that region, known as the market enterprise (ME) typically located in the capital of one of these countries.

The role of MEs is to oversee sales since other functions in the company, such as the BAs or the head office, do not sell projects or equipment. Rather, all orders would go directly to the ME of the region in which a client company intends to build a factory. Thus, MEs oversee all the sales and projects in their region, but as they do not produce their own product, they internally buy equipment from the specialised offices: the BAs. Occasionally, they also rent expertise from such offices. The MEs also operate according to the infrastructures and rules made by the Project Organisation and its two functions. Since the regions are on the level of QuipCo, they are univocal across ManQuip and ProQuip, but unlike ManQuip, ProQuip has the parallel structure of the BAs.

It took me a few months to comprehend the relationship between the regions and BAs. It appeared to me that the regions and BAs should be on some level connected, supporting one another, or both be under the head office. However, the MEs and BAs serve different functions in ProQuip and project work. Firstly, the BAs are not geographically allocated but are product-specialised business areas. Each BA makes a different set of machines for the processing of raw materials and possesses specific competences in the production of goods. The BAs, however, rarely sell their own projects; their engineering solutions are put on local markets by regions. Even within ProQuip, BAs and MEs, often operate as separate businesses.

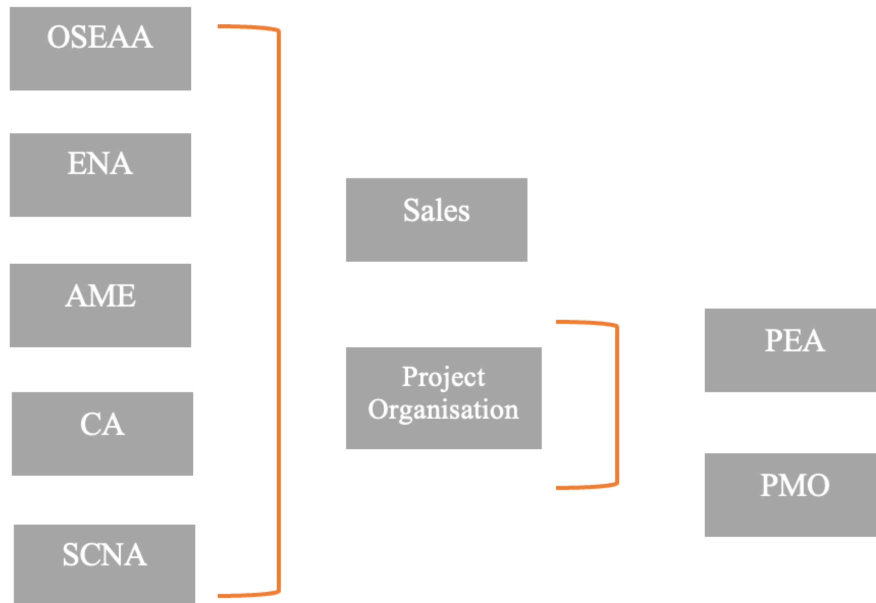

Chart 5: Regions and project leading

There are four BAs spread almost at random across the globe. Often, they have offices in specific countries because the company that was once acquired by ProQuip was there. In other instances, such sites were closed and re-opened elsewhere for various reasons, for example, a manager distributed their team across different offices and then decided to centralise elsewhere or a new workshop opened in a particular location for logistical reasons and an office somehow emerged there. From all the BAs, I spent most time in is the Hard Plastics Organisation (HPO) that specialises in the creation of equipment for the production of strong plastics, generally created as alternatives to metals. The other BAs are Soft Plastics Organisation (shortly referred to as just SPO) that specialise in the making of soft, malleable, and stretchable plastics; General Nonreactive Plastics (GNP) specialises in the production of equipment for more mundane forms of plastics, often in use for consumer goods, and; Medical Moulding (MM) is a BA working with equipment that specifically caters of the medical industry. Where ProQuip produces this specialised equipment and lines, ManQuip manufactures the standard equipment for the processing of plastics.

While I was formally employed by PEA to study travel work, HPO agreed to host me at their project sites. There I would obtain new charts of these same organisations and of the project work structures - which led me to wonder: Why do ProQuippers make so many charts? What do all these charts mean, represent, and tell me about ProQuip? And indeed, what role

do charts play in organising ProQuip? The following section addresses the formal organisation literature on charts and their role in organisations.

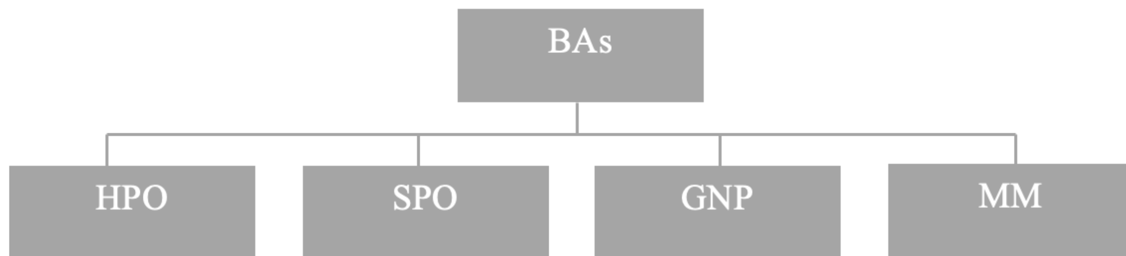

Chart 6: Business areas (BAs)

5.1.7 Travelling charts

This section provides a first sense of ProQuip, and its parent company QuipCo, and acknowledges the image of organisation as a whole apparatus which seems cohesive from the outside but appears confused and disorderly from the inside. Although currently their charts do not directly explain the organisation of work travel, they are important to facilitate the discussion on travelling and organising later in the thesis. These organisations and departments play a central role in structuring work travel, for example, as will be seen in Chapter 7, BAs like HPO are instrumental in setting the rhythms of travel. However, to arrive at that point, it is vital to first understand the constitution of ProQuip as an organisation, and indeed, the meanings of organisational charts in the making of this organisation.

The puzzlement of Kristina and Anna about the organisational structure reveals the first instance of disorganisation, highlighting that even formal organisation technologies such as the charts that Kristina and other ProQuippers drew, are dynamic and changeable. This section aimed to introduce the formal organisation of ProQuip, showing that although formal organisation exists at ProQuip, for example, it is incorporated with its own legal identity, it is also in turmoil from the current organisational changes. These processes of re-organising deprive ProQuip from some formal structures, which we then see ProQuippers supplementing with their own pseudo-formal artefacts. This serves to highlight the 'informal lives' of organisational charts and the intermingling of formal and social aspects of organisation.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of charts demonstrates that there are multiple conceptions of ProQuip, on one hand showing inconsistency in what can be considered 'the organisation' but on the other hand, also capturing the variability of perspectives which are all too natural in a large company such as ProQuip. However, from an Organisation Studies perspective, if all

these images are equally legitimate as ethnographic trust in one's informants would advocate (especially provided that no formal charts are in existence), the question then is, to paraphrase Robert Cooper: 'what is not organisation?'. In the following section, I consider what charts are, their purpose in organisations, and what they reveal about ProQuip.

5.2 For formal organisation? On charts and maps of organisation

Charts are presented as useful passive infographics for delivering information about a company through illustration succinctly and efficiently (Verdinelli and Scagnoli 2013), showing key points of interest in a company, displaying its 'core functions' (Vikkelsø 2016) and a range of supporting departments and units (Mintzberg 1979). In ethnographies, charts are presented as important artefacts through which readers can be made familiar with the organisation quickly and effectively, thus ensuring that they are now ready to proceed to the exciting *empirical stories* of the strange new world and its rituals, ideologies, and people. From this perspective, the charts create a backdrop to the events that will later unfold on the stage. Yet, despite the charts' prevalence in ethnographic accounts, few ethnographers stop to reflect on the meanings and significance of these charts, maps, and diagrams, question who draws them, how these diagrams are constructed, for what purposes, and what they may reveal about the organisation (for exceptions see: O'Doherty 2016; Dalton 2017/1959). In this section of the Chapter, I briefly review the FOS perspective on charts to define these artefacts and understand their early purposes. Following that, I review the uses of charts according to FOS and consider what the presented charts divulge about the organisation of ProQuip and travel.

5.2.1 Defining charts

In general terms, the organisational chart, or 'organigram' is a simplified visualisation of the organisation, which typically seeks to represent organisational structures and arrangements, lines of command, existing functions, and role-relationships (Vikkelsø 2016; Mintzberg 1979). As depicted in the previous section, charts can be varied and provide different types of information, but they have two main features: they do demarcation work of separating some groups from others, and they are hierarchical, positioning certain groups or people at a privilege. These differences are shown through a particular form of drawing: through lines and boxes, where lines generally indicate relationships or communication and reporting structures, and boxes usually denote groups, units, territories, or roles.

As Turco (2016, p. 9) explains, the organisational chart's lines map "both a firm's formal lines of communication and its lines of decision-making authority." Drawing on the example of *Chart 4*, one can appreciate that the manager Sandra Berg is the decision-making authority over the PEA, PMO, and Quality Management departments and their respective leaders, being in a box above their respective boxes. Similarly, that *Chart* also depicts a formal relationship between Sandra, who heads PEA, and Kristina, positioning Kristina as reporting to Sandra. The purpose of the chart from its conception, as FOS scholars contend, was to illustrate chains of command, showcase responsible persons in different organisational functions or specialisations, and define clear lines of action, communication, and accountability (Vikkelsø 2016). Typically, the "higher up" one's box is on the paper, the more responsibility, autonomy, and authority one usually holds.

Therefore, a chart can be understood as a *visual representation* of a company. Mintzberg (1979, p.37) defines three particular types of information that charts were designed to deliver quickly and efficiently: "(1) what positions exist in the organization, (2) how these are grouped into units, and (3) how formal authority flows among them (in effect, describing the use of direct supervision)". Not all charts necessarily provide all these types of information together. For example, *Charts 3* and *4* detail the existing positions at the top levels of the company, while *Charts 4*, *5* and *6* show how members are grouped into units. In addition, the formal authority flows between people are seen in *Charts 2* and *4*. Therefore, the chart can be broadly defined as a physical and tangible artefact that is created to *illustrate* and *represent* the formal structure of a company, often acting as a guide or a map for the labyrinth of complex organisations spaces and relations (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera 2015).

Nevertheless, charts have been criticised for lacking realism, leading them to acquire an ambivalent character in academic and practitioner circles. Vikkelsø (2016) accounts for a rift between world of practice, where charts have become normalised and routine organisational staples, and the academic world where charts are no longer considered interesting as organisational analysis tools. "While most organizations continue to find the chart indispensable (the organigram is inevitably the first thing handed to anyone inquiring about structure), many organizational theorists reject it as an inadequate description of what really takes place inside the organization" (Mintzberg 1979, p.37). Among academics, ethnographers still draw on charts, as I mentioned earlier in this Chapter, but they treat it superficially as a quick overview of organisational key features. Vikkelsø (2016) maintains that the academic

lack of regard for charts and other formal organisation artefacts results from organisation scholars moving their analyses to more ‘exciting’ organisational artefacts, for example, new forms of information technology. The disenchantment with charts may be traced back to a seminal ethnography written about half a century ago. In *Men Who Manage*, Dalton (2017/1959) describes a significant schism between the formal organisation depicted in the chart and the informal way of doing things. It has since been generally accepted that organisational charts are unreliable and often misleading artefacts in organisations (Kunda 2006), portraying companies with an unrealistic mirage of stability, permanence, and coherence.

Meanwhile, among practitioners, the classic organisational chart has changed from its inception as a simple informatic to elaborate formats, featuring circular or ‘matrix type’, cross-referencing charts, thereby moving farther from the simple informatic it was originally designed to be. In that sense, organisational charts in companies are often constructed as more of a tradition than for use (Vikkelsø 2016). The chart, no longer fitting the flexible neoliberal trends, fell into disuse on two main grounds: firstly, because it is claimed to not show a full image, depicting only the formal and not informal elements of an organisation, and secondly, it is argued to be inconsistent with the modern flexible, ephemeral organisation (Vikkelsø 2016).

The chart, therefore, has an ambivalent character, especially nowadays in the generally neoliberal post-bureaucratic climate (du Gay and Lopdrup-Hjorth 2016; Turco 2016; Vikkelsø 2016). In a recent study of TechCo, a software marketing company, Catherine Turco (2016) finds resentment toward the chart; the founders of the company are strictly opposed to all that relates to bureaucracy, calling for a culture of openness, flexibility, and departure from strict rules and policies. For most of the duration of Turco’s stay in the company, the chart is simply absent, but then TechCo’s employees increasingly begin to request a clear organisational chart to be constructed, explaining that “[t]here are a lot of people at TechCo these days (including myself) who have trouble figuring out who works in which group and what they do” (Turco 2016, p. 42). The TechCo millennials have argued that “an org chart would offer greater transparency into the company’s actual structure and greater ease of communication in it” (Turco 2016, p. 42). Although organisational charts are rarely addressed in contemporary MOS, they still manage to maintain a contested character.

As Gulick and Urwick (1937, in Vikkelsø 2016) contend, however, charts were never intended to showcase a realistic description of the company. Instead, such illustrations were made to aid the task of coordination and act as a map to navigate organisational spaces and relations, to then endorse cooperation between varying departments to achieve the ultimate productive goal of the company. The analogy of a map is also used by Mintzberg (1979), who claims that charts should not be dismissed for their inaccuracies, for their purpose is not to be fully comprehensive; a map shows towns and connecting roads, but never claims to give insight about the economic prosperity of a region. The same principle applies to an organisational map. It is important to keep it mind, then, that the chart is a two-dimensional artefact that exists to inform quickly and effectively only particular, clearly defined and designed information. As Verdinelli and Scagnoli (2013, p.360) observe, "[a] graphic representation allows the reader to acquire insights, develop an elaborate understanding, or appreciate new knowledge." Indeed, like in ethnographies, charts also play a central role in providing a quick introduction to a company for an incoming staff member (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). Provided that ProQuippers draw their own charts, it seems that charts in this company have more than a symbolic use. In the following section, I review some of the apparent uses of charts at ProQuip.

5.2.2 Uses of charts: In praise of the chart

The organisational chart has many uses in organisational analyses. From a formal organisation perspective, a chart can be used in varied scenarios, like for "instructing new members about the existing formal structure of the specific organization for which they worked" or "identifying potential problems or possible alternative forms of organizing, for example, in terms of span of control or degree of specialization" (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017, pp. 32-33). The charts, however, must be understood within a context (Mintzberg 1979); they have been constructed to effectively deliver specific information. By design, each chart represent only a small portion of a complex organisation, but together they are critical to understand the functioning of the organisation as a whole (Mintzberg 1979). This is perhaps why ProQuippers created so many charts, with each depicting different information about the company. Where one map shows altitudes, another shows motorways; similarly, *Chart 1* shows the relations with parent companies, while *Chart 4* focuses in on the Projects department.

Based on a formal perspective, it appears that ProQuippers drew charts primarily for the purpose of disseminating information quickly and effectively. As a visual representation, the chart can be summarised to have two connected, main functions: firstly, to represent an

organisation by providing a simplified image thereof, and secondly, to communicate select information about an organisation effectively through a visualisation. Since ProQuippers volunteered to draw up charts, it seems that they found this form of communication effective in giving an overview of the company, while also enforcing my subordination to the implicit rule of not mingling with ManQuippers. Therefore, it seems that the chart has social as well as formal functions.

Mintzberg (1979) points out that even Dalton, who critiques charts, indicates at the intricate interconnections between the formal and informal, where the formal orders the direction of the informal, thus shaping its characteristics. In other words, social dimensions of an organisation develop within formal structures, and formal artefacts can be used to exert social influence. The charts have several social uses: First, like in Turco's (2016) case, employees felt the need to compensate for the lack of formal charts. ProQuippers seemed to have an implicit agreement that charts are useful for purposes of orientation, onboarding, and disseminating information (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). This is evidenced by the construction of *Charts 1-6*, all of which were made or retrieved from old documents in order to onboard me into the company and ease my adaptation there. They did not seem disgruntled by charts being partial or incomplete and it appeared that providing a "skeletal configuration" was intentional, given that there could be no use in a chart that looks like a fifty-page company report (Van de Ven, 1976 in Mintzberg 1979).

Second, charts seemed to be used as sense-making mechanisms and resources for retaining a sense of security, reinforcing one's position at the company for oneself, as well as for informing others. This is evidenced by Kristina and Anna's confusion about how ProQuip is structured and their demarcation that everything outside of ProQuip exists but is not important. Similarly, in *Chart 6*, the horizontal spaces between the SPO unit and HPO signal that the affairs of each area are different enough to not concern one another. Third, in the act of drawing, ProQuippers were indicating what the important aspects of organisation were to them. This is demonstrated by how the charts were constructed. For example, Joanna (*Chart 2*) seemed to consider the legal systems behind the division of QuipCo into ManQuip and ProQuip important, while Valter seemed more concerned with the immediate politics of the Projects department. It is important to note that these are just six of over fifty charts drawn up at the field. The reason that charts appeared so often at the start of my fieldwork in ProQuip, it would

seem, was to provide a simplified guide, specifically from the ProQuippers' perspectives to the company and illustrate my and their relative positions in it.

While the purpose of ProQuippers to inform and guide appears clear from the aforementioned FOS literature, it is important to be reminded that the drawings were produced and procured at a time when much of the formal organisation was disbanded. Like in Turco's (2016) case, the lack of formally generated charts appears to be linked with confusion about positions in the organisation, lines of command and authority, and the relationships (and even existence) between different departments. It appears that the creation of informal charts is a means of relieving confusion and anxiety associated with organisational restructuring and the disorganisation resulting from it. However, if the 'core organisation', that is, the headquarters of ProQuip, is in turmoil and very few formal structures live up to their promise of stability and certainty, then it is even more unclear how work travel, which occurs at the periphery or 'outside' of this core organisation, is organised. Therefore, the next step is to try understanding how work travel is organised, if at all, by formal organisation mechanisms.

5.2.3 Charting work travel

As discussed in this section, charts are intended to represent the company, but they are not meant to be accurate or particularly realistic, hence even informal charts presented in the absence of a formal organisation are a helpful guide to the company. In general, a few things can be learnt about ProQuip from *Charts 1-6*. First, there is an overarching structure that ProQuip falls within and is thus subjected to influences from ParentCo, ManQuip, and other surrounding businesses. For example, the organisational change was explained to be motivated by ManQuip's crisis, which then affected the structures of ProQuip. This means that ProQuip is not only affected by internal problems like the Millennial reluctance to travel or global trends like pandemics and climate change, but also by decisions in the companies noted in *Chart 1*. Second, ProQuip has a Projects department that aims to organise project work predominantly through policymaking (PMO) and building of infrastructures (PEA). As mentioned in Chapter 4, project work is the central preoccupation and output of ProQuip, and the need to conduct project work is the driver behind ProQuip's travel practices. Hence, the Project Organisation should have direct effect on work travel and its organising. Third, the company is geographically dispersed across MEs and BAs, where MEs have the function of selling projects to clients and BAs build and sell equipment internally for these projects. Both these organisations are dealing with project work and have staff who travel; therefore, it is reasonable

to assume that the Projects department at the head office may have some authority over them in designing work travel.

Although charts are generally drawn to be simplified abstractions of reality designed to make information "transparent and 'instant'" (Cooper 1992, p. 181), this Chapter reveals that they can be inconsistent and perplexing, leaving the ethnographer to wonder where and what the organisation is. The different charts create an eclectic and multiplied image of ProQuip, showing it as more than one coherent structure. This puts the role of formal organisation to question; where formal organisation is described as a project of rationality, uniformity, and fixity, held in stark opposition to 'social' or 'spontaneous' forms of organisation that are characterised through innovation, flexibility, and creativity (du Gay and Lopdrup-Hjorth 2016), the charts reveal a paradoxical lack of uniformity but also a dependence among ProQuippers on formal organisation artefacts.

