Ellen Nathues

Differences in Dialogue

The Voices We Hear
in Interorganizational Collaboration

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THE VOICES WE HEAR IN INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

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Preface

Imagine you are a professional working at an organization. Already in your regular job and everyday work, you have a lot to make sense of: What is the professional image you have of yourself? Do you identify with your organization and its visions and values? Can you combine your interests and ambitions with those of your company or department?

Now, imagine you join an interorganizational team. You are now part of both your organization and your new interorganizational group, next to the affiliations with your profession, department, field, and so on. As your memberships, identities, and interests multiply, the lines between your many roles and attachments start to blur, or they begin to constantly compete for primacy. In one moment, you identify with the person sitting across the table in your joint interorganizational project and collaborative goals; in the next, you remember the (possibly deviating) objectives that your organization has for the collaboration. It is almost as if your organization is another voice in the back of your mind, one that creeps under your tongue and is so powerful that, only a breath later, it makes you voice these deviating aims. Because is that not what you are ultimately there for in your new interorganizational team? To represent—or perhaps more accurately, make present—your organization?

Then your vis-à-vis utters something and interrupts your thoughts as you begin wondering why her words do not make much sense to you. Filtered through the organizational glasses that figuratively color your view, you have difficulty grasping what your counterpart is trying to convey. You look at her and the many documents that she has spread out all over the table, and you realize: Right now, you are not only hearing her talking but also her organization and its routines, values, interests, and ways of doing things, through what she and the documents are saying. In other words, you are not just having a conversation with the individual team member in front of you, but one with equally her organization, this organization's interests and values, etc. Vice versa, your vis-à-vis is not solely talking to you, but likewise to the many voices you embody and express. And now, amid this multivoicedness, you need to find common ground and agree on collaborative goals and activities to make your interorganizational teamwork successful.

***

The complex multivoicedness of interorganizational collaboration struck me very soon after starting my fieldwork for this doctoral research. As I sat in meetings and observed team members planning, coordinating, or discussing their work, what I saw—beyond the individuals—were organizations, professions, interests, ideals, attitudes, values, objects and artifacts that were being handled, and much more. Therefore, in my analyses, I began reimagining the interactional scenes that I was looking at from broadly what people were doing to, more specifically, all the things and beings made present through their talk and

actions. I saw how team members were fluidly switching between the many voices they expressed, from one situation (or even second) to the next—much like a lenticular print or wiggle picture that in one moment shows one thing and in the very next (after just a bit of tilting) something entirely else, an optical illusion that portrays both a rabbit and a duck[1], or a ventriloquist that continuously oscillates between articulating her voice or the voice of her puppet.

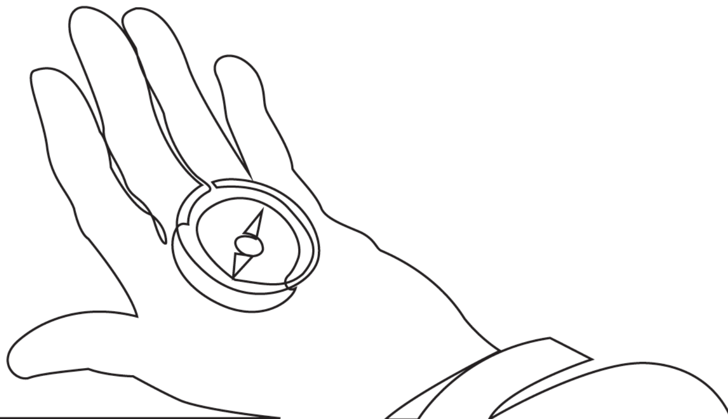
This dissertation explores the multivoicedness of interorganizational collaboration. I start with an introductory chapter (***Chapter I***) on interorganizational collaboration's particular characteristics, possibilities, and complications, the research assumptions and theoretical perspectives that orient this work, and my study's empirical setting. ***Chapter II*** maps an overview of the multiple differences that matter in interorganizational collaboration. This dissertation then develops a methodological framework that aids in identifying and tracing the many voices that partake in organizational interactions (***Chapter III***). Finally, this framework is applied to generate new insights about essential processes of interorganizational collaboration: How strategy is coauthored (***Chapter IV***) and how boundaries are built or permeated (***Chapter V***). ***Chapter VI***, this dissertation's final chapter, discusses the overarching conclusions of this work, reflects on this research, derives several core practical implications, and sketches a provisional agenda for future endeavors. Altogether, I hope that these efforts and exercises then provide novel, nuanced, and more complete answers to the following two main questions:

What differences make a difference—whose voices do we hear—in interorganizational collaboration? How do these voices shape and constitute how work unfolds and organizing is accomplished?