Considering the static nature of the chart, it is not entirely surprising that organisational scholars have moved their attentions to other technologies of organisational analysis, such that depart from images of stasis and are instead considered more attuned to the *becoming* realities of organisations (Chia 1995). Indeed, O'Doherty (2016) shows in his study of an airport that the notion of stability is illusory; organisations are in constant flux, from personnel shifts to the re-organisation of seating spaces. Once drawn up a chart becomes almost immediately redundant. Despite that, O'Doherty (2016) also points out that a chart is not simply an object of objective representation, but rather an artefact of organisational politics, where the act of charting in itself can be considered political. This perspective calls for understanding the chart not simply for what it is showing and claiming to represent, but also under what circumstances, by whom, and for whom it was constructed. In other words, a chart is *constructed* within a context and acts *to construct* its context, and if these dimensions are taken into account, it can reveal more than just the relations seen on its surface. Therefore, in the following section I take a different perspective onto charts from FOS addressed in this section, instead considering charts as modes of representation that construct organisations instead of tools of analysis which passively represent existing organisations. To do so, I draw on the works of Robert Cooper.

5.3 Representation: Understanding ProQuip through informal charts

Formal organisation has come to be seen as a permanent and stable object; a tangible entity constructed and maintained by legal and rational legitimacy (Weber 1978). In some ways, ProQuip is inside the glass building on the physical campus of QuipCo. It is across from the red brick building and the little park with the old trees between them. ProQuip is made of people who run it and produce for it; the engineers and managers of ProQuip allow the company to exist to create its products and services, and its legal identity lets ProQuip pay salaries to its employees. ProQuip is a company that is ran by people, hosted in buildings, official in documents, and produces tangible outputs. Thus, in many ways ProQuip is *real*. As seen in *Chart 2*, ProQuip is a corporation, meaning that it has its own legal identity and structure that upholds the company, but it is also a firm which denotes an organised form of economic activity (Robé 2011, in du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). However, as the existence of other charts indicates, the corporate identity of ProQuip is just an element of what makes it an organisation.

As the multiplicity of charts in section 5.1 has shown, the organisation may have a misconstrued image of permanence and stability. Each ProQuipper seems to have a slightly different idea of what ProQuip is, meaning that despite the imagination of formal organisation as factual, in effect the 'natives' of the company understand and communicate what ProQuip is in different ways. Taking an alternative perspective to FOS, I consider the chart as representation not only in a visual sense, but as re-presentation that not only seeks to inform about organisation but construct it (Cooper 1992). Visual representation means *illustrating* or 'capturing' ideas about what the organisation is through charting, hence *reflecting* an organisation that already exists in a simpler format. *Re*-presentation (spelled so for emphasis), on the other hand, sees organisation as constructed through the process of visualising it, through re-presenting – or making it present again – and thereby re-establishing it as something slightly different from previous conceptions. Indeed, static images of organisation such as the ones propagated through charts may even stand in the way of understanding organisations as dynamic entities (Munro 1998). Static imagery then affects how work travel, a practice that is by its nature dynamic, is understood. Considering that charts do more than simply inform about existing structures, in this section I draw on the work of Robert Cooper in studying formal organisation as representation.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, formal organisation originates as a project of rationalisation; formal organisations are constructed to make up for the limited rationality of the human and manage uncertainties and unpredictability (Cooper 1992). FOS scholars argue that formal rules and policies are enabling for organisational members since they define a territory within which people have the freedom to act (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). These two ideas are related, denoting that too much freedom or choice would render the human, their body and mind unable to act or participate in society. Therefore, organisations make up for limited rationality and decision-making capabilities of humans by limiting their fields of interaction and responsibility, while also creating systems to uphold information for the human. Organisations are created as information vehicles that allow humans to go beyond the limits of the capabilities of one human (Cooper 1992). However, Cooper (1992, p. 181) argues that to store information, representation must exist first, for example, in the form of "pattern, picture, model" or indeed a chart. These are images of organisation.

Cooper (1992) outlines three modes of representation, explaining that through techniques of representation organisational actors can render complex and distant things controllable. "Administrators and managers, for example, do not work directly on the environment but on models, maps, numbers and formulae which represent that environment; in this way, they can control complex and heterogeneous activities at a distance and in the relative convenience of a centralized work station" (Cooper 1992, P.183). Similarly, the chart is a representation of the organisation that ProQuippers may act upon, thereby acting upon the organisation. I explain this through Cooper's three techniques of representation: remote control, displacement, and abbreviation.

Abbreviation is about condensation; its principle is to reduce information accurately down to what is easiest to perceive and enact (Cooper 1992). In effect, abbreviation is about the economy of convenience, taking for example the chart, it provides instant information at a glance. Its simplified representation of the organisation, broken down to segments such as departments, and organised through symbols (boxes and lines, mostly), reduces the size of the task of trying to understand the company as a whole while also reducing the time it takes to comprehend it. Visual abbreviation, according to Cooper (1992) is most effective. The shorthand version of the organisation is, then, useful for providing an idea of the company for someone unfamiliar with it, while also providing managers and administrators with a tool for oversight over the company, abbreviating the complex functioning of the Hard Plastics

Organisation (*Chart 6*) and its units to a mere, controllable, HPO in a box. In that sense, the chart stands in as a substitute for the organisation.

Abbreviation also allows control. Particularly, remote control. By representing projects and their overarching organisations (such as *Charts 5* and *6*), the headquarters of the company are able to represent projects as a general on a smaller scale, on a chart. While these projects are taking place all over the world, and indeed, under particular departments of ProQuip, through representation the headquarters are able to create overarching governance systems to preside over all projects. As Cooper (1992, p.186) explains, the principle of remote control is to "build a reduced model of the original, bring the distant to the here-and-now, make a visual representation of that which defies physical contact." This, then, renders the distant controllable.

Finally, displacement is where organisation is delivered from a small-scale representation, such as a chart, to a large-scale manifestation of it. Cooper (1992) describes displacement as a technology of representation where a microbe is taken from livestock, bred in a laboratory under controlled conditions, a vaccine is developed, and then a weakened form of the microbe, in the shape of a vaccine, is reintroduced among livestock. In this example, displacement takes place twice: initially when a microbe is represented in the laboratory, and then when the laboratory is simulated or represented in farms. Similarly, the governance systems created in the PMO department (*Chart 4*) are based on representations of projects, there, past projects are abbreviated into short schematics and policy changes are created to be implemented across ProQuip. Similarly, in *Chart 4* distances are shown between the boxes that signify the divisions of PMO, PEA, and Quality Management. These distances are translated into the office reality, where Anna told me that, in practice, I can sit wherever I want– whichever floor and whatever desk – since the policy of hotdesking encourages people to change desks every day. But really, the PEA department usually congregates on the right-hand side of the fourth floor. Representations, constructed through the three representation technologies, abbreviation, remote control, and displacement, are affecting the ways that organisation is structured, not simply reflecting what exists on its own.

This process of representation, however, has a more vital implication for work travel and the organisation of ProQuip. Representation is a process of organising "*things* or *meanings*… in space and time" (Cooper 1992, p.191, emphasis in original). Particularly, many of the office units described in *Chart 4* are tasked with the process of organising projects, as I explained

before, PMO for example deals with governance of projects, whereas PEA is concerned with engineering issues. The chart represents distances between the departments, where PMO and PEA work in parallel to each other, the interaction between them is through the higher up Projects department of Sandra Berg. As Munro (1998) suggested, one can read this as horizontal 'gaps' in the map – between departments, showcasing distances – or vertical 'interactions'. However, as Munro (1998) warns, such a reading of charts is incomplete, forcing the departments into binary oppositions of connectedness and disconnectedness. Indeed, if considered from the perspective of boundaries and the interaction of the inside and outside, then a more nuanced understanding of charts and their activities in organisations can be achieved.

The Projects Organisation department in *Chart 4* creates the rules that projects worldwide need to adhere to. By representing past, present, and future projects in charts, diagrams and drawings, the projects are being abbreviated into general schemes, to then be controlled centrally and remotely. The centralisation of control means that frameworks can be created in the headquarters and then be dispersed across all BAs and MEs. However, this also brings up the question of boundaries. Are these projects, which are occurring outside of the physical boundaries of ProQuip on customer building sites, still in ProQuip? Following the argument of Cooper, they are. The projects, in being represented in smaller scales through charts and documents, are inside of the company, while the real projects that are ongoing are technically outside of the physical company. There is displacement in capturing what a project is like, representing it for purposes of policymaking, and then displacing this policy to apply across the company. The project in itself does not occur inside ProQuip, as it is constructed together with other companies, in agreement with them and using combined resources, that is, the project is outside of just ProQuip. Yet, it is also inside. This returns us briefly to the conversation with Fabio in the first Chapter, where Fabio describes his awareness of the changing spaces but unchanging work. Fabio is both in ProQuip and outside of it, bringing forth a different conceptualisation of the organisation; ProQuip could be regarded as a dynamic system, with changing boundaries, as opposed to a stable organisation that remains static.

It would appear then, that charts do not represent the organisational 'reality' in a seamless, factual manner. Instead, charts appear to represent the ideas of ProQuippers about the organisation, who voluntarily constructed images that they project onto the world. The managers and engineers of ProQuip seemed drawn to creating pseudo-formal organisation

artefacts even in the temporary lack of strict formal organisation. The FOS perspective would argue that this indicates the failure of formal organisation to fulfil the needs of organisational members to have a strong framework to operate within (Turco 2016). An alternative perspective would suggest that whether or not such formal framework exist or not, the act of creating formal artefacts, like charts, is a practice of not only translating reality into drawing but enforcing one's own ideas onto said reality and 'stabilising' the dynamism of organisational changes and work travel. Adopting a dynamic perspective, the chart ceases to be a representation of *space*, but rather, charts act as "stabilizing 'spaces' of representation" (Munro 1998, p.157).

In creating static images of organisation, ProQuippers also enforced an idea of stability and permanence that ProQuip does not appear to have. While, for example, Anna indicated that the right-hand side of the fourth floor was PEA territory, over the course of a few months at the headquarters I found that there was a constant flux of employees, with travellers coming and going through the headquarters and working in this area. The PEA's implicit departmental space was continuously invaded by ProQuippers from outside of PEA. Additionally, due to the organisational change, the company structure was broken down, meaning that it is in a current state of rearrangement; all charts drawn up were only an approximate reflection of what was ongoing at the offices. And indeed, the business of ProQuip is in project work which requires the creation and dissolution of temporary organisations (Packendorff, 1995), where permanence cannot exist by the nature of the job. Indeed, it is the purpose of temporary organisations typically to accomplish the goal of their existence as swiftly as possible, by "capitaliz[ing] on the specialized skills of their members" and "keeping costs of coordination to a minimum" (Bechky 2006, p. 3). Therefore, in this context, permanence is illusory and may be, as Munro (1998) suggests, an unhelpful perspective onto organisations. It is then, important to reiterate that Cooper's (1992) representation does not include passive reflecting of an already existing system, but rather, an active creation of the company.

The drawings of the organisation in *Charts 1-6* should not be read as univocal truths about the company, but rather as projections of ProQuippers onto the company. In creating such representations, ProQuippers seem to do two things. Firstly, through informing me of the organisational form, ProQuippers appeared to expect that I will organise myself to fit in accordingly. For instance, when access to ManQuip was restricted or when the PEA sitting area was outlined. Secondly, ProQuippers also appear to use charts to establish boundaries

around ProQuip. They create distinctions of what is inside ProQuip, such as the BAs, and what is outside, like ManQuip. However, as Cooper (1992) and Munro (1998) argue, the static images lead to delusion about the state of the company.

When taking the perspective that charts are active, as was done throughout this section, charts are revealed to be modes of exerting control over the uncertain and confusing organisational reality of ProQuip. It appears to be a response to the organisational re-structuring ongoing at ProQuip, where there is a lack of clarity about the future of departments and individual careers, and the boundaries around what constitutes ProQuip and others (such as ManQuip). Charting appears to be an attempt to regain control in this situation, but also even in times without restructuring, charts can be understood as technologies of representation used to control distant segments of the company. For example, the PMO and PEA offices create charts and other representations of projects and their encompassing structures, like BAs and MEs, thus displacing them into ProQuip's head office's direct control. They then create infrastructures that seek to homogenise these projects, displacing them back into the world of practice. In the next Chapter, I study some of these infrastructures, while in this Chapter, I emphasise that it is vital to appreciate the importance of charting as a formal tool of control in companies.

5.4 Conclusion

Throughout this Chapter, I described the formal organisation of ProQuip, discussing it as the *empirical setting* or *context* within which work travel is expected to emerge. I remind the reader that work travel is necessary for the production of projects, the output of ProQuip, to be achieved, and highlight that the Millennial Problem which ProQuip's managers are dealing with appears to be based on the loss of control over the Millennial engineer population. I suggest viewing formal organisation in two ways: as an encompassing structure within with work travel is generated and as a mode of organisational control. As a structure, formal organisation is conceptualised as a stable unit with clear boundaries, located at the offices. Engineers are employed by ProQuip through its administrative system, go into its offices to meet with colleagues and submit documentation, and depart from ProQuip out into the world to do projects on its behalf. As a mode of organisational control, formal organisation deploys bureaucratically mandated rules, hierarchical governance structures, and assigns specific roles to which engineers must adhere at ProQuip. I show that formal organisation is discoverable

through its artefacts, in particular, I investigate the *organisational chart*, which has been offered to me by multiple organisational members, showcasing different versions of it, and thereby revealing inconsistencies in the way ProQuip is viewed by its members. The chart appeared to be significant for ProQuippers, who utilised for multiple purposes, for example, onboarding new members into the organisation and making sense of their own positions at the company specifically in light of the ongoing organisational restructuring. In addition to that, by taking Cooper's perspective onto formal organisation and viewing the chart as representation, it is revealed to act as a more than a tool for illustration, but as a mode of control, simplifying and abstracting organisational realities and therefore making the distant manageable.

The charts, then, act both as a guide to the organisation for the readers of this ethnography (and myself as an ethnographer), and they are shown to have an active role in enforcing control over the uncertain environment at ProQuip. This is especially important since formal organisational charts are absent at the company during the time of the ethnography due to the restructuring, so the act of charting appears to demonstrate a motion among ProQuippers to regain control in a state of disorder and uncertainty. The series of organisational changes at ProQuip, like the digitalisation of 'expertise', seem to indicate that the formal organisation is in a state of disorganisation. This signals that the Millennial Problem may not be happening in isolation and that ProQuip (and it seems all of QuipCo) is dealing with a general situation of a loss of control. While the disorganisation aspect of formal organisation could be considered a failure of formal organisation, particularly by FOS scholars (see du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017), Cooper's (1986) perspective would suggest that disorganisation is a necessary and inevitable aspect of organising.

Through the analysis of charts, this Chapter reveals that the formal organisation, which is considered a stable and static facet of organisation, is actually dynamic. Where, previously, it seemed that ProQuippers are leaving the certainty of the formal organisation and its boundaries – the ProQuip offices – to go out into the world, engaging in the mayhem of project work at multi-organisational sites, this image is no longer convincing. The formal organisation seems to not be the safe haven that it appears at first glance. This Chapter destabilises the image of a rational permanent organisation that is the centre from which ProQuip's organising is done. The core/periphery structure does not seem to uphold where the stable centre or 'core' that should be controlling the shifting and temporary peripheries, is in a state of disarray. This

prompts a reconceptualisation of not only how work travel is organised, but how ProQuip is organised and whether “ProQuip” the organisation is in the offices or perhaps elsewhere.

Having entered ProQuip to do my fieldwork, I expected to find a central organisational hub that disseminates engineers out to travel to organisational peripheries; I expected ProQuip’s offices to be a ‘core’ with small groups of travelling engineers congregating on client sites. However, it no longer appears that ProQuip is a centralised ‘core’ with clear entry and exit boundaries for travellers to go through. This lack of a centralised ‘core’ then, also prompts reconsidering where control is centralised. I argue that understanding the setting in which work travel originates (since it is difficult and perhaps erroneous to say ‘produced’) is vital to understand how it is managed and controlled. As the work travelling practice regularly transcends, by its nature, the boundaries of the permanent organisational spaces, it was vital to consider the structuring agents of ProQuip. The discovery of their instability, however, should not be dismissed as a malfunction, as FOS scholars would argue, but rather a condition under which work travel emerges and continues to operate. Hence, it is critical to take ProQuip’s disorganisation into account as the practice of work travel is explored further in this thesis.

In regard to the question of control, this Chapter shows that formal organisational control is enforced through abstracting and creating simplified versions of ‘the periphery’ and the work ongoing there. Formal organisation has the capacity to exert some control over work travel despite its disorganised state, as the continued operation of departments show despite the absent structure. For example, such control is ensured through creating governance systems and tools for engineers. These formal infrastructures and how they operate will be studied in the next Chapter, investigating how work travel is organised by the formal organisation based at ProQuip’s headquarters and what effects it has on the practice, in addition to other, social, modes of control.

Chapter 6: Controlling work travel: Formal infrastructures and travelling cultures

This Chapter is about formal and social forms of control of work travel, aiming to answer the question of how work travel is organised in the remote settings in which project work takes place. The previous Chapter finds that the Millennial Problem, identified as a key concern for ProQuip's management in Chapter 4, is one among a series of problems of control at ProQuip and its overarching structure, QuipCo. Chapter 5 finds that ProQuip's formal organisation is remarkably disorganised; the reality of ProQuip is not fixed as it may appear from a FOS perspective. Even without exiting the offices to explore the realities of project work, the identity, integrity and even coherence of ProQuip is questioned, given the ongoing centralisation and restructuring efforts at the company. It becomes unclear how work travel is centrally organised, given that departments that would be creating and enforcing project governance and similar systems are in a limbo state between existence and non-existence. The administrative systems are continuing to operate on the assumption that they would not be made redundant the next day, and engineers keep reporting to their managers assuming that they are still on their teams. Nevertheless, I find that while these departments are not formally confirmed to exist amidst the restructuring, they keep operating, and the infrastructures they generate are in place across the company. In this Chapter, I study these infrastructures and discuss their organising of work travel in light of project work, as well as the social organising processes onsite. Therefore, I study the interplay between formal and social modes of organising work travel at ProQuip.

Additionally, given the disorganised state of ProQuip, Chapter 5 questions whether the conception of ProQuip as a centralised hub from which travellers are disseminated to different projects is applicable to ProQuip. Classical conceptions of organisations, particularly based on FOS, regard organising through a centre/periphery dichotomy, where usually a central organisational office is controlling the numerous peripheries (see du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017), however, it seems that this dynamic is not representative of ProQuip's situation. Indeed, it becomes unclear even where ProQuip is since its formal structure is in disorder and its personnel is dispersed across the world in multiple offices and frequently working off the premises of ProQuip altogether. It does not seem that ProQuip is contained in the space of its offices, meaning that it cannot be said that the office is the centre of the company from which engineers 'go out' to do project work. The dichotomy of the centre/periphery, therefore, fails,

meaning that ProQuip as a company may need to be thought of in different terms. While this Chapter continues in the errand of finding out how work travel is organised, focusing on both formal and social modes of organising, the question about what constitutes ProQuip (and hence how can it organise work travel) remains in the background.

Given the centre/periphery problem, this Chapter investigates how work travel is organised by following the formal or 'centre' perspective and discussing it in relation to the social or 'periphery' view, that is, the organising that is initiated from the project sites. The Chapter is divided into four sections. The first section introduces a series of travelling infrastructures and considers their effects on work travel. It then discusses these infrastructures in comparison to how the company historically developed and how work travel became institutionalised as a core practice. The second section moves on to the project site, briefly introducing the setting and distinguishing it from the offices. It accounts for a series of norms among ProQuip's travelling engineers, describing the 'engineering culture' and the organising initiatives of project-based managers. The third section proposes the existence of an alternative organisation to ProQuip, operating in parallel to it to organise work travel: the Travelling Organisation. The final, fourth, section concludes that while formal infrastructures are supportive in nature to the organising of work travel, the strongest current of organising work travel occurs from the travelling cultures.