[1] This clever comparison was suggested by Christoph Haug (in an email conversation on communication's dislocal and impossible effects) and shamelessly borrowed by me for this preface.

Chapter I.

Orientations



Chapter I. Orientations[2]

When professionals from different organizations come together, they bring diverse perspectives, abilities, identities, interests, etc.: One team member might be an expert in technologies while another takes a more business-oriented perspective, one might just have begun working for a start-up while another has been part of her large organization for years, and one might pursue a personal agenda while another is seeking to maximize her organization's pay-offs. Interorganizational teams are often ripe with such distinctions, which is another way of saying that many different voices become expressed in them (Gray & Schruijer, 2010). This dissertation asks two overarching questions: First, *what differences make a difference—whose voices do we hear—in interorganizational collaboration?* Second, *how do these voices shape and constitute how work unfolds and organizing is accomplished?*

Interorganizational collectives have been described as multivoiced arenas already in earlier work (e.g., Bouwen & Steyaert, 1999; Gray, 1994; Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Lewis et al., 2010). This dissertation empirically explores and substantiates this analogy by unpacking '***The Voices We Hear in Interorganizational Collaboration***,' including how they shape, constitute, and (dis)organize collaborative processes and practices. In other words, it lays bare the '***Differences in Dialogue***' in interorganizational collaboration and unveils their performative effects.

This first chapter provides broad 'Orientations' of the theories, concepts, assumptions, ideas, and empirical setting that will accompany readers as they move through this dissertation. Specifically, Section 1.1. elaborates on interorganizational collaboration's particular characteristics, possibilities, and complications and sketches three conceptualizations of how this dissertation will treat members' and organizations' dissimilarity: as *differences*, *voices*, and *boundaries*. Section 1.2. explains the broader research assumptions (of a relational ontology approach; Kuhn et al., 2017) that guide how this work seeks to generate novel insight, followed by comprehensive depictions of sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) and ventriloquism (Cooren, 2010a) as this research's main theoretical anchors (Section 1.3.) In Section 1.4., the research setting is described, including the type of empirical material collected. Finally, Section 1.5. offers an outlook on the remaining chapters.

[2] I would like to thank Milena Leybold for her helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this chapter.

1.1. Multivoiced Organizing: The Case of Interorganizational Collaboration

Our organizational landscape has become increasingly characterized by collaborative arrangements between organizations (Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Majchrzak et al., 2015). In interorganizational teams, professionals from multiple companies collaborate, typically in temporary-bound projects (Sydow & Braun, 2018). It is otherness and dissimilarity that is bringing together these professionals and their organizations (Schruijer, 2020): Richer pools and broader ranges of expertise, skillsets, resources, perspectives, etc. are assumed to spur innovation, learning, or general performance (Majchrzak et al., 2015; Savage et al., 2010; Yström & Agogué, 2020). In other words, interorganizational teams are assembled as catalysts of novelty, discovery, and efficiency.

However, such anticipations are contrasted by evidenced difficulties (Bryson et al., 2006; Bstieler & Hemmert, 2010; Ungureanu et al., 2021). All too often, interorganizational teams' potentials are not actualized, at least not to their fullest. Due to an innate tension of interorganizational collaboration, what is supposed to benefit a group commonly also complicates its activities and practices. Dissimilarity and otherness can lead to "collaborative advantage" (Huxham & Vangen, 2004, p. 191), but they can just as well—perhaps even more quickly—result in "collaborative inertia" (Huxham & Vangen, 2004, p. 191). Typically, centripetal forces compete with centrifugal ones (Koschmann et al., 2012), with members fluctuating between cooperative talk and assertive talk (Hardy et al., 2005) or between speaking with a united 'we'-voice or multiple separate ones (Lewis et al., 2010).

Organizations tend to have different structures, cultures, and languages, diverging priorities and preconditions, or conflicting goals and interests (Gray, 1994; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2005; Majchrzak et al., 2015; Sydow & Braun, 2018). These distinctions can lead to friction or alienation between team members as they complicate finding common ground, building shared objectives, or organizing work. Ambiguous and imprecise authority structures further muddle these processes (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Koschmann & Burk, 2016; Sydow & Braun, 2018). Collaboration requires joint decision-making, which is why power tends to be distributed across members and organizations (Gray, 1994). Members need to agree on who has a say about what they (will) do as part of their situated practice (Koschmann & Burk, 2016), making things even more complex and messier.