6.1 Travelling infrastructures: Formal organising

The travelling infrastructures are systems and regulations created at the head office to be implemented and followed across the company, on different projects, in all countries and contexts. In this section, I consider a series of these infrastructures that ProQuip's engineers and managers described as essential, created by the office staff to control and administer project and travel work. The first infrastructure is administrative: the *travel reporting system* that was mentioned briefly in Chapter 4. It must be used to account for travelling and organise the trips. The second infrastructure is the Field Service Office (FSO) department, in charge of staffing decisions. It is new in ProQuip, having been annexed from ManQuip toward the end of my fieldwork (which is also the reason it does not appear in any of the charts). This department allocates travelling engineers to different regions based on the workload as well as the engineers' roles, duties, and competencies. Relatedly, I also introduce the roles of engineers and how they transcend individual projects.

The third infrastructure focuses on the governance and other systems which are created and controlled by the Projects Organisation that was introduced in the previous Chapter. It particularly focuses on the jobs of the “two-headed organisation” of PMO and PEA (see *Chart 4*) that directly deal with designing, coordinating, and improving project work practices. This Projects Organisation also has other departments working on project related issues, like Quality Management that deal with the assessment of quality materials and production on projects. That, however, does not touch upon work travel directly. Towards the end of this section, I discuss the effects of these infrastructures on work travel and the roles of formal organisation, also considering the company’s development over time to examine how these systems developed and work travel became institutionalised as a central practice. I examine how formal organisational control is applied to work travel on the basis of these salient infrastructures.

6.1.1 Administering travel: Travel reporting

Travel reporting is a set of rules and infrastructures that every traveller needs to adhere to. I briefly explain this in Chapter 4, indicating that, administratively, a trip starts and finishes at a ‘point zero’, usually the home or office of the traveller. To launch a trip, the traveller must use the travel reporting tool either on their work computer or on a related app on their company phone. The engineers plug in their departure point, and from thereon need to account for their modes of travelling and costs, adding receipts and photographs into the app (but also keeping physical copies), and accounting for other incurred costs such as fuel. Through this app, they can also hire cars, book transit and hotels, and make use of the partnerships that ProQuip has with other companies. This system also has automated country codes, assigning different amounts of ‘daily allowance’ (which is extra pay calculated to cover for everyday living costs when travelling). Different countries have different living costs, and the automated system simplifies this accounting. For travelling, this is not only a useful tool but also a mandatory one.

There is a physical infrastructure linked to the travel reporting software known as the White Box, which is indeed a physical white box located at the pigeonholes mail area of ProQuip’s head-office building that is where ProQuippers submit their travel reports. To generate a travel report, ProQuippers need to formally track their return to their ‘point zero’ on the travel app, click to submit the report, print out a copy of the confirmation of the submission with the details of the report. Then, together with the physical receipts of all their spending over the course of the trip, they must leave the physical report in an envelope in the White Box.

Most ProQuippers staple or glue their receipts to A4 printer papers to ensure nothing is lost. The reports are then picked up and, as I was told, go to an irretrievable place.

Aside from travel reporting, ProQuip also has many partnerships with different companies to ease travel and make it more comfortable for ProQuippers. For example, when hiring a taxi in the region where ProQuip's head offices are located, one needs to only mention to the driver that they are a ProQuip employee, and a discount would be applied. Similarly, in hotel chains checking in and out processes are made faster through ProQuip's established relationships with brands. Likewise, another important infrastructure is the travel agency. In each country ProQuip hires a travel agency to deal with the administration of travelling. Therefore, the travelling app is linked to a travel agency, so in effect all travel bookings are done through them. Given that it is not uncommon for things to go awry during trips, it is the role of the travel agencies do deal with airlines and other issues, further simplifying travel for engineers. Similar agencies are hired for other relevant aspects of travelling, like health and travel insurances. When a ProQuipper falls ill while travelling, they need only to call their health insurance who would direct them to the nearest clinic or hospital and liaise with them. Despite the importance of all these tools for work travel, they only partially respond to the question of how elements of travel are organised. Therefore, in the next section I introduce the staffing processes, among which is Field Service Office (FSO) that allocates engineers to their working sites.

6.1.2 Staffing projects: Field Service Office (FSO)

The Field Service Office (FSO) does not appear on any of the charts introduced in the previous Chapter because it was, until recently, part of ManQuip. I came to know about it toward the end of my fieldwork, when the integration launched by the organisational change programme was at a more advanced stage and the FSO role in servicing the needs of ProQuip as well was clearer. Its task is to allocate engineers prospectively according to different regional needs. In ManQuip, the FSO only dealt with allocating field service engineers to cases of machine breakage or maintenance. Generally, they have a core crew of up to five engineers who are highly trained in all the machines models that ManQuip sells, standing on standby to be deployed to deal with emergencies. The rest are scheduled to be deployed to different regions for the next year. To schedule field service engineers, the FSO administrators use historical data to estimate the numbers of engineers that would need to be allocated per region based on

the numbers of factories, clients, and ongoing projects. However, when ProQuip's project engineers also came under the responsibility of the FSO, the task got more complicated.

ProQuip's project engineers travel differently to field service engineers; they usually go for prolonged time periods and their specialisations differ from those of ManQuippers. Initially, the FSO attempted to use the same formula for staffing ProQuip's projects. They inquired which machines each engineer specialised in and attempted to create a schedule on that basis. Stefan, a German installation engineer, explained that it was a nonsensical approach: "If someone specialises in mixers, they start asking what models, what types, and things like that. It doesn't matter, all mixers are the same; once you know one model, you know them all. It's the same technology. But the FSO go by codes, they need to know exactly which mixers. We have thousands of machines here at ProQuip. ManQuip have a dozen or so," he complained. Indeed, with ManQuip producing about ten different machines, and ProQuip produces hundreds – without accounting for all the custom production lines that ProQuip designs for clients – this approach was found unsuitable. Besides that, the FSO also had trouble allocating the different denominations of engineers within their algorithm; their systems could not differentiate between automation, installation, commissioning, and other types of engineers, and more importantly, it could not account for the specialists needed in particular areas.

The FSO, then ended up is doing a fairly generic but important job: using predictive data to forecast how many engineers would be needed in different regions based on how many projects are ongoing at all the regions, and thereby assigning staff from one region into another. For example, Rafael in Chapter 4, has been allocated from the SCNA region to OSEAA based on predications of high volume of projects in OSEAA. However, the staffing done by the FSO and the travel reporting systems only explain some of the mechanisms that organise work travel. It does not explain how decisions about who is going to travel where are made, especially when experts are needed, therefore, I introduce company roles as another infrastructure of control.

6.1.3 Job roles

The roles of engineers in the company are another formal organising function for project work. Depending on their qualifications and specialisms, engineers take different positions, for example, 'automation engineer', 'technical leader', 'site manager', and others. These roles are at company level, designating what tasks and duties are within the job description, and where

authority employees have over what parts of production. The roles are established through rules, administrative systems, and contracts. The roles people are given on projects – such as enacting an installation manager of a particular factory production sector – are subordinate to their role as a *ProQuip installation manager*. This is very important for effective project work. This is not unlike Bechky's (2006) discussion of roles among temporary film crews. Bechky (2006, p. 5) shows that "what drives coordination in these temporary organizations and maintains continuity across projects is the negotiated reproduction of role structures—the mutual reinforcement of the generalized role structure and repeated enactments of these roles on specific sets." Similarly, at ProQuip, it must be clear what an installation manager does across the company, regardless of their current project.

Roles also have direct effect on travel, since different roles travel differently; whereas an automation engineer is only typically needed onsite for a few weeks to months, an installation engineer is generally there for much longer. Brown (1965, in du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017, p. 5) emphasises the centrality of clear job role delegation, arguing that "formalization of policies makes clear to people the area in which they have freedom to act". This is the case for allocating engineers to projects, which is typically done through job titles. When a project manager is planning a project, he specifies how many engineers of which specialism he will need and in what stages of the project. Project managers draw upon company roles as a resource to organise projects, which is particularly important when equipment specialists need to be booked from BAs, like, for example, Bianca who specialises in continuous extrusion moulding machines.

The assignment of engineers to projects is governed by an overarching system on one hand drawing on FSO's regional allocations, but on the other hand, on specific project needs. In other words, the organisation of travel is inherently linked with project work and its lifecycles. To explore this link further, I return to the PMO and PEA departments and their roles in organising projects and hence affecting work travel.

6.1.4 Project Management Organisation (PMO)

As discussed in Chapter 4, work travel is organised by project needs. The ways projects take place in ProQuip, however, is controlled by the PMO. This organisation's role is to create overarching and centralised rules and regulations for project work with the aim of homogenising project practices across the company and supporting full-time travelling staff, as Dan, the head of department explained. PMO is half of the 'two-headed organisation'

managing project work at ProQuip, where PEA focuses on the technical side of project engineering optimising by building and disseminating digital tools and PMO deals with project governance.

According to Dan, project governance is about "getting the backbone fixed"; it is about standardising and rationalising the processes of doing project work across the company. The role of this organisation is to set standards for project work, for example, designing the project life stages, demarcating expectations for what needs to be done for each stage, and creating a core project team (see, for example, Chart 7). Dan explains that governance is very important to prioritise, "it is the standard that all projects across the company are managed around.". He then elaborated that his job is to create frameworks under which projects can be evaluated. Previously each ME and each project level had its own structure – not to mention the BAs, which operated by their own standards. Now all projects will have one blueprint and one review board for each region.

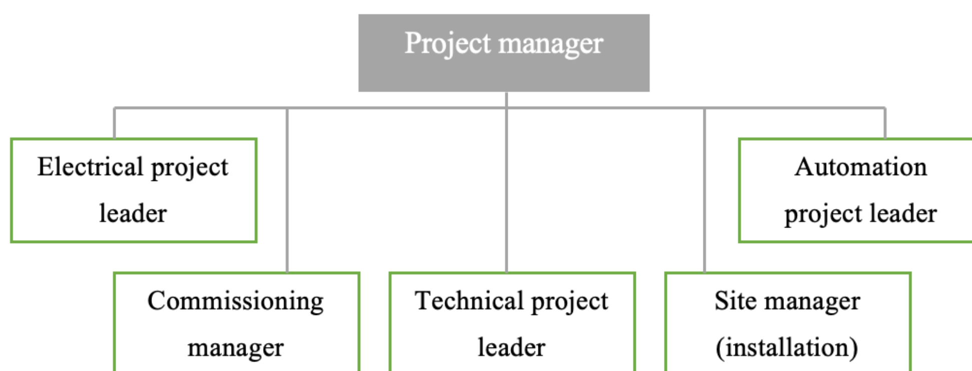

Chart 7: Project leadership structure

The governance review board would centre around checking milestones and tollgates. Milestones are retrospective, ensuring that the projects achieved their targets for their current stage, and tollgates are prospective, checking whether projects are ready to proceed to the next stages and setting out targets for the next phase. The idea is to diagnose problems at early stages, finding their sources, and deciding on solutions. Dan recently purchased a governance tool for the review board. It is a digital technology created to monitor projects across this framework. When I mentioned this system onsite, however, the ProQuippers I spoke to said they were familiar with the project review board, and it would be good if it actually worked. "They say it's to diagnose issues, right? Well, when we have issues and we tell them about

them, those boards disappear and don't wanna do anything about our problems. Suddenly it's all 'proceed at will'," an engineer complained.

However, Dan explains the above issue as an operational mishap. For him, the point is to set up the governance and then convince people to follow it. He intends to do so using Kotter's change model; saying that he will keep pushing this system until people get used to it because everyone is resistant to new ways. Then Dan added that setting up governance systems is not enough; "knowing how to get there doesn't supply all the resources for that, a roadmap is no good without the road… for that other infrastructure is needed too. But the road must also be built." In this metaphor, the governance systems are the road toward good project practice. Much of the other infrastructures for projects, however, is dealt with in the PEA department, parallel to PMO.

6.1.5 Process Engineering and Automation (PEA)

PEA stands for project engineering and automation, and its purpose, as the head of department explained, is to 'optimise the engineering'. Anna, who works in this department explained her job to me. She is working on the new 3D tool called Hall which will take multiple steps and several years to implement. The idea behind it, Anna explained, is to achieve 'inefficacy gain', meaning to gain financially from increasing productivity by improving the engineering on projects. She cited several ways of doing so: by implementing best engineering practice, creating new tools, increasing training, and creating networks to increase collaboration. "We can't be we vs. them," she told me, referring to the distance between MEs and BAs. "Things can look great, but they also need to look the same," Anna added, referring to the lack of integration between the MEs and BAs, and rivalry between the sectors. Their solution, Hall, is meant to homogenise the engineering outputs of all departments, giving them "the same look and feel". RAP (Russian Aerospace Plastics) was one of the first projects where a prototype of some of Hall's systems was tested – and it did not go particularly well, prompting engineers to joke that it is the system "to end all projects, then ProQuip, and then all of humanity", referring to the Hal system in the film *A Space Odyssey*.

The software, at the time my ethnography began was set to be completed in 2024 and meant to become one integrated online system to include multiple aspects of project engineering work. It is meant to encompass technical documentation of plants in a digitalised format, with different access portals and dashboards for ProQuip's engineers and clients.

Having this integrated system, Anna told me, would allow ProQuip to create a database where one could search similar projects and estimate costs faster in the pre-project state. A few weeks later, however, I was told by a couple of Dutch sales engineers, specialising in soft plastics vacuum forming equipment, that through experience they can estimate costs and durations of projects much faster and with more accuracy than any software could, simply because projects are generally extremely complicated, requiring hundreds if not thousands of equipment units. Once one knows how to estimate this, they can do so quickly for a client's exact specifications. "Projects are too different to use these digitalised databases," Barend told me, "you need to know what you're doing; any monkey could look for similar projects but that's not going to get you the right values."

However, the way Anna sees it, Hall is about "good efficiency", it offers simplified drawings without engaging too much detail, shortening the duration of tasks. Anna says that the accuracy it compromises is irrelevant in broad-brush tasks like estimations. "All you need to do is draw the functionality of the plant and then Hall gives you the automation codes," Anna told me, describing another function of the databases, reducing the work needed to be put into automating factories. Other things that Hall can do is schedule product type deliveries for onsite work, evaluate necessary amounts of pipes and other parts for potential plants, thereby shortening lead times between ordering and the arrival of equipment. Indeed, by predicting necessary items, they can be pre-ordered from partner companies, decreasing lead times from months to weeks. However, the first attempt to run Hall at a project, the RAP in Russia, did not go well. When I mentioned to Anna that the engineers in RAP were not fond of the new system (to put mildly, since each Russian engineer had a colourful speech on the topic – I did not confer all that to Anna), Anna responded, "so sure it did not work that great, but it is all about changing the mindset."

In the future, Hall will be part of a bigger platform for engineers, set to include an engineer room, a coffee corner room with personal avatars aimed to act as a collaborative space to chat on a personal as well as professional level. The PEA team are also planning to include other software such as inventor applications, Factory 3D, and another existing software that engineers regularly use. There is, however, an issue that multiple onsite engineers pointed out to me. When IT or other bodies in the head offices come up with new software, they install them on all the computers, but they do not remove old software. Over time, people end up with incomprehensible amounts of software that no one remembers any longer what they were for,

slowing the operations of the extremely powerful computers that ProQuip buys by a huge margin. A couple of engineers once reset a computer to default to test its power without the generations of software that IT never uninstalled, and in their words “it was flying”. It would appear that many of the inefficiencies that PEA is trying to eliminate are on a more basic level than they recognise. Perhaps the solutions to the ‘inefficiencies’ that they are looking for are not necessarily about adding new innovations, practices, and artefacts, but removing the redundant old things that are blocking up their current operations.

This reiterates the point from Chapter 4 that work travel is reliant on other forms of mobility. To conduct projects away in remote settings, one of the first moves of ProQuip is to install high speed internet, allowing the use of digital engineering systems such as the ones purchased, designed, or dispensed by PEA. Meanwhile, PMO designs and enforces the standards for project work, which project managers need to adhere to when making decisions about projects. For example, based on PMO’s templates, project managers would need to decide how many engineers they would require, when and for how long, and whether they have the budget and necessity to hire specialists from BAs or even external specialists, known as consultants (who are employees on a different type of contract with green, not blue, ID cards). PEA, then, provides the tools for travellers to work outside of ProQuip’s premises. While these two departments are not organising the ‘moving around’ aspect of work travel, they enable work to be done remotely in the static sense of travelling described in Chapter 4. As Dan put, PMO is ‘the road’ and PEA are ‘the gas stations on the road’ of work travelling.

6.1.6 Supporting and controlling work travel

Overall, the formal infrastructures of ProQuip’s offices are instrumental to support work travel. They provide systems to account for travelling, arrange staffing across regions, and provide governance structures and digital systems. These are designed to make the experiences of travel simpler for engineers. Importantly, these infrastructures affect different aspects of work travel as defined in Chapter 4, including travel as being onsite, utilising other mobilities, and being on the move between places. The formal organisation, then, is instrumental in supporting the practice of work travel, but it does not seem to fully explain how work travel is organised, describing only the tools for ‘optimising’ travel, guidance as to how projects should commence, and generic allocations regionally.

Nonetheless, I want to highlight that the power of formal infrastructures in asserting control over travel should not be underestimated. Although appearing subtle and supportive, the technologies described in the previous sections can operate in a manner similar to representation as discussed in Chapter 5. By inscribing individual engineers as units (e.g., being ascribed as 'automation engineer'), engineers become codes for the FSO to be allocated across the FSO's grid on regional project sites. For example, five units of automation engineer will be required in the SCNA region next year. In this sense, being input into formal organisation systems, ProQuip's engineers are being represented in a similar way to the organisation, only not through charts but other 'textually mediated' organisational infrastructures (Cooper 1989). Therefore, by reducing engineers to manageable components, like units of a specific type of employee (roles) or items to be allocated or booked as resources for project work, they become more easily controllable at a distance. Travelling engineers become not unlike the digital avatars that Anna hopes to represent them as in the Hall system in the near future. This is what Cooper (1989) calls the 'economy of visibility'.

Visibility renders subjects manipulatable, and where visibility cannot be achieved physically, documentation makes people more controllable by making each person a "case". Among practices of documentation are the keeping of individual files in Human Resources (HR) departments, use of the travel reporting system, and an especially common one: sending of emails, for instance, utilised to move responsibility from oneself onto someone else. Documentation is a form of formal control which is administered through distance, enforcing accountability onto subjects and reinforcing it through examination – that is, surveillance and assessment. For example, the travel reporting system described in section 6.1.1 is such a mode of control, in which each ProQuipper must account for their movements when outside of ProQuip. This information feeds into their profile, or "case", since the travelling app is linked to the engineer's other company accounts like emails and the information held on the engineer at HR, legal, IT and other departments. Through being documented and documenting oneself, an employee becomes a unit of accounting for ProQuip, which is expected to behave in certain ways. So, while the travel reporting system is useful to ProQuippers in its automatization, making accounting for travel expenses simple and efficient, it is also a mode through which the company monitors employees to detect any outliers that may need to be corrected. In such a 'textually mediated organisation' (Giddens 1985), travellers do not need to be present at ProQuip to be distantly controlled by ProQuip's subtle and unintimidating infrastructures.

Despite this, formal control does not account for other aspects of travel organising, for instance, how are individual engineers selected for projects, how travelling from the perspective of 'being a traveller' is organised (see Chapter 4), how the scheduling of engineers' time between sites takes place, and more. For this reason, in the following section I discuss social modes of organising work travel, focusing not only on the process of arriving onsite, but also on being there and 'being traveller'.

6.2 Travelling cultures: Social organising

This section is about the social organisation processes occurring throughout the organisation, but most noticeable at project sites where most engineers are. I first introduce the project site, describing the differences with the office, which are significant for how work is done in these settings. Particularly, the client-facing aspect of work travel creates a strong cohesive culture among travellers that office-based employees never described. In the following sub-section, I follow a series of narratives from the field that highlight several norms that are prevalent among travellers, including engaging in social gatherings, calling and forming global 'teams', and proudly self-identifying as travellers in opposition to office-based employees. In the final sub-section, I explain some of the histories of ProQuip which explain how work travel emerged as a prevalent practice and how the travelling culture became institutionalised.

6.2.1 Onsite: The project

The office buildings seem a distant dream when onsite. The green trees, tranquil landscapes, and shimmering glass windows all fade within the first days in a dusty, muddy, industrial environment. *Onsite* is the emic term for being on the project site, more specifically: the factory building site. There is no paved road just yet and the car jiggles from side to side as we slowly drive toward the rising silos in the distance. It is quite rural. In fact, it is rural around all three project sites where my ethnography has taken me. This is the norm, ProQuippers informed me, since building rurally is less costly than near cities. There was one site which was in a city, Ernesto, a field-service engineer, once told me. It was in California, but that was the only project that was so conveniently located. Usually, they are much further out, and if one is unlucky, they end up in Siberia, 5 hours' drive from the nearest city after some 6 hours' flight from Moscow. In that context, the Austrian factory, project ASEP, is being built in a fairly good location, at the outskirts of a medium-sized town and not too far from a large shopping centre. The other two projects I visited were far more remote; one was in the outskirts of a

Russian village, 2 hours' drive from the nearest city, and the other was in the middle of a cornfield.

As we're arriving at ASEP, we keep a slow pace at the small unpaved road and eventually reach a barrier with a guard. I go into the booth, present my documents and sign in. They give me a temporary pass for two weeks, a paper with a stamp and dates that I need to show every time I arrive onsite. It replaces the automatic ID card access at the office. The sensible office shoes stay at home, as do the blouses and smart trousers. Here people wear site clothes featuring the emblems of and in the colours of their companies, always with a high-visibility vest on top. The clothes are sensible to the conditions here: including sturdy metal-toed shoes, jackets and trousers that repel sparks as to not light on fire, and hard hats. You may only take off the hard hat or visibility vest at the office, which is inside a container. The site, unless inside a factory at an advanced building stage, is typically muddy, sometimes frozen, occasionally dusty.

Aside from the setting in which project work occurs, there are two significant differences between the site and offices. First, once the project is finished and delivered to the client, the organisation, such as the ASEP sting. In other words, ASEP is a temporary organisation (Packendorff 1995), created through the permanent organisation, ProQuip. As Beckhy (2006) describes in her account of the temporary organisation of film crews, this setting requires swift trust establishment between the employees, clarity about their roles and ability to perform them in diverse settings. Project teams at ProQuip change in every project, depending on engineers' availability, budget (since senior staff are generally 'more expensive'), and other considerations. This means that teams are frequently changing over the course of one's employment and that over time ProQuip's engineers work in different compositions. Second, unlike office work, project work is client-facing. This means that ProQuip's engineers are continuously presented with opposition and demands from external organisations, binding them together as "ProQuip" through a dynamic of 'us versus them' or community-formation (Parker, 1998), where ProQuippers from different countries and specialisations are branded as a group in a multi-company space. However, what it means to be "ProQuip" onsite seems to be different from the meanings at the offices. In the following sub-section, I discuss some of the norms, customs, and expectations of being onsite.

6.2.2 Norms and customs

In this sub-section, I discuss three forms of social organising notable across ProQuip's sites, these are: *local community formation*, *global social networking*, and *commitment to travelling*. I begin by introducing the *local communities formation* onsite, which include arranging and participating in a range of social gatherings and following customs. I briefly mentioned in Chapter 4 that Bianca finds the time spent with her colleagues, 'the guys' as she calls them, fun. It is one of the aspects of the travelling job that attracts her to travelling; she likes having dinners with 'the guys', going out on Saturday nights, and being a part of this community. Indeed, travelling ProQuippers spend much more of their days with other ProQuippers than office-based employees. Mealtimes are especially revealing since in conventional settings breakfasts and dinners are spent with one's family.

Before the workday begins, I often see my fellow ProQuippers at breakfast at the hotel. Everyone eats quickly, quietly, and we are off to work to be on time for the 8am meeting. When we are in separate hotels, like in my trip to Austria, we each make our own way to the site. Lunch is more lively but also efficient. In Russia, we are loaded into Grigory's van, who is a process engineer on the RAP site, and drive off to a cafeteria where we order from a selection of what has been cooked that day, and I then watch in fascination as Grigory eats a full head of raw garlic with his Borscht. In the US project, there is a little more variety in terms of food, we can either drive to the local Subway, a Tex-Mex restaurant, or a little Thai café. On both sites we load into a car, go for lunch, and enjoy a conversation over food. On the Austrian site, a food truck arrives each day, serving a variety of sandwiches and, if you arrived early enough to claim one: bread with a delicious hot schnitzel and curry ketchup. We eat at our desks, occasionally chatting if not immersed in work.

Dinner is a different story. When we are staying in hotels, we meet to go eat together. It is a custom to take out the new people onsite. The ones that are onsite for long, often a few years, generally cook and eat at their rented apartments. Some, who stay at hotels but travel a lot to the same site, want time to themselves, buying sandwiches at local supermarkets to recharge after days full of interactions. There is usually a 'core team' onsite that stays for the duration of the whole project, and over time they spend less of their non-working hours together. However, for most, dinner is a social convention written into the invisible social protocol of ProQuip.

On this trip to Russia, every evening over the past two weeks we have gone to the Belgian Brewery. It is one of about three or four restaurants in the village, and according to ProQuippers it is the best one. The Belgian Brewery serves four types of beer they brew in-house, and a set of international and national dishes. The English, or Dutch, or French, or whatever other languages are spoken onsite usually sit at another table from the Russian speakers. On some occasions, when few of the hotel-based people are onsite or someone particularly friendly is present, they mingle. We order food and speak about a range of topics, from the casual topics of leisure travel and destinations to language study techniques, to witchcraft and Russian paganism.

However, it is much more common to discuss issues that arose onsite and brainstorm solutions. When managers are onsite, the conversation is usually more general than the 'nuts and bolts' of everyday onsite work, instead speaking of restructuring and staff changes, other projects and their progress, prospective projects and staffing, and timelines including when a particular engineer may be needed on another project and when he thinks he will be finished here. On one occasion, Ippolit, the head of automation on this Russian project, who was busy coding at the dinner table, got scolded for underreporting his hours. At that time, his line manager, Mikhail, was visiting to meet with the client and report back to his superiors on the progress of this project. Mikhail said that he knows how much Ippolit works (who, I learnt, has a belief against personal gain), and in the last month he has not seen any accounting for overtimes. Mikhail said that he will not sign off the monthly report until Ippolit fixes it. Dinner, then, is a more relaxed space for having the same conversations about work that one would have onsite with the same people. The work does not stop when the workday ends, which is one big difference between office-based work and being onsite. Even when one is not on the premises of the site, they are onsite.

In this sense, travelling engineers are expected to follow a protocol of customs which centres around comradery, including: taking new people out to dinner, getting them medicine if they get ill, and picking them up in airports or hotels if necessary. The premise is that every ProQuipper, whether you personally know them or not, is 'one of us' and hence is to be treated familiarly. The social aspect of being onsite is particularly important because ProQuippers' only interactions are with other people onsite, immersed in the ProQuip community. When travelling, ProQuippers are isolated from their families and friends, usually talking to them through calls and if the connection is good enough, video-chatting – but that is rarely the case.

This is true for both the Millennial community and the Older Guys. However, I found that these two groups rarely spend their out-of-work time with each other, with the exception of company-paid dinners arranged by the project or site managers.

Aside from local community formation, travellers also form *global social networks* that exceed individual sites. This is the second form of social organising notable across ProQuip's sites. The creation of global networks refers to maintaining connections with engineers that a ProQuipper has worked with before on other projects. As Fabio once told me: "The longer you are at ProQuip the more you have that [a network]. You have 'an album' and you put a new sticker in it! You know what to do more and more, looking back at the album". The 'album' that Fabio refers to is the acquaintances that one has developed over the course of their career at ProQuip. The longer one works at ProQuip, the more people one knows, and the more resources one has to draw upon. This resource, derived in relationships and networks is known as *social capital* in the social sciences, referring to "social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital" (Bourdieu 1986, p.16; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998).

A perquisite for using social capital is membership in a particular group, such as ProQuip's travellers. Social capital resources are accessed through mutual recognition as members of the group and through direct acquaintance (Bourdieu 1986). Onsite, it is generally known when another ProQuipper is scheduled to arrive onsite on a particular day, and the knowledge that it is a 'ProQuipper' is enough for the local ProQuippers to accept the newcomer and extend their comradery. Similarly, reputation or status within this group is significant for accessing the capital, where good reputation and 'being known' across ProQuip is a 'credential' (Bourdieu 1986) warranting the use of the shared resources. That is, when someone is known across the company as an expert in something, they generally have fewer barriers to these resources and more connections to draw upon. Social capital is shared because it can only operate through reciprocity; it is not owned by one person and expressed or used onto others but acts through social connections like advising one another, trading thoughts and brainstorming solutions, sharing experiences and anecdotes, keeping each other informed of important events, and so on (Orr 1996).

At ProQuip, social capital is customarily accessed through calls. It is not uncommon for people onsite to pick up their company phones and call someone on the internal numbers to take suggestions on how to deal with a situation. While calling is not a formal obligation of

work in the company, it appears to be a set norm in the travelling community. By engaging in this digital mobility, social networks are contained within ProQuip but supersede any sites or fixed organisational structures, such as BA/ME divisions. The network is ProQuip-wide and mostly specific to travellers. This also affects project staffing; when planning projects, project managers often create their core team, such as the site, commissioning, automation, and other leaders on the basis of who they worked with successfully in the past. It is not unheard of for project managers to call line managers and negotiate for specific people for their projects, either for some duration of time, or for the whole project. The site, then, is often organised based on past projects as much as it is on the formal titles of employees. Another notable dimension of social capital is that it is temporally dynamic (Parker et al. 2015), meaning that individuals arrive at ProQuip knowing almost no-one and then develop relationships. Indeed, the speed of the acquisition of social capital is different, where behaving according to the customs and norms of the community and adopting its responsibilities, like taking colleagues out for dinner, leads to faster establishment as a known member.

Over the course of a project, one usually establishes friendships and professional relations with other ProQuippers, and in future projects, when they are not co-located, it is a typical practice to call one another to draw on other people's expertise, consult them or ask questions, get their opinions and much more. The more projects one does, the larger and stronger their network grows, meaning that Older Guys and other engineers who travel a lot, generally have more social capital to draw upon in their work.

The third form of social organising that travelling engineers appear to exhibit is *commitment to travelling*. The practice of work travel, as noted in Chapter 4, is more than physical displacement, and it olds personal value to engineers. For example, as Per, a 47-year-old former process engineer mentioned in Chapter 4, reminisces that his favourite part of travelling was "the long nights that me and the boys would pull; 8-12 nonstop, 6,7 days a week for months at a time." Multiple engineers who worked in travelling speak about it nostalgically, alluding to belonging to a community of shared hardship and overwork, but one that was worthwhile since they wanted to belong. Staying overtime and working long hours onsite is expected, I found out. The practical reason, as Jack, one of the project managers on a site I visited, explained to me, was because the project has more and less busy periods. The expectation is that during the busy periods, like when the first product is launched, the team will be there. A client's employee, Vladimir, in his 50s, once shared with me that he applied to

work at ProQuip and was successful, working on probation. One evening he was told he could go home or stay overtime to support another colleague – Vladimir explained that he had no work left to do and decided to go home – he said it was a mistake, and when he did not pass his probation, ProQuip told him that that day was a key moment; he was expected to stay.

Engineers told me they do not mind the long hours onsite, since the company is fair about paying their overtimes, and they usually have nothing better to do outside of working hours when travelling anyway. However, the culture of overwork seems to extend further, creating a division between the office and travelling ProQuippers. One day driving to work, Jack told me that nothing annoys him more than out-of-office emails that managers send. "What could stop them from checking an email? What are they in the middle of the desert? We find a way to keep up with our emails in the shittiest conditions when travelling, and they are away for weeks at a time at some resort. Don't they have internet?" he complained. Many travellers share this contempt toward the management-class, where in Russia for example they are known as "the Office Plankton; doing no more than "moving papers from one pile into another". One afternoon at the coffee machine the engineers onsite were discussing an employee who recently moved offices, I recognised the name since I met that person before and joined the conversation. "He was an excellent engineer, seriously, brilliant at his job," Nicolai, one of the automation guys told me, "but when he was promoted to manager, he completely lost the plot, he doesn't know what he's doing and that's a shame, we lost a good engineer and gained another liability."

In that sense, travelling appears to be an identity marker where engineers describe themselves as properly contributing to the company and "doing the real work", whereas managers are described as generally consuming company resources on doing nothing. The expensive trips for groups of managers to visit sites also cannot be helping this impression. When office people come to site, they seem more like groups of tourists, huddled together, wearing unsuitable clothes and looking uncertainly around. Rare few managers arrive onsite and seem to understand the space they now inhabit, moving around with certainty and comfort. These are usually past travellers, from MEs or BAs. Indeed, this insight was brought to me by Jack. In our first meeting, he asked to know what I was studying, and I explained: I want to understand how work travel is managed and organised. My phrase, the 'one-liner', which I worked out over time to avoid getting into confusing academic jargon, was along the lines of "I am trying to understand how 'the organisation' manages travel" (which is a problematic

assumption, as I mention in Chapter 3). To that, Jack laughed and said: “They don’t have a clue, those in the office.”

The anti-management attitude appears to echo the findings of Kunda (1992), where engineers-turned-managers in his fieldsite, High-Tech, lost status among the ‘proper engineers’. At High-Tech, the company explicitly used culture management as a normative control mechanism with the aim of “marry[ing] the engineer to the company!” through informal organisational culture and propagation of popular ideologies, such as cultural rituals and the romanticising of work (Kunda 1992, p.6). There is evidence of similar attitudes in ProQuip, where hard work is seen as correct behaviour and occasional burnouts are not uncommon. Kunda’s (1992) ethnography is rife with depictions of how this culture is enforced and modes of resistance to it among engineers. High-Tech is explicitly teaching ‘culture speak’, promotes the slogan “culture to replace structure!” (Kunda 1992, p.90) and “heavy investment in work” which a manager tells Kunda, results in pride among the organisational members who benefit from remaining individually recognised and responsible for the delivery of their work (p. 66). Kunda (1992, p.11), then, identifies this use of culture management as normative control, which he defines as “the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feeling that guide their actions.” Kunda describes that this commitment to the company occurs through identification with the company goals and intrinsic satisfaction from the work. He explains that this cultural control is enforced through exposure to the narratives of managers and their implied expectations, such as eating breakfast at one’s desk to show they are at work early. Nevertheless, Kunda also finds cynicism and sarcasm toward these norms and occasional refusal to participate, for example, when an engineer disposed of his ‘trophy’ for finishing ‘the bootcamp’, an onboarding programme at High-Tech.

Several decades later, Turco (2016) describes a neo-normative mode of control, where her community, Millennials working for a social media marketing company, are encouraged to ‘remain true to themselves’ at the workplace. At TechCo, the Millennial employees are encouraged to bring their individuality to work, where bureaucratic rules and dress codes are dismissed, working times are flexible (for most employees), beer is freely available in the company free-beer-fridges, and employees are encouraged to pursue their interests. A particularly astonishing first image into TechCo is the pizza night that Turco (2016, p.x) describes in her first chapter: “loud music was piped in, and people began moving about the

packed room in a human approximation of bumper cars…Employees took to writing their ideas on large flip boards… Pizza arrived at some point and boxes surfed their way around the room." The pizza night – "Hack Night" – is one of the voluntary company events, where employees are invited to share their ideas over pizza and music to "collectively hack away at the problems they care about" (Turco 2016, pp.ix-x). Fleming and Sturdy (2009) observe that such control is aimed at breaking the work/non-work boundary, with organisations such as TechCo encouraging playfulness and 'fun' at work. Fleming and Sturdy (2009) suggest that breaking this boundary has the opposite effect, where events such as the Hack Night are using employees' own unpaid time for work, essentially capturing their individuality (Turco 2016). Indeed, work becomes the locus of their personal as well as professional lives, where 'they are all friends' at the workplace, over time displacing non-work friendships.

ProQuip's travelling employees exhibit behaviours similar to the ones described above. ProQuippers are using their personal time, such as at dinners, to discuss work-related issues, they are spending their non-work time with other ProQuippers, but it does not seem that ProQuip is utilising neo-normative control or even normative modes of control. Discourses around 'being oneself' are not present at ProQuip, nor do travellers spend enough time at offices to be exposed to such cultural mottos or ideas. Indeed, in Turco's and Kunda's ethnographies, the office is the space where employees are exposed to company rituals and norms that the management class decides upon and enforces. Members, then, comply to belong. At ProQuip it is unclear how the 'appropriate culture' is decided upon or implemented across the company. Normative control appears to extend as far as ProQuip's office boundaries, creating an office-culture but not touching upon the travelling culture. Moreover, whereas the Older Guys exhibit pride in their working conditions, including the long hours, being overworked, sacrificing their personal time and family-interactions for work, this attitude does not seem to translate equally to the Millennial generation. While the Older Guys scoffed at the idea of working at the office and spoke about office-people as either wasteful or even 'weaklings' in comparison to the 'real ProQuip workers', the Millennials did not follow the narrative of "us versus them". Millennial employees described the reasons they preferred site work and generally regarded moving to office positions as a possibility in the future, not as disgrace. It seems, then, that the values of Millennials are different from the Older Guys, and it does not seem that ProQuip enforced either belief system upon their employees.

It seems that ProQuip has several cultures. The first is the office-based culture that is created and maintained by managerial design, such as the 'paper-free' clean offices, coffee mornings, and other norms described in Chapter 5. The Travelling Cultures appear distinct from that, with engineers adhering to travelling-specific customs, as described in this section, including comradery and calling. These are shared between the Older Guys and Millennials, but a point of difference between them is the attitude toward the office and office workers. For the Older Guys the distinction from the office is vital, to be known as *travellers*, rather than *Office Plankton*, and indeed, it is a matter of pride. For Millennials, on the other hand, such a distinction does not hold strong value, where their identity as ProQuippers is not strongly related to the practice of travelling and they are considering other career trajectories within the company. It, therefore, appears that there are two connected but distinct Travelling Cultures at ProQuip. The question, then, is how the Travelling and the Office cultures developed, and also how they developed apart from one another. I return to the histories of ProQuip to investigate the issue.

6.2.3 ProQuip's development

ProQuip is consolidated from many specialist companies with expertise in different types of industrial equipment, all of which were acquired over the last thirty years. Over the years, ProQuip has been acquiring other technology companies to expand their range of products and capabilities in terms of specialised equipment and products. For example, in 2017, ProQuip acquired a French company that specialises in making equipment to produce very hard plastics for satellites. Over the two and a half decades since the acquisition of the first specialist company, ProQuip has acquired over 15 other companies. Nevertheless, this proved problematic since these companies were not fully incorporated into ProQuip, retaining a semi-autonomous structure for many years after they have formally become ProQuip.