Essentially, in interorganizational teams, members relate as individual professionals, group members, and representatives of their organizations (Schruijer, 2020). Some have therefore compared interorganizational collectives to multivoiced arenas (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1999), have argued that the core undertaking of such groups is the integration of multiple voices (Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Lewis et al., 2010), or have posited that "whose voices are dominant and whose are silenced is a key question to explore" (Gray, 1994, p. 290). For these reasons,

interorganizational collaboration is a fascinating context for exploring questions of multivoicedness and organizing, with great practical relevance. When professionals bring different perspectives, interests, agendas, languages, values, ways of doing things, etc., to their new team, how are collaborative goals and strategies formed, and how is exchange made productive? This dissertation will elucidate members' and organizations' dissimilarity and otherness from three angles: as *differences*, *voices*, and *boundaries*.

Differences, Voices, Boundaries

As explained before, dissimilarity and otherness are central constituents of interorganizational collaboration. In essence, teams are set up to combine members' and organizations' different skills, abilities, etc. in fruitful ways (Majchrazk et al., 2015). The separate chapters of this dissertation treat dissimilarity and otherness in three (interrelated) ways: as *differences*, *voices*, and *boundaries*.

Studies on *differences* scrutinize how professionals differ in their work environments. In theory, this can include any distinction between two or more individuals (van Knippenberg et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016)—we can differ in how we look, act, think, behave, reason, work, speak, etc. However, the lion's share of research tends to focus on differences such as gender, age, or ethnicity—that is, those differences that can be spotted immediately or that can be codified, quantified, and aggregated in straightforward ways (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). These differences are often considered input factors that influence output proxies such as creativity, performance, or decision-making (Bodla et al., 2018; Meyer, 2017). In contrast, studies of deep-level or contextual aspects or that zoom into personal and individualized accounts of how differences are noted tend to be conducted much less (Shemla et al., 2016). Therefore, studies on member differences continue to cover only a narrow terrain of attributes. Moreover, they are still solely scratching the surface of how differences are subjectively and interpretatively made sense of and often only offer limited explanatory power of why differences at times help and at other times hinder collaborative practice.

An alternative, communication-inspired conceptualization of dissimilarity locates otherness in expressing diverse *voices*. Akkerman and colleagues' (2006) study of an international research team offers a rich example of the usefulness of such a perspective. Their paper shows how distinctions in conceptualizations and understandings of pedagogy, merits in theoretical versus more practical approaches, or disparities in departmental affiliations and country-level standards can become relevant as groups collaborate, with important implications for how collective work is (or is not) accomplished. Trittin and Schoeneborn's (2017) conceptual piece seconds this line of reasoning: Diversity, they argue, includes individual aspects that one sees or notices otherwise but also differences in viewpoints, interests, opinions, or broader discourses (organizational, industrial, societal, etc.) that become articulated through what professionals say and do.

A reframing of dissimilarity as diverse voices can thus broaden what is considered part of otherness, including contextual discourses that people articulate in their talk: When collaborators sit at their meeting tables, what are the voices that can be heard? Such a conceptualization could also allow researchers to observe and study the performative effects of diverse voices as they transpire in real-time (at the meeting table).

A third way to treat dissimilarities is to consider them as *boundaries*. Boundary studies are typically less about aspects such as gender or age and more about broader distinctions, including how professional groups and roles are demarcated (Gieryn, 1983; see Bos-de Vos et al., 2019 for a study of an interorganizational project). Similar to the conceptualization of dissimilarity as diverse voices, thinking of otherness as boundaries shifts attention to interaction: Figuratively speaking, boundaries are conceptualized as emergent and dynamic lines (Abbott, 1995; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Weick, 1979), which means that they can be negotiated, contested, or made more salient as professionals collaborate. The umbrella term for these efforts is boundary work (Langley et al., 2019). Tracing how the distinctions within and around an interorganizational group are (re)drawn can reveal how dissimilarity is dealt with in interaction, for example, whether lines are blurring or why new sub-groups within a team emerge. To be successful, interorganizational groups need to collaborate across their demarcations. Considering otherness as boundaries that are (re)drawn or not can offer a helpful perspective to comprehend better how collaborators (fail to) do so.