This signals to the issue around the Travelling Cultures. Since ProQuip is an assemblage of different companies, a big proportion of travellers come from within the companies that have never been part of the ProQuip offices culture or even been exposed to it other than in brief trainings. ProQuip usually kept the offices of the acquired companies where they were, often since there was workshops associated with them. So, in many cases, engineers simply kept working in the same spaces under a different name (now ProQuip) and only interacted with other ProQuippers onsite. This created a hybrid culture between ProQuip's original culture and the incoming engineers from the acquisitions. Additionally, with travel being a

central occupation from the beginning of ProQuip's existence, it seems that the Travelling Culture of the Older Guys developed spontaneously without the interventions of ProQuip's offices; it appears that ProQuip never needed to regulate this culture given that it suited their needs: the engineers were travelling continuously, showed commitment to the job, and pride in the practice. It suited the purposes of ProQuip, so no interventions were necessary until, the ProQuip's managers encountered the Millennial Problem, that is.

The Travelling Culture then, is a product of its time, emerging after 1981. The long-term ProQuippers told me at length about those time. Sven, for example, who was a welder at a company that was later acquired by ProQuip, told me that one Thursday he was joking with his crew that it is time for that company to buy QuipCo, since they were so close in business. The next Monday he came to work and found out that he was now part of QuipCo. He told me that in the late 1980s and early 1990s travelling was a higher income option for many, so families would decide to have a core breadwinner who would sacrifice their time with the family for better chances for their children. Another engineer, Göran, in his 40s working at the offices, told me that he believes that the Older Guys could not stop travelling even if they wanted to, that is becomes their lifestyle: "it's like an addiction." A few travellers confirmed that supposition, although not in these words, saying that they feel bored and restless at the offices and at home, and that they need to travel to feel alive.

The circumstances around the emergence of the Second Travelling Culture, of the Millennial generation, is explored in Chapter 4. The Second Travelling Culture differs from the First in the absence of the pride in travelling and the aversion to office positions is absent, leading to a similar but not the same Travelling Culture. This then, means that ProQuip has three organisation cultures, the office culture, and two Travelling Cultures that do not seem to be controlled by the offices.

The autonomous nature of travellers appears to indicate that there may be a Travelling Organisation occurring on the periphery or in parallel to the organisation of ProQuip. With different goals (travellers to serve customer and ProQuip to support travellers), cultures, settings, and relatively loose control, it is plausible to image that travellers are really members of a Travelling Organisation that exists outside of the temporary organisations of different projects and also in conjunction with the permanent organisation of ProQuip but separately from it. In the next section I explore this supposition.

6.3 The Travelling Organisation

In this section I explore the possibility of the existence of an entity or process that I call the Travelling Organisation. The Travelling Organisation, while not formally established like ProQuip, is observable through travelling engineers' activities onsite and beyond, appearing to be working alongside ProQuip's mechanisms to organise work travel. I define a series of characteristics of the Travelling Organisation, which seems to exceed the boundaries of individual project sites and are inherently linked to the activities of work travelling. In this sense, I adopt Cooper's (2007) definition of organisation as a process based on social activity (I explore this notion in further detail in Chapter 7). I show that the Travelling Organisation is *socially operated* but draws upon the resources of the formal organisation; it predominantly exists to *organise travel*; it is *self-forming and self-organising*; and it is *transcendental* but immanent through ProQuip's sites; and finally, it is *dynamic*.

The Travelling Organisation is based on the *social activity* at the core of which is the practice of work travelling. This Chapter describes a series of customs and norms of travellers, which encompass the Travelling Culture, subjecting aspiring members to a set of conditions that they must adopt in order to belong in the travelling community. For example, engineers need to extend hospitality and curtesy to fellow travellers, like picking them up from the airport or arranging a hotel room. The Travelling Organisation comprises the described Travelling Cultures, but it formed through the *practices* of travelling, that is, the actions that travelling engineers do in other to enact the traveller, the travelling culture, and utilise the resources of this organisation. This includes a wider range of practices and activities which adhere to the multifaceted definition of work travel introduced in Chapter 4; belonging to the Travelling Organisation entails following the norms and customs of this community, but also having the know-hows of travellers, like the packing of a travel bag, extending social capital resources to fellow travellers, and exchanging knowledge about travel- or work-related innovations. All these behaviours are learnt through immersion in the Travelling Organisation, which is socially learnt. This means that unlike ProQuip that has the form of a formal organisation, the Travelling Organisation is, at its core, *socially operated*. It is, however, important to note that the Travelling Organisation does not exist independently, since its members draw upon the resources of ProQuip to maintain the practice and its existence, for example through mundane activities like renting cars through ProQuip's partnerships.

The Travelling Organisation's core purpose is to *organise work travel*, existing due to this practice and reshaping it from a chaotic set of movements of ProQuippers leaving the offices to go to dispersed project sites, into a set of recognisable patterns. This means that travelling becomes a recognised activity, where engineers establish structures and arrangements for how to manage travelling better. For example, they appropriate travel by buying items and artifices that make travelling more comfortable or getting loyalty schemes at hotel chains or airlines to make it more convenient. The purpose of the Travelling Organisation is to complement ProQuip's formal infrastructures in making work travel more organised and manageable through social means, like knowledge exchanges, communications, networking, setting of expectations, and more. Relatedly, the Travelling Organisation, like the Travelling Cultures described in the previous section, is spontaneously occurring to respond to the needs of travellers where ProQuip is failing to do so, or where it cannot extend its reach. Therefore, it can be said that the Travelling Organisation is *self-forming* and *self-organising*.

The Travelling Organisation is also only observable through ProQuip and its sites. Since it is not a formal organisation, it does not have a physical imprint on the world, such as papers that document its existence or a physical office that its employees are expected to attend to work. Moreover, given its transcendental state, the Travelling Organisation is not only an Organisation of Travel, but it is a *Travelling* Organisation; it is dynamic, unbound, and in motion just like its members. Despite that, it is critical to not understate the connectivity between the 'solid' ProQuip and the 'gaseous' Travelling Organisation. The Travelling Organisation is formed through the activity of work travelling, which is produced by ProQuip's needs, therefore, the Travelling Organisation and ProQuip are inherently interlinked, an idea that I explore in greater detail in the subsequent Chapter. The Travelling Organisation is then only immanent or observable through ProQuip and its spaces.

The Travelling Organisation, then, is maintained by the formal and social infrastructures of ProQuip, exists immanently on the project sites, in the offices of ProQuip, and in spaces outside of these boundaries, yet it is a transcendental *travelling* being. In other words, the Travelling Organisation is a product of ProQuip's work travel practice, and it depends on that practice and ProQuip to continue existing, but it also organises work travel and affects ProQuip. In the following Chapter, I explore how the Travelling Organisation and ProQuip are related, and how they organise work travel.

6.4 Conclusion

This Chapter described a series of formal infrastructures that aim to organise work travel, and some customs and norms prevalent among travellers, forming the Travelling Cultures. I find that although the formal travelling systems, such as travel reporting, staffing conducted by the FSO, and project governance and digital engineering systems are instrumental to ease travel work and structure the experience of travelling, they act more as support mechanisms for travel than primary structuring agents. Nonetheless, I caution against dismissing formal organisation mechanisms as merely supportive, explaining that they operate in a similar manner to representation discussed in Chapter 5; applying subtle control through representing and documenting engineers.

However, it appears that there is more to travelling than the formal organisation is able to capture. I introduce the project site and study the customs of travelling engineers, to consider the social organising mechanisms of work travel, revealing a culture where local comradery and maintenance of global social networks is an intrinsically expected part of doing project work and being a ProQuip traveller. I study historical narratives of the early ProQuippers and tales that were passed down in the company to understand how the culture of travelling has developed (as non-oral histories were unavailable due to the paper-free office setting), finding that ProQuip's Older Guys joined the company at a time when travelling was the best financial outcome for many families, and since then became immersed in the practice which attained its own personal meaning and provided these engineers with an identity of a traveller. This, then, formed the first wave of the Travelling Culture.

I also found that this Travelling Culture is divorced from the office culture of ProQuip. It turned out that since ProQuip is a hybrid organisation made from multiple companies acquired by ProQuip over the years, many of these companies' engineers were never exposed the office culture and joined the Travelling Culture since they were mostly in direct contact with other travellers. With ProQuip's office and Travelling Cultures developing simultaneously in different spaces, over the years, the acquired companies would adapt to the Travelling Culture and import some of their own elements, with its core structure remaining relatively stable. It appeared that ProQuip never had to make efforts to control the Travelling Culture since it suited the needs of ProQuippers; by maintaining the financial incentives such as overtime pay and

daily allowances, most ProQuippers never needed any other incentives to travel, especially since once they were incorporated into the community, it was hard to leave.

Although the office and Travelling Culture developed separately, it is important to note that they are not entirely divorced from each other. The 'top down' approach of creating a ProQuip culture is effective to an extent, where the office culture for example, has many similarities to the Travelling Cultures, insofar as all ProQuippers can say that their goal is to create 'end to end solutions' and the driver behind their work is excellence. The idea of excellence, not necessarily always in those words, is pivotal at sites as much as in offices, since ProQuip can be distinguished from its competitors based on quality: "we make better product, and our clients know it. Yes, we charge more than others, but clients get quality production lines. That's why the big customers go for us, they know what they get with us". However, behaviours, expectations, customs, and norms at the offices are very different than onsite, and they are also subject to national cultural differences. One site-based engineer once told me that he went into his Moscow office to deliver a travel report in 'normal clothes', that is, a T-shirt and jeans, and got scolded for not wearing a suit. He said it was nonsensical since he was travelling later that day and such superficial dress-codes were entirely inefficient. In that sense, with sites being international inter-organisational workspaces and with travellers generally having extensive experience working in different national settings, the national cultural differences onsite are far less prevalent than in offices. Therefore, the Travelling Cultures can be described as international while different offices still have some national cultures on top of which the ProQuip culture stands.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the necessity to control the Travelling Culture only emerged with the appearance of the Millennial Problem. That is to say that the new Travelling Culture no longer suited ProQuip's needs. In this Chapter, I explain that the second wave of the Travelling Culture is, by most part, very similar to the first: they share the same customs when onsite, and similarly develop global social networks. However, due to age and interest differences, younger and older employee groups generally stay apart from one another socially when onsite. This means that contemporary ProQuip has two Travelling Cultures and one office culture, and the analysis in this Chapter indicates that they are not in control of the Travelling Cultures.

I purpose that given the autonomous nature of the social organisation of travel; it is possible to image a Travelling Organisation. I develop this concept to express the series of

social activities ongoing on the ‘periphery’ of ProQuip, both connected to ProQuip through its sites and infrastructures but also acting independently of it. I explain that the Travelling Organisation is traceable through both formal and social infrastructures, which become noticeable on ProQuip’s sites and at their offices. Furthermore, the Travelling Organisation is a socially formed, self-organising, and transcendental entity that appears to exist in order to organise work travel where ProQuip is unable to. I suggest that ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation are therefore inherently interlinked, and in the following Chapter I explore the relationship between work travel, ProQuip, and the Travelling Organisation in more depth, aiming to answer how work travel and organisation are entangled.

Chapter 7: Breaking boundaries in organisational analysis

This Chapter answers the research question posed in the first Chapter: *how is work travel organised?.* In the previous Chapter, I study the formal and social organising mechanisms of work travel, discovering that ProQuip applies relatively loose control over the practice and that spontaneous Travelling Cultures emerge outside of the formal boundaries of the organisation. I propose that work travel, then, is co-organised by ProQuip and an additional organisation that manifests on the periphery of ProQuip, specifically in connection with work travel, which is organising work travel in the capacities that ProQuip is not doing or is unable to (for example due to geographical distances). I call this the Travelling Organisation, which I describe to be self-forming and self-organising, existing transcendentally but being immanent through ProQuip's multiple sites, and having the central purpose of organising work travel. I depict this organisation as what would be considered "social organisation", meaning that it is not formally constituted like ProQuip, being fundamentally formed on the basis of social activity (Cooper 2007).

In this Chapter, I draw on Cooper's concept of the *boundary* to explain how ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation are entangled – a theoretical problem posed in Chapter 2 – and thereby answering how the practice of work travel is organised. Specifically, I explain that through the boundary we can account for the interdependence of travel and organisation(s), where on one hand, ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation are organising work travel, but on the other, work travel sustains these organisations allowing them to continue existing.

The boundary concept is based on what Cooper calls a 'proximal' perspective, which rests on two premises. First, it necessitates viewing things as dynamic as opposed to bound and stable, meaning that from this perspective ProQuip ceases to be understood as a formal organisation, instead focusing on how it is constituted as what we would call organisation through day-to-day practices. This reveals the pivotal role that work travel plays in forming ProQuip and displaces ProQuip as an organising core to a peripheral object. O*rganising* in itself becomes central, showing that ProQuip is formed by travelling practices which sustain it and give it legitimacy. Second, the proximal view focuses on day-to-day activities, disengaging from previously formulated and institutionalised concepts within the social sciences. This means that instead of explaining the events at the field using preconceived notions in the social

sciences, Cooper argues for basing concepts on processes and practices occurring daily to form these 'organisations'.

While the Travelling Organisation is one such notion, centring on the practices of work travel, I consider a further mode of organising work travel that disengages from the previously utilised notions of the 'formal' and 'social'. I return to the field and considering modes of organising immanent to it; in particular, I follow the non-human actor that appears central to my informants, who schedule their travel and work around it: the product that will ultimately be produced at the factory. In describing the Organisation by Product, I go beyond the structural perspectives in MOS, showcasing other realities of the formation of organisation.

The Chapter is divided into five sections, where in the first I introduce a vignette of a customer meeting where doors are kicked down, shattering and disrupting classic images of organisation. This vignette brings attention to the question of boundaries and their formation, pointing to a problematic in the study of organisations, which seeks to conceptualise organisation through established categories, excluding states and situations that do not fall within institutionalised structures. In the second section, I introduce the conceptual shift that is necessary to comprehend the relationship between ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation. This conceptual shift is highly important since the Travelling Organisation is borne out of dynamic shifts of travelling employees, and in a sense is indeed *travelling*. I draw upon Cooper's discussion of distal and proximal perspectives, suggesting that organisation may be better understood as a process rather than entity or fixity. In the third section I explain the notion of the boundary and describe the entanglement between ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation and following that, suggest considering a non-structural perspective onto the organisation of work travel, disengaging from the notions of formal/social. In the fourth section, I follow product and show how work travel is in many ways done according to the processes of its making, where, in effect, work travel mirrors this organising. In the fifth, final section, I conclude that work travel is organised through a dynamic motion between ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation, and other forms that organising takes. I propose that travel is not only mediated by established organisational structures, but also often by seemingly unremarkable entities like a product-to-be-produced.

7.1 Breaking doors (boundaries) down

This morning Vasya, the installation manager for the compression moulding machines on the Russian Aerospace Plastics (RAP) project, came up to me and, with a satisfied grin, invited me to join a meeting "unlike any other". Turns out that there is a meeting at 2pm that everyone is dreading and Vasya has been excused from it by his line manager. The meeting's original purpose was to facilitate understanding of the programmes between ProQuip's and the client's automation guys. Vasya and Ippolit, the head of automation on the project, attended it in the last two weeks but got "all kinds of management crap against ProQuip". The meeting, apparently, was not meant to include any management-related issues (since there is a designated weekly meeting for that purpose), but the financial management people of the client kept showing up and dismissing all conversations about technical issues. Vasya called the Moscow office after the first meeting and was told that they will get someone to help from the ProQuip management for the next week, but no one showed up. So, in the advent of this meeting the site is brimming with nervous energy. The meeting "unlike any other" is actually fairly typical, with a few engineers reiterating the invitation, saying that they think I will be interested to see the regular bashing they get from clients.

Ippolit tells me that this client is about as difficult as they get, and although they are happy to work with ProQuip Moscow again, the client hates the Belgians who are leading the project. Ippolit then admitted that sometimes the Belgian project manager does not make things easier by choosing to not follow Russian cultural norms. However, today the team attending the meeting will only have two 'foreigners', a Polish engineer who understands Russian almost perfectly, and myself – and most have not yet realised that I not Russian. As the morning goes by, the situation begins to escalate: Now Vitaly, the site manager, is going and he is stressed. He told me that "there will be a scandal". When I asked if I was permitted to write things down, he responded, as though not hearing me: "they want to stop the project." This would seem ludicrous, after all, the project is nearly complete. After three and a half years of onsite work, there is less than four months left, where final lines are to be put in place and commissioning is to be completed. What remains is the testing of product and ensuring that the lines run smoothly – there is no sense in stopping the project, but since Vitaly is stressed – who is usually as collected as onsite engineers go – then I see that the threats are not for nothing. The meeting that has not yet happened has already transformed from a routine engineers' consultation into an inter-organisational negotiation.

We, ProQuip's delegates, arrive a few minutes before 2pm in an office I have never been to before. It is in the newly constructed office building of the client, on the far side of the factory site from our offices. It feels like a diplomatic mission to a foreign land. The engineers that moved at ease in the factory areas now seem awkward and uncomfortable, constrained by the small conference room and its cliché long oval table that takes up most of the space. We're a big group here this time, not the two automation guys against the client's office like in previous meetings. Two of the client's people are already in the room, with their backs to the door and they seem to have not expected so many of us because they comment on our numbers. They are not engineers; one is a woman in her early 30s who works in some managerial capacity, and the other is a woman in her mid-40s, who introduces herself as the accountant of the client. We go around the table and take our seats. The room is filling up quickly, and soon almost all the chairs are taken. We are 12 in the room, and one of our engineers is connected through Zoom. The room arrangement is almost comical; 'we' are facing 'them'. One side of the long table taken by one side of the negotiation.

It is five minutes past 2pm and the meeting begins. We perform the ritual of introductions, each of us stating their name and position in their respective company. I get a few perplexed looks when I explain that I am an organisational ethnographer and ask for permission to write notes for my research. Most nod and others say "yeah, yeah that's fine" dismissively – I am an odd addition to the meeting but not interesting enough to get in the way of the agenda. Soon Vitaly is discussing the situation with the accountant; the client is apparently dissatisfied with the quality of the polymers, and Vitaly is arguing that the polymers are not the problem; the problem is the water. According to the agreement, the water provided by the client should have better purity, whereas the client's water exceeds the particles' size limit tenfold! The accountant disagrees, citing readings from the Plastoscan, a device that ProQuip installs in every refinement centre. Vitaly reassures her that the polymer structures are according to standards, and the qualities of the polymer can be controlled in the post-combination phase. Vitaly is then cut off midsentence when the door flies open with a bang. It hits the wall and bounces back toward a red-faced figure in white. The head of the client factory, Angry-Man-in-White, or simply Roma, storms in with shouts, spit coming out of his mouth. We are all stunned and Vitaly looks taken aback. I am not taking in what Roma is shouting about, and even the client's people look distraught. Somehow the border which demarcated the meeting has been broken, and as Szymon, the Polish engineer, later told me, he was not sure where he was for a few minutes. It could have been a safari, movie set, war zone, a simple assault – but

it was no longer the meeting. The rupturing of the bubble we were in, one that demarcated our situation as clearly organisational – a meeting by all standards – has left us confused and disoriented. Roma quits his shouting and leaves, slamming the door behind him, and we are now in silence. It is not unlike a monastery. We hear the birds outside, the fan of the computer on the desk, and footsteps somewhere down the corridor from us. We slowly look around to reconnect with the surrounding. The office space that was so clearly 'meeting room' before now seems unfamiliar. It is an odd sensation, since, after all, we all remained seated where we were: we did not move anywhere but somehow the situation shifted, or better yet: erupted around us. "A boundary has been crossed," Vitaly said later, when returning from that meeting, and I think that is quite a good description.

7.1.1 Conceptualising work travel

The vignette depicts the breakdown of a boundary where a recognisable, clearly organisational event is violently disrupted and becomes uncertain and unknown. Before the rupturing when Roma kicked down the door, the meeting was proceeding according to unspoken protocols: the antagonistic groups sitting on opposite sides of a table, a representative of each group relaying their concerns or arguments, and a member of the opposing group responding. As the door tears into the room, all attention is shifted to the intruder and his actions, and then, upon his departure, we are suddenly unsure of what we are supposed to be doing. We are in unscripted territory, and Vasya's prediction about the meeting being "unlike any other" rings true, mostly because the meeting becomes something else – something indeterminate (Cooper 1976). In a sense, we are sent through a boundary from order to disorder.

While violence in organisational settings is not unheard of (see Costas and Grey 2019), the vignette highlights the importance of boundaries in defining a situation, event, and even organisation, and their fragility. In previous Chapters, boundaries have been subtly defining the spheres of operation of organisations: ProQuip's offices delineating its physical presence, or gates around the factory building site including and excluding personnel. The boundary, according to Robert Cooper (1986), is fundamental to organisation since it lays its limits and by contrasting it with all else, defines what organisation is. Organisation, in his terms, is defined by difference and boundaries demarcate such differences. In the vignette, the boundary that defines the meeting is ruptured, therefore the difference between the outside world where, for example, project work is ongoing, and the meeting is suddenly dissolved. It is also important to note that difference, or boundary, is active. The boundary was actively maintaining the

temporary state of a meeting, meaning that it remained in a state of a meeting as long as some conditions were upheld: the door remained shut, the oval table and old speaker phone on the table continued in their capacity of signalling the meeting atmosphere for the duration of this event, and the actors kept performing the pattern of a 'meeting'.

The event of the kicked door highlights the temporality of organisations and the constant work that is put into maintaining their existence. It indicates at the work being done across ProQuip and its travelling components to keep the organisation in existence and at a relatively constant state. The violent dissolution of a meeting, then, indicates at a central condition of organisation that this far has been unaccounted for: the activity necessary to ensure an organisation's continued survival, and hence its inherent dynamism. To analyse ProQuip and its organising of work travel I argue that a shift in perspective is needed from a static to a dynamic understanding of organisation, which is what I introduce next.

7.2 The conceptual shift

Studying work travel requires a conceptual shift from an ontology of fixity and to one of motion, change, and becoming (Beyes and Steyaert 2012; Steyaert and van Looy 2010). Like the meeting suddenly dissipating around us, this organisation needs to be thought of not as a permanent stable structure, but something that is constructed circumstantially through multiple artefacts and behaviours, and that labour goes into sustaining it. Organising, then, in its active sense, is a process which forms and reforms organisations through time and space (Hernes 2014). The beginning of this approach can be traced, in a general sense, to the seminal work of Karl Weick in the *Social Psychology of Organizing* where he opens the trajectory toward studying organisations as ongoing processes or 'patterns' as opposed to stable entities (Tsoukas et al. 2020). By focusing on organising as a process, we may start understanding how it is formed and sustained. As Tsoukas and colleagues (2020, pp.1317–1318) put, with this approach "we are sensitized to take notice of what we ordinarily overlook, namely the streams of activities that sustain the pattern we ostensively call 'organization'". Indeed, throughout this Chapter I pay close attention to the activities and patterns that form ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation, some of which were already depicted in previous Chapters. I specifically consider how ignored or dismissed activities, often not fitting into what could be classified as "organisational behaviours" (not unlike the factory manager's sudden appearance in the

vignette), act to organise what we come to call 'organisation'. However, first I need to explain the conceptual shift necessary to pick up on these activities.

In previous Chapters, I explain that my initial approach to the question of how work travel is organised broadly stems from a formal organisation outlook, where I assumed that a corporate centre like the offices would be organising the peripheral project sites where work travel was ongoing. For that core/periphery outlook to be valid, the organisation, specifically ProQuip, needed to be rendered a fixed centre from which travelling units, the travelling engineers, were dispatched into temporary organisations: the project sites. Hence, ProQuip was perceived as an ordered, unitary entity, with a formal legal identity, typically a bureaucratic and hierarchical structure, clear rules, roles and procedures, and an explicit goal for its existence (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). In other words, ProQuip was conceptualised as a formal organisation, the permanent and ordered nucleus around which the peripheral project sites and travelling engineers were orbiting.

This conception of ProQuip, however, came under scrutiny in Chapter 5, where I found that ProQuip is in a state of disorganisation, with inconsistent images of organisation shared among the employees, and ongoing restructuring processes active across the company rendering the formal structures and its hierarchies redundant. This destabilised the image of a rational and coherent permanent organisation that is in control of its peripheral units. Indeed, I found that many of the travelling engineers either did not know where within the ever-shifting structures of ProQuip they fit, or did not care, focusing on the immediate concerns of the project. With the distances between ProQuip and the sites extending over geographical and organisational dimensions, it became unclear where the organisation of ProQuip or of work travel even was. I found that the permanent organisation is not as permanent or stable as it is often described in the literature, while, similarly to Bechky (2006), I discovered that the temporary organisation of project site work is not as temporary or unstable as it is commonly portrayed. As I show in Chapter 6, the customs and procedures of temporary organisations, which I called Travelling Cultures, seem to exceed the boundaries of individual projects sites, constructing a transcendental entity that guides work travel alongside the formal organisation mechanisms: the Travelling Organisation. Therefore, to comprehend this entity, or indeed process, I suggest shifting the conceptual understanding of organisation from a static to a dynamic view, given that my initial analytical path does not appear cohesive with the empirical material and fails to capture *the organisation*, only leading to more questions about its nature.

The conceptual shift from stasis to process can be explained by returning to the disrupted meeting. The meeting can be viewed as either a snapshot of an event or a continuous procession. As a snapshot, one may see Vitaly leaning forward onto the table facing the accountant while all eyes in the room are focused on him. Vitaly's mouth is open, hand gesturing, a few people in the room hold pens over paper with notes scribbled on them, the speaker phone is at the end of the table holding the potential to be used. Vitaly's side of the table is dressed in blue work clothes, some are still wearing neon vests on top, and a few have hard hats behind them, resting on a small shelf under the window. The client's side is in casual dress, with occasional jewellery and heels setting the groups apart. The image is recognisable as a 'business meeting', potentially between blue- and white-collar groups. Falling into that archetype, the snapshot provides some information as to what is ongoing at the factory site. However, as a continuous process, we may note some of the movements that create the meaning of a meeting – not simply prescribe it under the already defined category. For example, the situating of bodies into two fronts, the turning of heads toward speakers, the unspoken nomination of who will respond to which argument. These are actions that lead to a situation of a meeting, together constructing what becomes a pattern recognisable as a meeting. In this thesis, I am interested in the activities that lead to the situation of work travel.

It is vital to note that there are advantages to both static and dynamic perspectives. As a snapshot, Mintzberg (1979) argues, a still image can deliver specific information in a concise way. It is what Cooper (1989) calls the 'economy of visibility', where an item or an idea is selected, and what is considered relevant to be communicated is expressed and simplified, excluding 'unnecessary' information so that the relevant is available 'at a glance'. An image of a meeting or an organisation would include what is thought to be important to render it recognisable in a certain way: a negotiation or groupwork meeting, or an expert or budget-friendly company. It may, then, be beneficial to adopt the static view of organisations in some circumstances, but as I account for in earlier Chapters, this approach fails to reveal how work travel, an inherently dynamic practice, is organised. Therefore, a process view is adopted.

The central premise of the process view is moving away from the idea of organisation as a bound or fixed entity with clearly demarcated boundaries (Cooper 1986). Indeed, it is important to mention that the notion of the organisation as a bound, unitary entity has already been questioned earlier in the thesis, in relation to the mobile nature of ProQuip's employees. In Chapter 2, I note that MOS research has often focused on "static images of organisation,

typically studying organisation as a cohesive administrative unit composed of permanent structures (Chia 1998), crystalised in fixed and bounded organisational spaces (Costas 2013; Hislop and Axtell 2007)". I explain that this assumption is problematic since much of ProQuip's activity (and indeed, other organisations: see Costas 2013; Aguiléra 2008), takes place outside of the geographically bound spaces and specific workplaces. Considering that much work is done nowadays from outside of fixed organisational spaces, with alternative forms of working such as teleworking becoming more commonplace (Hafermalz 2021; Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt 2018), I question how ProQuip extends control beyond the physical boundaries of the workplace. However, at that stage in the thesis I do not question how these physical or formal organisational boundaries constitute ProQuip and whether they are related to travelling. These questions emerge from the empirical investigation, where ProQuip, as mentioned in Chapter 6, does not seem to assert much control over its 'peripheral' subjects.

To move away from a static and fixed imagination of organisation, then, Cooper and Law (1995) suggest focusing on the study of *organising* as opposed to *organisations*. Specifically, Cooper makes a distinction between organisation as a bound entity and organisation as an organising process, the latter denoting the processes through which organisations emerge, disappear, and continuously establish themselves as organisations through social practices (Spoelstra 2016). This distinction requires an ontological shift that Cooper and Law (1995) describe as 'proximal' and 'distal' views. In the distal perspective, organisations pre-exist their study; organisations are established units in the world, with relatively clear boundaries, functions, and a specific goal (Cooper and Law 1995). This is the form in which organisation is presented by formal organisation scholars – also a commonplace perspective across MOS – and it is viewed as an object already constituted and 'finished'. Such an outlook normalises a 'state of rest' while changes are often considered distracting, abnormal, and even malfunctional. Change, in the distal view, should be a function of the fixed organisation, carefully ordered and engaged in through strategic planning as a reaction of a stable entity to a volatile environment. A company, as Barnard (1968) argues, must be stable otherwise we would be plunged into a state of disorder where nothing would make sense. Cooper (1986), however, suggests that disorder is what allows organisation to make sense.

Cooper cautions against taking the distal perspective, warning that it may lead to a 'retrospective illusion', where the events being studied are explained through pre-existing

categories, therefore leading to "conclusions that efface their origins" (Cooper and Law 1995, p. 199). This is not unlike casting the aforementioned meeting as a "meeting" without accounting for what makes and unmakes it a meeting. The rupturing of the boundary and destruction of the event might have been missed, classing it as an 'odd meeting', perhaps, but overlooking the moment in which the meeting, at least for a few minutes, ceased to be, instead replaced by a distressed group of people in a room.

The distal view is problematic, Cooper asserts, because accepting the notion of a bound organisation as a natural state of being skips over the question of how these boundaries are formed and unformed, and how in turn they form the organisational entity we speak of (Spoelstra 2016). So, while the "distal stresses boundaries and separation, distinctness and clarity, hierarchy and order," it does not account for how these hierarchies, boundaries and more come to be (Cooper and Law 1995, p. 201). This is the problem I come across in my study of ProQuip, where I find that some form of a boundary appears to be separating travelling from offices, Business Areas from Market Enterprises, and more, but I cannot trace that boundary, nor can my informants explain its nature. As I demonstrate in my discussion of representation (Chapter 5), there are however processes of *ordering* employed by individual ProQuippers through charting while 'order and hierarchy' are obscured. This shows that there is ongoing *organising,* that is, organisation-making processes at ProQuip in the absence of the distal formal organisation.

The proximal view is concerned with this *ordering*, rather than order as an existing state. In this perspective, the organisation is ever incomplete and indefinite, existing within a plane of endless possibilities. The organisation is unstable, constantly reconstituting oneself through processes of creating order from disorder, and hence, it is in constant flux and transition: organisation is continuous, unfinished, and never fully realised (Cooper and Law 1995; Cooper 1983; 1986). From this perspective, the organisation does not have a structure that pre-exists the ongoing processes of structuring; organisation is constituted from the tension of disorder being made into order (Cooper 1986). Therefore, organisation is always active; it is a verb rather than noun (Cooper and Law 1995). Studying ProQuip from this perspective casts the restructuring in Chapter 5 as a routine process of remaking and alteration that is inherent in any organism or social activity among which are organisations (Cooper 2007). The incompleteness of organisation is necessary according to Cooper to continue organising and hence being: "*It remains forever unfinished precisely so that it can keep on going*" (Cooper and Law, 1995, p.

228, emphasis in original). From the proximal perspective, the organisation never reaches a state of being organised; organisation is the ordering in itself. Hence, ProQuip is not an organisational core that structures work travel, but rather practices like work travel constitute what ProQuip is and could become.

It is important to note that Cooper does not deny the existence of the distal, but for him the distal is 'a proximal effect' borne out of processes of organising (Cooper and Law 1995). His concern is that the emphasis on organisation as a bound entity within MOS research leads to a dismissal and forgetting of the proximal and of processual understandings of organisation. This is important since, as Cooper and Law (1995) illustrate in their essay, any entity formally conceived to be one thing and that thing only can exceed the boundaries of its distal conception and become 'more'. To take the example of a can of soup that becomes an art exhibition: it exceeds the formal meaning it was given by its manufacturers. Cooper (1986) argues that everything exists in a state of potentiality of being 'more than'. Similarly, it appears that ProQuip's formal boundaries are exceeded by travelling engineers thereby forming something other than ProQuip, that is, the Travelling Organisation.

On the contrary to Cooper, for du Gay and Vikkelsø (2017, p.17) the study of anything but a formal organisation is the "development of an often highly elaborate, ornate, and intricate set of simulacra that pass under the same basic name (organization)". In that, du Gay and Vikkelsø (2017) claim that authors adopting a process view, focusing on social organisation and other non-formal approaches which they file under the title 'metaphysical stance', are in fact complicit in the act of 'disappearing formal organisation'. The metaphysical stance is explained to be an attitude, predisposition, or 'comportment' in which contemporary MOS academics are preoccupied with "'rationalized myths', 'capabilities', 'assemblages', 'becomings', 'discursive formations', 'action nets'" and other marginal interests that they lose sight of the formal organisation entirely (du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017, p.18).

The notion of 'comportment', then, indicates that such authors are inherently interested in organisational forms other than the 'classical' formal organisation, and begin their research from that perspective. According to du Gay and Vikkelsø (2016), the process-perspective authors interpret organisations into 'something else', constructing simulacra of organisations and neglect the central object of organisation studies. In this thesis, however, the process view is not adopted from the start and formal organisation is taken seriously, yet the formal perspective alone does not explain how and whether at all ProQuip (distally) manages work

travel. As argued in Chapter 6, formal mechanisms are not to be dismissed in terms of their influence or control over travelling, as they act in conjunction with the social apparatus. Therefore, I argue that both the formal and social should be taken into account when studying organisational phenomena, but the question then becomes how to study these without privileging one over the other. To that end, Cooper offers the notion of the boundary as an active form of making organisation from disorganisation. Following the proximal perspective, I argue that ProQuip is constituted through the practice and activities of work travel, as well as a series of other organisational activities discussed in previous Chapters. Therefore, I turn to the entanglement (or better yet, *entangling*) of the Travelling Organisation and ProQuip.

7.3 How is work travel and organisation entangled? The boundary

Work travel and ProQuip are clearly related, as has been illustrated in previous Chapters, with travellers being employed by ProQuip, travel being enabled through its various infrastructures, schedules being defined on a global level at the headquarters, and much more. However, the nature of this relationship has remained evasive, since, as the notion of *entanglement* denotes, this relationship is intricate and twisted together. As I suggest in the previous Chapter, there are two core entities that are active in organising work travel, the formal organisation of ProQuip and the social activities that I came to call the Travelling Organisation. In this section, I draw on Cooper's notion of the boundary to explain how work travel is entangled with organisation, following the conceptual turn described in the previous section where organisation is understood as a cohort of activities rather than a state of being.

The boundary describes a mutually dependent relationship between two entities that are being separated and joined through a difference (or boundary) (Cooper 1998). To take the example of the bashed in door earlier in the Chapter: the wall and door separate the meeting room from the factory, making it an isolated space where meetings can be held, but also connect the room to the factory, as part of the factory planning. The boundary then maintains the separation/connectivity between two systems, meeting and factory; the closing of the door creates a temporary social structure within a system now known as a 'meeting'. The boundary, then, is "like the rim of a glass, which, while separating inside from outside at the same time brings them together, or the edge of a coin, which separates as well as joins the obverse and the reverse" (Cooper 1983, pp. 58-9). The wall and door function as a difference "in the sense of not being *this* but *that"*; it is based on opposition to another term: a meeting room, not a

production area (Cooper 1983, p. 58, emphasis in original). In the case of work travel the same principle of reversal applies. The engineer is travelling, he is not at ProQuip. The idea of travelling is comprehended through opposing point B (travelling or the site) to the original departure point A (ProQuip or office). It is an act of disjunction (travelling is not being at ProQuip) but also conjunction (travelling is mediated or enabled by being employed at ProQuip) (Cooper 1983). While both forms of working, travelling and office-based work, are technically being employed by ProQuip, they have different characteristics (see Chapter 4), and they are viewed as opposites by engineers.

Office work is often tagged as boring or unappealing among travelling engineers, some describing it as a pastime where no work is done. Raymond, a site manager, and Sven, a quality manager, for example, say that they get bored of being in the office. Raymond only comes in to submit travel reports, attend meetings, act as a guinea pig for new products, and catch up on the latest events. Sven on the other hand, does not see the appeal of the office even for these functions. It is two hours' drive from his house one way, he told me, and when his newly appointed manager tried to coerce him to come to the office when not on a trip, Sven asked why would he like to lose 16 work hours in a day? The bewildered manager asked "16? How?". "Well, I come to the office, I am bored. I start chatting to people, so you lose my 8 hours of work, and 8 of others." Some engineers react in outright disdain toward office work, for example Slava, an installation leader for the wet part of the RAP factory, was chanting to himself one afternoon: "money money, stupid money,". When I asked him what it was about, he responded that he has already been three years on the project. "Three years," he sighed, "I am ready to be done here." Is the office better? I asked him. He profusely shook his head, "Of course not, what would I do in an office? No. I like to be in the thick of things, where everything is happening. Do you know what it's like to come to an empty block of land and see your vision appear after years of toil and sweat? I am doing what my father did, and his father, we have always been practical. We need to construct." This distinction has become an institution among travellers, who even call office-based employees "Office Plankton" in Russian speaking countries, referring to the relative meagreness and uselessness of their positions in comparison to site work.

Not all engineers are contemptuous of the office (although the attitude is generally that of relative superiority among travellers), for example, Tiago, a 27-year-old junior automation engineer said that personally he prefers office work to the site: "You have more development

work! You think more at the office." Whereas most engineers onsite are process engineers (designing, installing, and commissioning equipment), Tiago is an automation engineer, meaning that he spends several months onsite toward the end of the project putting the computer systems of the factory to work. Tiago prefers coding and designing the software over the site work: "you re-test a lot here, it's more like supporting them [the process engineers]." Despite that, the discourse that separates ProQuip as the office and ProQuip 'travelling' as denoting onsite work and other practices (see Chapter 4), is prevalent in the company. This distinction relies on the idea of, first, travelling not being at office-ProQuip, and second, travelling as the activity including its practices of moving between spaces, working onsite, dealing with internet issues, and much more.

The boundary between ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation, then, is the activity of engaging in work travel. As Cooper writes, the boundary is between binary divisions which define one another, meaning that the Travelling Organisation is defined by ProQuip, and vice versa. To understand the entanglement between these organisations and work travel, it is important to take into consideration the relationship between the 'system' (organisation) and boundary. For instance, the door and wall are *separating* the meeting room from the rest of the factory are also defined by the relationship with the meeting room, since there is no sense in a wall or a door standing in isolation with nothing to separate or connect. This is why it is crucial to emphasise that the boundary is actually an activity, not a barrier; it is the *keeping* of the factory away from the meeting that the door (a medium through which the boundary manifests) that makes the boundary. Therefore, two things can be said about the boundary. First, it cannot exist on its own, it needs to be structured in relation to something, creating a relationship between the two things, like ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation. Second, the boundary is an *activity* that is the product and agent of structuring disorder into a pattern which is organisation. In the case of work travel, this practice both creates ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation, but it is also created by these entities: "things act *and* are acted on, that is, they are both cause *and* effect of their happenings" (Cooper 1976, p. 41).