As said, these different conceptualizations of dissimilarity and otherness reappear throughout this dissertation. Specifically, ***Chapter II*** explores which *differences* become salient in interorganizational collaboration, coupled with a sensemaking approach (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Taking an insider perspective and drawing on in-depth interviews, it answers the following research question: *Which differences do interorganizational team members perceive as meaningful when starting to collaborate, and how do they make sense of this otherness as either helping or hindering their collaboration?*

Chapters III and IV, in turn, are interested in the *voices* that we can hear as professionals work and collaborate. ***Chapter III*** mainly pursues a methodological ambition, developing the concept of ventriloquism (a central idea of the Communication Constitutes Organization perspective; Cooren, 2010a) into a more systematic analytical framework (the question that this chapter poses is: *How can the notion of ventriloquism be developed into a methodological framework for more systematic analyses*?). Drawing on video-recordings of team meetings, ***Chapter IV*** then applies this analytical framework to the strategy coauthoring process in interorganizational teamwork, addressing this question: *Whose voices do we hear in interorganizational collaboration, and how do they take part in coauthoring collaborative strategy?*

Finally, using a different set of video-recorded team meetings, ***Chapter V*** scrutinizes the *boundaries* that emerge, exist, or are re-enacted within and around an interorganizational team through visual, verbal, and embodied practices. It focuses specifically on the role of objects and poses the following question: *How is boundary work accomplished when boundary objects materialize in multimodal modes?*

The answers to these questions take the form of subjective insider accounts, momentary snapshots, processual sketches, and bottom-up theory building. Rather than offering highly abstracted insights, factors, and workings mechanisms, this work first and foremost aims to provide rich, textured, and dynamic descriptions and illustrations of the multivoiced organizing processes and practices of interorganizational collaboration. New knowledge is generated from considering the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration as continuously (re)enacted in interaction through various actants. This ambition is anchored in a relational ontological approach.

1.2. Research Assumptions: A Relational Ontology Approach

This dissertation adopts a *relational ontological approach* (e.g., Barad, 2007; Cooren, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Orlikowksi, 2007; Slife, 2004). Above all, this means that the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration is understood as ongoingly enacted through relations that are established in situated interactions between a large variety of actants. This section describes the research assumptions of a relational approach in more detail, leaning on Kuhn and colleagues' (2017) five premises.

Premise 1: Relations over Parts

One way to portray an interorganizational collective is to list its individual and organizational members and name its aims and objectives as codified in plans and strategies. Such a depiction offers an overview of the separate parts of interorganizational collaboration. Another way to describe an interorganizational collective is to focus in more detail on the relations that form between these parts as team members collaborate. That is precisely the ambition of a relational ontology approach, which argues that phenomena emerge and transform as particular connections, configurations, or assemblages are performed in practice (see also Cooren, 2018; Latour, 2013; Martine et al., 2020; Slife, 2004). This dissertation hence understands the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration as a buzzing and complex hive of ever-changing connections and scrutinizes its emergence and transformation through dynamic relations, rather than considering it as a more or less steady structure of separate parts.

Premise 2: Phenomena as Enacted and Multiple

When a phenomenon comes to exist as an ongoing enactment of relations, it also becomes innately plural and eventful (Garfinkel, 1967, 2002). What an interorganizational collaboration is or becomes can then twist and shape-shift from one situation to the next, hinging upon how exactly relations are configured (see also Cooper, 2005). Analytically speaking, this requires attendance to the concrete practices through which a particular version of an interorganizational collective is brought about, without considering this version as finite or the only one. This dissertation acknowledges interorganizational collaboration's continuous becomingness but also seeks to explain the emergence and momentary stabilization of particular configurations.

Premise 3: Phenomena as Social and Material

A relational ontology posits sociality and materiality as fundamental aspects of everything (see also Cooren, 2018; Martine & Cooren, 2016). A phenomenon is always an effect of the relations that sustain it (i.e., its sociality). Simultaneously, it is also always an effect of its materiality as these relations can take shape only through materialization processes—they need to have a material presence, in one way or another. Hence, a relational approach challenges the separation of a 'bifurcated world' (Whitehead, 1920) into material aspects on one side and social experiences on the other. Therefore, this dissertation treats the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration as always socially and materially constituted. It seeks to follow and unpack how an interorganizational collective eventually takes shape through the relations that materialize between parts, thereby sketching an image of interorganizational collaboration where material and social dimensions are connected rather than separated.