Therefore, practices of work travelling accounted for throughout Chapters 4-6 operate to construct the Travelling Organisation and sustain ProQuip by providing it with income and legitimacy through producing its core output, factory building. Similarly, work travelling results of the existence and operations of ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation, since without ProQuip to finance travelling and give it a goal, travel would not be possible, while

simultaneously, it is unlikely that travelling would be engaged in, at least not effectively, without the Travelling Organisation, as described in Chapter 6. If, for example, travellers did not work cooperatively drawing on each other's knowledge globally, did not provide one another with medicine when ailing, did not take colleagues out to eat, and so forth, it is very likely that the turnover of ProQuip's travelling staff would increase incrementally. The point is, then, that work travel practices are constructing ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation by creating patterns (or organisation) that are conducive for the existence of these organisations, thereby also preserving the boundary's own existence.

Hence, the entanglement between organisation and work travel is in the variety of travelling practices and enactment of infrastructures, multiple of which have been described in Chapter 6, for example: receiving daily allowances or using the booking system of ProQuip, engaging in dinners while working onsite or sharing tips about travel friendly headsets, thus enacting the Travelling Organisation. However, previous Chapters only take into account the practices that fall under the generalised categories of the social sciences: formal and social. As the vignette in section 7.1 shows, that is a problematic approach since by prescribing an accepted and generalised pattern 'meeting', 'formal organisation', or 'organisational culture' and analysing a phenomenon only according to these criteria, considerable processes of organising that do not fall under these categories can be missed. As Cooper and Law (1995) argue in endorsing the proximal view, paying attention to happenings that do not fall into prearranged categories may give insight into how organising makes up social reality (see also, Chia 1995). Therefore, in the following section I disengage from the preconceived categories of the social or formal that have dominated the conversation to this point to focus on an actor significant to my informants, which has had a central role in organising activities and schedules on one of the projects sites I studied. That actor is the product.

7.4 How is work travel organised? Organisation by product

Aside from the series of social and formal activities that seek to organise work travel discussed in Chapter 6, in this section I introduce the centrality of product to a range of project and company decisions, and hence the organisation of work travel. ProQuip constructs and runs product lines including soft plastics, hard industrial plastics, plastic units for healthcare equipment, and much more, all of which would have equivalent agency in organising work travel. Throughout this section I describe how various forms of Organisation by Product act as

an alternative form of organising work travel to the social and formal mechanisms discussed in previous Chapters.

The process is the concern of ProQuip, not the client, because ProQuip's service is to build and hand over fully functioning factories. At early stages in a project, the client and ProQuip's sales team meet to discuss the specifications of the factory that a client wants to build: which products they want to produce, how many tons of what product to produce daily, and whether they have specific requirements (for example, ASEP wanted the water tanks to be constructed above a production area). A project manager is then assigned to design the custom factory and see it through to completion. From that point onward, the factory is the concern of ProQuip with the product organising the process.

It is very common for the product line to define how a factory will be constructed: starting from the raw materials warehouses and being assembled incrementally toward the packing area. Often, large structures like evaporators and certain tanks need to be put into still unfinished buildings, where the building is then completed around them. It is also important to note that contemporary factories are fully automated, with many areas completely operated by robots and restricted to humans. Some lines have motion sensors around them to detect activity: if a human comes too close, the lines shut down. So, before the factory is handed over, ProQuip's job is to ensure the smooth running of production lines basically at the push of a button. The client, then, after ProQuip's departure, is only required to supply high quality raw materials to ensure a good product. In this sense, the product is the direct concern of ProQuip's engineers and their work centres around it for the duration of the project and beyond it. I explain this through a series of activities in the factory-making process.

As a project and equipment company, central activities for ProQuip are the designing, manufacturing and then installation and commissioning of *specialised equipment*. ProQuip produces a large range of equipment among which are units like moulding machines, mixers, evaporators, shredders and so on. This equipment is designed by ProQuip and made in their workshop, often with the supply of parts and materials from partner companies. This requires a series of actions, including developing and designing, manufacturing and assembling, before proceeding to install and test the equipment. Assembling larger units, like evaporators takes place onsite, and indeed much of the work onsite is the assembling of the factory, meaning connecting different parts of the manufacturing process to each other – the lines that go from the raw material tanks to the moulders, for example. Specialised equipment and lines then

require specialised staff. This is the first organising process of work travel, *specialising*, which prescribes who is needed where.

Many engineers, like Bianca in Chapter 4, specialise in specific types of equipment or specific processes. Bianca is a specialist in continuous extrusion moulding machines, while Vasya in this Chapter specialises in the compression moulding machines. Some engineers sometimes specialise in niche processes and equipment like the hardening of polymers for outer space. Specialisms then dictate who is needed on what project, when, and for how long. As I noted in earlier Chapters, automation engineers for instance are often only needed onsite toward the end of projects while process engineers are required to be onsite for however long it takes to install and commission their units. Project managers book and schedule staff based on their specialisations, and as shown in Chapter 6, some scheduling processes are even at the level of the headquarters, who allocate engineers to different regions according to the regions' respective loads. Specialising, then, is a product-centred activity occurring on ProQuip's level rather than on that of individual projects, which engineers and sales personnel (who also travel although differently) engage in throughout their employment at ProQuip. Their work travel destinations and schedules are decided according to when and where their skills would be needed, and who (of project managers) negotiates for their time.

There is a notable difference between the processes of specialising that travellers engage in and the concept of 'roles' discussed in Chapter 6. Specialising, as in the proximal perspective, denotes a process by which engineers develop competence and niche knowledge of a particular area of production, a type of equipment, or the process of manufacturing a good. Specialising is continuous and by its nature, is the process of acquiring more knowledge and experience, a process for example, observable in Bianca's narrative in Chapter 4, where she described how an expert in continuous extrusion moulders will be coming to mentor her in the launching of her first set of units. A job role, however, is a distal idea which denotes a static title by which an engineer is known across the organisation, making him searchable on databases, send-able to projects, and in general renders one a unit of accounting as noted in the discussion on the textual organisation (see Chapter 6). Specialising is proximal, as it is constantly changing and leading to organisational changes, whereas job roles aim to fix an identity to an employee and render them thus controllable.

The engineers' travel schedules are also dependent on the described product cycle. The timing and length of the stay of an engineer onsite is determined by which part of the production

process the engineer engages in. However, this only accounts for the travelling *to* site aspect of work travel. Work travel is also organised by the different stages of the production in the sense of *being* onsite as work travel. When product launch is taking place, that is, when equipment is being commissioned, tested, and first product is given, is also the time when engineers spend most time onsite. Overtimes are a norm at this stage of production, where it is not uncommon for engineers to spend 12 or more hours onsite a day. Hence, work travel is organised by the needs of the product in terms of who is sent to site, when, for how long, and also how they work while onsite. And, given that work travel and ProQuip are entangled as shown in the previous section, the product also organises ProQuip.

ProQuip is organised by products predominantly in the sense of investment decisions, some of which occur on a functional and some on a strategic level. On a strategic level, such decisions include investment in the development of new technologies, acquisitions of other companies that are specialists in certain products or processes, and on a more mundane level, the hiring and training of staff. In Chapter 6 I describe the histories of ProQuip and its origin in an acquired company and the subsequent series of acquisitions of smaller specialist companies, which managers explained, were necessary to continue expanding the competencies of ProQuip. They engage in acquisition to expand their repertoire of equipment, improve production and innovate, and most importantly, stand above the competition. Improving the processes of making product then, feeds into the decisions of ProQuip to change as a company. Therefore, the organising efforts of a product expand beyond the organising of travelling to the organising of ProQuip.

A product and its processes, I found, dictated many of the scheduling and travelling activities of engineers, expanding beyond individual project sites to coordinate the operations of travelling personnel worldwide, but also affecting the organising in non-travelling functions of ProQuip, including sales, product and equipment development, and even investment decisions. In other words, plastic – or any other product to be manufactured – actively centre the activities of travelling engineers, managers, and ProQuip as a whole, around them.

7.5 Conclusion

This Chapter investigates the relationship between work travel and organisation by adopting an alternative understanding of organisation as a process or social practice rather than a formal entity (Cooper 1986; 1989). I present a vignette that describes the breaking up of a meeting

onsite between ProQuip's engineers and the client's management team by a screaming factory manager, who barges into the room, kicking the door in. This situation is noteworthy, I explain, because it dismisses formal organisation and its structures, dismantling the event of a meeting through the violent interruption, causing the participants of the event to momentarily lose their bearings and question where they are. The participants of the once-meeting are dislodged from it into a non-organisational setting which also does not have a name or space to be accounted for within the norms of functional formal organisation studies. The event, which is significant to ProQuip's engineers, becomes no more than a mishap or error to be eliminated in terms of formal organisation. However, I then explain that by considering the moment of the dissolution of the meeting as a vital event of organising, or really disorganising, then the functionally non-organisational can lead to insights about organisation.

To study the process of organising or organisation making, much like the un-made meeting, I explain that the perspective onto the nature of organisation needs to be shifted from a static understanding to a dynamic one. This entails reconceptualising the notion of organisation and relearning how to study it. For this, I draw on the works of Robert Cooper who advocates for a 'proximal' rather than 'distal' view of organisations, meaning that organisation needs to be ceased to be viewed as pre-existing its structuring, a stable unit in the world with relatively clear boundaries to be studied using preconceived notions and categories within the social sciences. Instead, Cooper argues that a proximal view is to be adopted, which conceives organisation as dynamic processes of social activity to be studied by focusing on said social activities that form and reform organisation.

I find that a fixed, or 'distal' perspective (Cooper and Law 1995) of ProQuip creates an inauthentic mirage of stability and coherence where, given the necessity to travel and emphasis on project work, dynamism and mobility are innate. As ProQuip is dependent on work travel and hence the Travelling Organisation, creating a bounded concept thereof leads to a flawed imagination inconsistent with organisational realities. Specifically, I question the idea of fixating ProQuip as a formal, stable entity to which the unstable and changeable Travelling Organisation is anchored. I explain that if ProQuip is understood as organisation in *becoming* (Chia and Kallinikos 1998) following Cooper's argument about proximity, that is, comprehending organisation as a dynamic pattern of activities that together are recognisable as 'organisation', then a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between work travel and organisation can be instigated.

I return to one of the core research problems in this thesis, identified in Chapter 2, where I ask how work travel and organisation are entangled. I explain the processes of entangling using Robert Cooper's notion of the boundary, which is a continuous and changeable process of defining an organisation through activities which separate and bind systems, in this case ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation (Cooper 1986). 'Entering' the boundary perspective insinuates removing the focus from ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation to what is in between them and hence constructs them. The boundary perspective moves away from the idea of organisation as a bounded entity by focusing on what is meant to bind it and separate it from everything else that is not organisation. In other words, the focus is cast on the nature of the 'wall or enclosure'. I explain that the boundary is active; it is a process which allows both the Travelling Organisation and ProQuip to exist, and that the activity that binds and separates them is work travel. I find that ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation exist in a state of symbiosis, where through enacting the various practices and activities of work travel described in Chapter 4, they are dependent on one another to exist and have a relationship of mutual definition.

While I show that work travel as an active practice may be what forms the boundary between ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation, I stress that although ProQuip creates much of what we would call the 'formal' and the Travelling Organisation what would be labelled the 'social', there are other processes in play. Returning to the vignette's point about non-organisational processes and situations, I follow Cooper's recommendation to set aside established or pre-existing categories within the social sciences like the formal and social, which have constituted much of the discussion up to this point, to focus on 'other' processes in organising work travel which under the 'social' and 'formal' umbrellas would go unnoticed. Specifically, my analysis of the organising of work travel focuses on a central non-human and non-organisational actor within my fieldwork: the product. By focusing on a significant actor to my informants and following the product and its journey, I find that much of work travel (and hence ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation) is compliant to the product and its rhythms. In this sense, I move beyond institutionalised categories of organisational analysis to locate a more fundamental organising form that emerges from the fieldsite: Organisation by Product. This Chapter, then, concludes that multiple aspects of organising need to be taken into consideration, including what has become institutionalised as social and formal perspectives, but also other processes, like the centrality of *producing* that entwines organising efforts around it, including the organising of work travel and ProQuip.

Chapter 8: Concluding remarks

This Chapter reflects upon the ethnographic exploration of work travel conducted throughout the thesis and summarises its findings. The Chapter is in four sections. In the first section, I summarise the thesis. Specifically, I start by reminding the reader of the theoretical challenges that were identified in the literature review to which this thesis aimed to respond. I then review the findings of each Chapter and how the investigation advanced through multiple stages and utilised a range of theoretical lenses to arrive at the conclusions drawn in the final empirical Chapter, Chapter 7. In the second section, I relate the findings of the empirical investigation of work travel with the theoretical challenges, defining four contributions the thesis makes to MOS: creating an integrated account of work travel; presenting an empirical account of work travel; exploring the entanglement between work travel and organisation and; theorising work outside of permanent organisational spaces. In the third section, I consider some of the limitations of this research and how it can be advanced further. In the final, fourth, section I provide a brief, final summary of the thesis and its contributions.

8.1 Summary of thesis

This thesis is about the organisation of work travel, specifically aiming to respond to the question: *how is work travel organised?*. Work travel is the concept I develop from its emic use at ProQuip to capture several instances of work mobilities that the travelling engineers at ProQuip practice, including moving between places, working onsite, using mobile technologies, and enacting 'the traveller'. The thesis is based on 12-months multi-sited fieldwork across six countries and six organisational sites of the multinational company ProQuip, dealing with projects and equipment for factories. Over the course of the ethnography, I investigated how the practice of work travel is organised, studying the ProQuip offices and remote project sites where the engineering work is done. I focused on the multiple meanings that travel held for its practitioners, the travelling engineers, denoting travelling between physical spaces but also the act of being away from home.

I adopted a series of theoretical lenses to study the organisation of work travel. First, I adopted the perspective of FOS which presents organisation a stable unit that organises travelling centrally and administratively. However, I found that the office's control over work travel is only relative, and indeed, their control over ProQuip's central structures seems inconsistent. Second, I addressed the questions of control from a CMS perspective where I also

studied the experiences of travellers and their understandings of travel, focusing on the social mechanisms that mediate work travel. I found that an additional organisation to that of ProQuip appears to be steering work travel and its practices, which I called the Travelling Organisation. Despite focusing on the organisation-view (formal) and engineers-view (social) aspects of organising work travel, I find that elements of the practice of work travel remain unaccounted for. To overcome this issue, I proposed adopting the process lens to directly study the *organising* of work travel, including formal and social mechanisms, but also redirecting one's gaze toward 'other' forms of organising such as that of product. I, therefore, propose in this thesis that work travel is organised through a combination of formal, social, and 'other' *practices*. I argue that in order to understand work travel, it needs to be conceived as an ongoing process, and its organising too should be perceived from an active stance, as a constant effort and set of activities that lead to a state of organisation.

In the remainder of this section, I explain the progression of this thesis, first addressing what theoretical issues were derived from literature on mobilities and how this has become relevant for MOS. Following that, I recount how the empirical research advanced throughout Chapters 4-7 and what the findings of each were.

8.1.1 Problems from the literature (Chapter 2)

The Second Chapter reviews relevant bodies of literature around the topic of work mobilities. I define work travel as a form of mobile working which is distinct from other forms prevalently studied in MOS, such as expatriation, migration, and ICT-mediated work. I explain that such forms of mobile working occur under different conditions from work travel, where for example, ICT-mediated working like teleworking does not necessitate geographical displacement and working from specific places, while expatriation does not require frequent trips from home to remote work locations. In contrast to that, work travel requires frequent geographical displacement from home to specific remote work locations where engineering work is carried out. I also indicate that work travel is an understudied yet crucial form of working that pertains to MOS study since it is an essential work practice for engineers and other professional who build their work-life around it, and it also remains unclear how management of such remote personnel is accomplished outside of the strict boundaries of classic workplaces like offices (Aguiléra 2008; Hislop and Axtell 2007; Axtell and Hislop 2008). This regular remoteness constitutes a practical problem for organisational actors, as I explain in Chapter 4 by depicting 'Millennial Problem', where ProQuip's managers find that

they are having trouble controlling travelling employees. I review perspectives previously adopted to study mobile working, specifically paying attention to Formal Organisation Studies and Critical Management Studies as two relevant approaches to the formal and social aspects of organising.

Following the review, I present two problematisations to existing literature. First, I note that much of the literature on mobile forms of working neglects to consider the role of organisation, where typically work travel and organisations are studied as separate entities. Following Faulconbridge and colleagues (2020), I argue that the entanglement of these entities must be considered to achieve a deeper understanding of work travel that accounts for the influences of organisations on travel. Secondly, and following Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) propositions, I problematise the applicability of current organisation theories to non-static work forms. I argue that the static view of organisations typically adopted within MOS does not account for the dynamic nature of work travel and therefore, direct translation of forms of control from co-located traditional workplaces to remote and dynamic work conditions cannot be assumed. These two theoretical problems, which I then call the entanglement and static problems, form the foundation of my inquiry in subsequent Chapters. I conducted the research using ethnographic methods as described in Chapter 3, doing multi-sited fieldwork across six sites of ProQuip and analysing the data by focusing on the multiple practices of work travel.

8.1.2 Findings (Chapters 4-7)

This subsection summarises and discusses the findings from the empirical Chapters 4-7, indicating at the problems derived there and showcasing the continuity of my inquiry into work travel. Chapter 4 describes what travelling entails at ProQuip, describing it as a multifaceted practice that includes: (i) the *physical dimension* of work travel, denoting moving from one place to another, as geographical displacement; (ii) the *static dimension* of work travel, which is being away from the core of ProQuip such as the offices, in peripheral factory building sites; (iii) choosing to engage in this organisational practice for multiple *reasons* and responding to *motivators* for travellers; (iv) becoming a traveller, in the sense of *embodying a traveller* by adopting behaviours and doing additional labour to travel, and; (v) practicing *supplementary mobilities* such as digital mobilities to support and enable travelling. Through this account, I provide a more integrated view of travelling in organisation than previous studies of mobilities, where generally authors privilege one aspect of travelling over others (Aguiléra 2008). This fosters insight into what travelling entails in practice and what meanings it holds for travelling

engineers. The integrated concept of work travel feeds into the analysis in subsequent Chapters, emphasising that managing work travel is much more than managing geographical movements of employees.

In Chapter 4 it also becomes known that travelling is not only a set of theoretical problems for MOS, as described in Chapter 2, where I explained that it is unclear across the mobilities literature how work travel is organised beyond the bound workplace (Costas 2013) and how work travel relates with the organisation (Faulconbridge et al. 2020). Empirically in Chapter 4, I find that ProQuip's management are finding managing work travel challenging; they explain that they are having problems getting Millennial generation employees to continue travelling, with them moving to office positions after some years at the company. They call this 'the Millennial Problem' and try to manage its symptoms using HR interventions. However, I suggest that the Millennial Problem may be of the nature of organisational control, and rather than attempting to 'change the mindset of employees' we need to understand how control is administered in ProQuip over travelling (and therefore remote) engineers, and what of the modes of control employed at the organisation fails to act equally upon the Millennials as it did on the previous generation, known as the Older Guys. Therefore, the question that emerges from this Chapter is "how is work travel organised?".

In Chapter 5, I start my investigation at the 'core' of the company, focusing on the formal organisation of ProQuip, its offices, and legitimate structures which, according to classic organisation theory, should be the central hub that organises everything else (see Parsons, 1951; Mintzberg 1979; du Gay and Vikkelsø 2017). While in my fieldwork I observe two key spaces where work is done at ProQuip – the office and the site – in this Chapter, I focus on the office. I learn that while ProQuip operates over 250 large projects every year, meaning that they have staff across over 250 main locations of inter-organisational project work known as *sites*, there is a limited number of offices and only one central office, the headquarters of the company. I start my study at the headquarters, assuming that a large portion of organising efforts would come from this centralised structure. This assumption adheres to the core/periphery structure dichotomy commonly utilised in MOS and IHRM research which assumes that the one 'core' is an organising agent of multiple global 'peripheries'. I explain that I start at the core to understand the relationship of 'the organisation' (particularly, the formal organisation) with its travelling agents and peripheral sites.

While in Chapter 5 I expect to find clear specialised division of labour, strict hierarchies and formal written rules that are dictated through impartial rational logic (Parsons 1951; Weber 1978), instead I find inconsistencies and uncertainty. I expect these formal structures to set out the framework or scaffolding by which work travel is organised institutionally, exercising control from the centre out onto individual project units, sites, and engineers. However, instead I find a deconstructed formal organisation, riddled with ambiguities and inconsistencies. In the absence of formal hierarchies and information, a series of informal organisational charts reveal that organisational members, particularly of the managerial class, are seeking to regain control over the company in face of the disorder by creating representations of it and applying remote control through visibility technologies like charts (Cooper 1992). It becomes clear throughout the Chapter, then, that the formal organisation of ProQuip is unstable, messy, and its boundaries are not clearly defined. Therefore, in Chapter 5 the image of a rational permanent organisation crumbles.

While the FOS school would consider this a failure of organisation, I suggest adopting an alternative perspective that considers restructuring and disorganisation in companies as usual and even routine (Cooper 1986). Chapter 5 reveals an important dimension of organisational life that is paradoxical and disorderly, and instead of dismissing it as erroneous, I find the discovery puzzling and inspiring further investigation. I, therefore, suggest that the core/periphery perspective adopted early in this Chapter is inconsistent with the empirical material and offer to consider organisation, not as a bound rational *entity*, but as the *enactment* of organisation (or *organising*) through organisational practices (Cooper and Law 1995). Chapter 5, then, creates a new problem. It does not answer the question of *how control is exercised over work travel* and opens a new question: *where, if not at the core (or offices), is the organisation?*

In Chapter 6, I study two organisational spaces where elements of work travel are observable: the office and project site. Using these spaces as media to reveal work travel, I focus on the formal infrastructures and social practices that govern work travel, given that formal and social organisation are the two main categories that organisational scholars typically adopt to study organisations. That said, it is important to emphasise that formal and social organisation are not 'types of organisations' but approaches to studying it, where formal organisation is a form that social organisation takes (Cooper 1983). I study a range of formal mechanisms that the head office has in place to coordinate project work and travelling staff,

including the travel reporting system, global staffing offices and decisions, project governance, and digital engineering systems.

I find that these infrastructures do not directly organise work travel, but appear to act as supportive systems, easing the travelling experience for engineers. For example, travel reporting makes accounting for travel expenses simpler with it being automated through codes, linking to discounts, and narrowing the search of the engineer to approved options in terms of hotels and car rental companies. However, I caution against dismissing formal organisation as not in control of work travel, explaining that through methods like enforcing textual accountability and keeping individual files, companies retain control over even remote employees directing their actions and behaviours (Cooper 1989). I also remind the reader about the technology of representation discussed in Chapter 5, pointing out that the same distant control through visualisation applies in homogenising project work and hence administering control over the individual travellers.

Nonetheless, it appears that the control of the formal organisation is a partial explanation to how work travel is organised hence I move on to social forms of control. Focusing on the project site as a primary place of work for travellers. I study the travellers customs and norms, including the local community formation, global social networking, and commitment to travelling. I found a culture where local comradery and maintenance of global social networks is an intrinsically expected part of doing project work, factoring into what being a ProQuip traveller means. However, I also found disparities between the Travelling Culture of the Older Guys and the one of the Millennial employees, where they usually spend out-of-work time on site in separate groups and where the third prominent norm among the Older Guys, the commitment to work travel, did not have the same weight or pride associated with it among the Millennials. I, therefore, explained that it seems like two Travelling Cultures that share many characteristics. Indeed, I also find that despite some overarching similarities between the Travelling Cultures and the Office Culture, they are different, featuring different expectations and prompting different behaviours among their employees. Most significantly, through an analysis of historical narratives, it emerges that ProQuip never seemed to attempt to control the Travelling Culture beyond enforcing narratives about a general ProQuip Culture, given that the Older Guys' Travelling Culture suited the needs of ProQuip.

Based on the discussed disparities, I suggest that it may be plausible to imagine the organisation of work travel as a separate but also connected organisation to ProQuip. I call this

organisation the Travelling Organisation, describing it as self-forming and self-organising 'social organisation' that is not formally incorporated like ProQuip and exists as proxy of ProQuip onsite, standing in for what ProQuip cannot organise. I also show that the Travelling Organisation exists transcendentally meaning that it does not have its own spaces of operation, but it is observable on ProQuip's sites, predominantly the project sites. I note that the main purpose for the Travelling Organisation's existence is to organise work travel and its nature is dynamic hence it is not just an Organisation of Travel, but a *Travelling* Organisation. Therefore, I suggest that a dynamic perspective is necessary to understand not only the Travelling Organisation, but ProQuip, the entangling of these organisations, and work travel.

In Chapter 7 the entanglement between the identified organisations and work travel is investigated by addressing organisation not as institution or entity, but as process. I draw on the works of Robert Cooper who advocates for organisations to be studied through a 'proximal' lens, reconceptualising organisation from a pre-existing, stable structure to a series of social activities that construct a pattern that becomes known as 'organisation' (Cooper 1986; 1989). Following this process view of organisations, the Chapter returned to the core questions of the thesis, responding to *how is work travel organised* and *how are work travel and organisation entangled*. In response to the latter, I explain that focusing on the activities of organising provides insight into how ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation are mutually constitutive. In particular, I explain that through the practices of work travel, ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation are being bound together and held apart simultaneously. In other words, the practice of work travelling is the boundary between them, where, for instance, travellers are dependent on the infrastructures of ProQuip when performing onsite work and they are dependent on the Travelling Organisation and its resources, such as when requiring advice from colleagues. Yet, the travelling practice also keeps the Travelling Organisation and ProQuip apart by sending its engineers to geographically remote places. Hence, ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation exist in a symbiotic, mutually defining relationship that is mediated through the activities of travelling for work.

In responding to *how is work travel organised,* I consider non-institutionalised manners in which travel is organised, specifically studying how the processes of making the product that the factory being built will be manufacturing organise work travel, and by association, ProQuip. I conclude that by studying multiple facets of organising activities, including 'formal', 'social', and 'other', a more heterogeneous idea of the organising of work travel can

be achieved. I argue that the use of formal infrastructures of ProQuip, together with the social conditioning and drawing on the resources of the Travelling Organisation, and following the rhythms of production of goods, together produce a nuanced account of how organising is done. Moreover, understanding these three facets of organising as ongoing processes of organisation-making leads to an appreciation of work travelling as a dynamic organising process that in itself is organising ProQuip and the Travelling Organisation while being organised by them. In other words, work travel is acting and being acted upon, hence it is "both cause *and* effect of [its] happenings" (Cooper 1976, p. 41).

8.2 Contributions

This thesis makes four contributions to MOS and the studies of mobilities. First, based on the analysis provided in Chapter 4, this thesis provides an integrated account of work travel drawing upon empirical research. Previous studies of work travel and mobilities generally privilege one aspect of travelling over others (Hislop and Axtell 2007; Felstead et al. 2005), particularly the use of ICTs to facilitate teleworking. This ethnography shows that work travel encompasses many different mobilities, including displacements, digital mobilities, the state of being away from home, and more. This is significant because it elucidates that travellers typically draw on more than one type of mobility at a time, for example, using company phones to call or respond to emails while travelling to site, and making use of 'travelling artefacts' such as international plug artifices while staying abroad for work. Moreover, oftentimes engineers depend on one form of mobility to engage in another, for example needing internet connection onsite to do their work (and hence remain onsite). Indeed, some studies have noted the relationships between different mobilities, predominantly studying how displacement practices such as work trips interact with ICTs (Felstead and Henseke 2017). However, these studies are generally conducted from a lens of substitution, aiming to prognose how physical mobilities could be replaced by ICTs (Faulconbridge et al. 2020). This lens misses the intricate correlations and dependencies between the different mobilities that are highlighted in this ethnography. The integrated perspective onto mobilities, through the concept of work travel, can open new avenues for research which consider the manners in which different mobility practices interact with each other and are conjoined to enable other organisational practices.

Second, this thesis presents an ethnographic account of work travel, addressing the scarcity of empirical studies on the topic and exploring the experiences of engineers who regularly

engage in this work practice. In other words, this thesis contributes to MOS by providing an empirical insight into work travel, addressing the conduct of work outside of permanent organisational spaces. Work travel is illustrated through ethnographic narratives, describing some of the practices and experiences as a lived every-day activity for travellers, thus establishing the multiple meanings that work travel holds for the organisational members of ProQuip. This ethnographic attention contributes empirically to the understanding of work travel and mobilities, since ethnographic research is known for providing deeper insight and revealing previously unnoticed aspects of phenomena, enriching our understanding of our informants from their point of view and questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019). By embedding oneself in a context for a prolonged time period, an ethnographer has access to deeply situated meanings, internal colloquialisms, and personal experience of the way of life of the locals. This also provides ethnographers with a unique viewpoint from which they can challenge established theory, especially where new practices arise within grand narratives of past (Kuruvilla and Avgar 2006). By introducing detail from the lives of travellers, depicting travel and its technicalities, I attempt to intimately acquaint the reader with work travel, addressing how the practice is constructed, by whom, using what means, and with what consequences (Atkinson 2017). The empirical aspect of the thesis contributes to the understanding of work travel as a daily lived experience for travelling engineers and other travelling workers.

Third, the thesis provides an account of the relationship and entanglement between ProQuip and work travel, demonstrating organisation and work travel as co-constituent and describing the entanglement as an organisation-making process. As noted in previous Chapters, work travel and organisation are generally studied as 'discrete entities', neglecting to address the connectivity between mobile working forms and the organisations in which these practices are embedded or by which they are enabled (Faulconbridge et al. 2020). In this thesis, I attempted to study work travel from an organisational stance, initially aiming to explain how it is organised by ProQuip, and later discussing the possibilities of work travel organising ProQuip as much as being organised by it. I demonstrate that organisation and work travel are co-constituent and have a symbiotic relationship, where one defines the other through mutual dependency: work travel relies on ProQuip to continue being practiced whereas travel and its activities provide legitimacy and resource for ProQuip to continue operating. By identifying and confirming that work mobilities and organisation are correlated, the thesis contributes to the studies of mobilities within MOS, indicating that mobilities such as travel should be studied

in relation to organisation rather than in an isolated capacity, as has been predominantly done so far. This, then, can lead to a more complex conversations about travel that apprehend it as part of the fabric of organisation, and as shown in this ethnography, a central constituent of the identity of ProQuip, thereby moving past the stances that inherently judge travel as a problem to be 'managed away' due to financial costs or environmental concerns, often through digital alternatives (Gustafson 2012; Poom et al. 2017; Caset et al. 2018; Boussauw and Decroly 2021). Therefore, this analysis fosters a more nuanced understanding of what travelling entails in practice and what meanings it holds for travelling engineers, and how it is deeply embedded in organisation, opening new avenues for research on what constitutes mobile working, how it is experienced by travellers, and what drives it.

Fourth, the thesis responds to the principal research question "*how is work travel organised?*" hence adding to the theorising of work outside of permanent organisational spaces. I show that the organising of dynamic practices can be studied across the multiple lenses applied in MOS, including social, formal, and 'other' perspectives. In this, I contend that to understand a dynamic practice like work travel, the perspective adopted needs to appreciate organisation as an activity rather than a fixity, which requires the conceptual shift described in Chapter 7. Therefore, I show that work travel is organised through *practices* of what could be described as of formal, social, and 'other' natures. For example, formal organising of work travel occurs when engineers use formal infrastructures or when administrators fashion them. As I note in Chapter 6, ProQuip has many tools and software designed to improve engineering and travelling, so much that their computers are slowed by the overpopulation of programmes that the IT department generates and installs. However, only a segment of these tools actually gets daily use, therefore, it makes sense to only study the tools that are being used and how they are being used, given that intended use does not always match with the real application. The focus, then, is on the activities surrounding the tools and infrastructures, not the tools themselves. Since work travel is a process and activity rather than state, I advocate for studying it and its organising as such.

Furthermore, I respond to the issue of the static conception of organisations identified earlier in the thesis. Specifically, I problematised the applicability of current organisation theory to the organisation of work outside of the permanent organisation given that these theories are derived from and typically studied in fixed organisational spaces that are unlike the conditions producing the Travelling Organisation. I show that organisation theory does not

appear to directly translate from static spaces to dynamic conditions, for example, in considering culture management approaches. ProQuip travellers are generally outside of the sphere of influence of the permanent organisation and are not subject to the same ProQuip culture as office-based employees – with travellers practicing different lifestyles and working under different conditions. A spontaneous culture instead emerges among travellers. Therefore, I contribute to MOS by highlighting the differences between organising in fixed and dynamic organisational settings, indicating that the applicability of contemporary organisation theory in some contexts may need to be reconsidered. I also suggest that studying phenomena that is inherently dynamic, like work travel, requires a perspective onto organisation that acknowledges this dynamism, thus I offer to study travel through it practices and activities. I propose that such an approach is transferable to other organisational practices.

8.3 Limitations and future research

There are a few limitations that are important to highlight in relation to this study. First, this study was conducted at ProQuip and is directly concerned with the events and happenings in that company. This means that it is not generalisable beyond the setting of this ethnography, and while it represents work travel, and I contend that the multifaceted concept of work travel derived from this setting and presented in Chapter 4 is useful for continuing to explore work travel, it is vital to remember that work travel may look different in other settings. In fact, some of my informants who previously worked for ProQuip's competitor commented on differences in work travel, for example Fabio in Chapter 1 says "I used to travel and save, travel and save, that's all," when describing working for the competitor.

Second, my ethnography took place across four languages, which is both an advantage and limitation of this study. My proficiency in the four languages is different, where for example, I speak English on a daily basis, but I have not practiced German is several years. This impacted the fluency of my understanding in certain conditions, especially onsite where industrial noise was making it hard to hear what engineers were saying. It is also important to factor in the cultural differences that are embedded in languages. Knowing a language fluently does not necessarily lead to perfect understanding or articulation of ideas. I found this to be the case with Russian, my mother tongue, and English. For instance, I made a mistake assuming that 'anthropologist' would have the same meaning in Russian, making my informants think that I am an archaeologist. Similarly, when onsite in the US, I had trouble understanding some of the

expressions that locals used, including American football metaphors and slang. The difference in languages also translates into the writing of the thesis, where some expressions and ideas in Russian, Swedish, or German do not have direct translations, forcing me to reshape the informants words, while losing some of the character of the conversations. For example, the use of “whatsamathingy” is mentioned in Chapter 3 instead of the Russian *fignya* (фигня), which does not capture the dismissive nature of the Russian term – expressing how unimportant the item is but also necessary for the sake of this task, said in casual swearing. The English alternative hints at forgetfulness, perhaps not being able to think of the item’s name, whereas in Russian it expresses the lack of care about it: “just pass me that *fignya*.”

Third, it is important to account for my position at the field as a young, non-engineer woman. It has become clear on several occasions that the behaviours around me differed than around other ProQuippers, particularly onsite which is a male-dominated space. I noted that engineers spoke to me differently, and in Russia no one even shook hands with me because in their culture, it is rude to shake a woman’s hand. My gender set me apart from other ProQuippers, sometimes rendering me invisible, while at other times leading to changes in the field because of me. For example, in one meeting an engineer started swearing but was cut short when the site manager barked at him: “watch your language, there’s children around here.” After looking around, confused as to where and why there would be children on a project site, I noticed all eyes on me. Turns out I was the child. I discuss my positionality at the field in more detail in section 3.2.5 in the Third Chapter, however, it is important to highlight here that a different ethnographer would have had other conversations and different access than me, meaning that my body, languages I speak, occupation, and other attributes, all affect the data I collected and how work travel was made understandable to me.

Fourth, this study was Euro- and American-centric, having taken place across the Nordic countries, Belgium, Austria, the United States, and Russia. While Russia, the US, and the northern European countries all have different cultures and languages, it is vital to note that the narratives, perspectives, and outcomes of this thesis are only to an extent representing *global* work travel. While many engineers that I met across different sites came from the global south (e.g. Argentina and Brazil) or Asia (e.g. India and Indonesia), I have not been to sites on that side of the world and so my research remains restricted to the global North. Future research should focus more on the conditions of the global South, where much project work is being done.

Fifth, the multi-sited nature of this research is an advantage and limitation, where on one hand, I was able to gather insights from multiple places, interact with many travellers, and experience travelling. On the other hand, this impacts the extent of my immersion in the field, where typically ethnographers would build long-term strong relationships with informants. I was unable to do so due to the sporadic nature of site visits, having spent a month in each of the three project sites, a week each in two offices, and the rest of the time at ProQuip's headquarters. However, even in the offices there were few people who stayed for longer than a few days (other than managers), meaning that I could not spend much time with them. While this is a limitation in terms of depth, I find that the short interactions, like working for two weeks alongside a group, were authentic to the field, where to be trusted I often simply need to tell them that "I am ProQuip" (not, "from ProQuip", "*am* ProQuip", as the local colloquialism goes).

Sixth, in the thesis I did not have scope to focus on a few areas of interest that I believe should be explored further in future research. Among which I find particularly important to focus on the digital mobilities and their interactions with work travel. As I describe earlier in the thesis, I find that digital mobility use is vital for conducting work travel, for instance, internet connection is indispensable for work travel and allowing project work to be conducted. More exploration is needed to see how these modes of travel interact and affect one another. Furthermore, more attention needs to be paid to the non-human actors and their agencies in the field. While I inquired into the role of product as well as the agencies of formal infrastructures in shaping work travel, I find that more work could be done on the relationship between product lifecycles, the conditions for its making, and travel.

8.4 Concluding thoughts

This thesis studied *how global work travel is organised* in a 12-month ethnographic study of a multinational engineering company, ProQuip. In particular, this thesis identified two core theoretical problems to which it aimed to respond. First, the practice of work travel has previously been studied as a discrete entity that is disconnected from the organisation within which it emerges. Therefore, it remained unclear whether and how work travel and organisation are entangled. Second, organisations are generally perceived as static units and generally extant organisation theory is derived from static settings, I challenge how such conceptualisation and theorising applies to the dynamic practice of work travel.

In response to these questions, I make four contributions to scholarship in Management and Organisation Studies and the topic of mobilities. First, I provide an integrated account of work travel that encompasses five dimensions of mobility, including: geographical movement; being away from home and office; engaging in travelling; embodying the traveller; and utilising digital technologies. Second, I provide new empirical insight into the lived reality of travelling workers. Third, I follow three theoretical lenses in an attempt to identify how work travel is organised, finding three modes of organising affecting work travel: formal, social, and 'other'. The first involves formal organisational control mechanisms deployed from ProQuip's offices to its peripheral offices and sites, and enforced through sets of formal infrastructures like charts and travel reports. The second accounts for a range of social mechanisms and behaviours that organise travel, revealing a Travelling Organisation that supports and substitutes ProQuip's formal control. The third involves 'other' modes of organising that are not institutionalised within the MOS discourse, accounting for the agency of a product in organising work travel and ProQuip. Fourth, the thesis contributes to MOS by showing how work travel and organisation are entangled in an organisation-making effort, that is, work travel and organisation co-create one another. In this sense, I respond to the core question of the thesis *how is work travel organised?* by explaining that work travel is organised via the process of continuous organisation-making that occurs at the peripheries of permanent organisations if perceived through the distal outlook, or through the tension between a permanent organisation and other forces, specifically of formal, social, and 'other' natures. This organisation-making is made visible through, constructed by, and supports work travel, and the process of work travelling is the dynamic boundary-ing of organisation which manifests their being. In other words, work travel produces organisation, and organisation produces work travel in a cyclical, dynamic manner.

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