Premise 4: Agency as Hybrid and Distributed

A relational ontology argues that all phenomena are always accomplished through webs, assemblages, or configurations of multiple actants. These actants include both human and other-than-human[3] ones (see also Cooren, 2018): What a document expresses can shape an interorganizational collective as much as what a team member says. Action and agency (i.e., the ability to make a difference or do something) are therefore always hybrid and distributed, not singular and isolated, which is another way of saying that no actant acts on its own but is always caught up in and with others (see also Caronia & Cooren, 2014). Therefore, this dissertation's analytical efforts will look beyond human agency and be as inclusive and

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[3] In unison with Kuhn et al. (2017), I prefer the term other-than-human over non-human as the latter tends to keep up the rigid distinction between humans and non-humans that it seeks to challenge. I will therefore use the term other-than-humans throughout this dissertation.

agnostic as possible in identifying the chains or plenums of agencies that partake in interorganizational collectives. The aim is to provide a fuller picture of all the things and beings that act—of all the voices heard in interorganizational collaboration.

Premise 5: Causality in/as Action

Relational thinking reimagines causality as emerging simultaneously and thus indeterminately with action rather than a deterministic, linear sequence. Instead of identifying a pre-existing cause that subsequently determined what a subject was becoming, this dissertation analyzes what else is acting when a subject acts. It then elucidates how one out of many versions or configurations of interorganizational collaboration is actualized through what this ensemble of actants is doing or performing together (see also Butler, 2015).

Collectively, the five premises form the perspective from which interorganizational collaboration is considered and unpacked in this dissertation. This perspective radically differs from more conventional approaches: It prioritizes phenomena's emergence and transformation through wavering relations and performative processes over their manifestations as fixed entities or solid structures. While this might first strike readers as overly complex, messy, and processual, this perspective simultaneously has the potential to open up novel, rich, dynamic, and more complete insight into the processes and practices through which interorganizational collaboration is enacted as collaborators discuss, coordinate, and organize their joint work. The following theoretical lenses or ideas are leveraged to support this ambition: *sensemaking*, '*Communicative Constitution of Organization*' (CCO), and *ventriloquism*.

1.3. Theoretical Anchors: Sensemaking, Communicative Constitution of Organization, and Ventriloquism

Sensemaking

This dissertation seeks to provide novel insight into the processes and practices of multivoiced organizing in the particular context of interorganizational collaboration. Shifting the focus from studying organizations as bounded entities to their emergence and maintenance in situated and dynamic organizing processes was first proposed by Karl E. Weick. In his 1979 and 1995 books, he situates the emergence of organizing in the cognitive-discursive and socio-psychological processes through which collective meaning is given to events—a sensibility that has ever since been profoundly explored by organizational (communication) scholars and which has led to vast rethinking (Brown et al., 2015). With Weick's *sensemaking* theory, we have learned to imagine organizational collectives not as passive and fixed containers but as ongoing and ephemeral enactments, opening up more processual, interpretative, and practice-grounded conceptualizations and insights.

This dissertation leverages ideas from sensemaking to better comprehend which *differences* make a difference in interorganizational collaboration: Which differences are perceived by collaborators themselves, and how do team members make interpretative and subjective sense of them (***Chapter II***)?

Weick's sensemaking approach aligns with many of the premises of relational thinking described before (Kuhn et al., 2017). However, it tends to draw a sometimes-slippery and often-asymmetric distinction between human sensemakers, language, and cognition on the one hand and situations and their materiality and performativity on the other (see also Hultin & Mähring, 2017). While events' material embeddedness is acknowledged, humans and their capacity to transform complex circumstances and equivocality into comprehendible and recurring cues stand central—irrespective of whether this conversion occurs through cognitive processes unraveling in minds or through intersubjective co-construction of meaning in talk. Human actants remain the "primary authors" (Introna, 2019, p. 746) of meaning and organizing.

This limited imagination around agency (i.e., the capacity to make a difference or do something) is challenged by relational thinking, together with other theoretical lenses that illustrate that not solely humans engage in meaning-making and organizing practices. For example, Bruno Latour's (2005) *Actor-Network-Theory* (ANT) or Karen Barad's *agential realism* (2007) show how a diverse ensemble of actors participate in the relational whole that brings organizing into being, including things such as technologies, artifacts, or scripts. From this point of view, organizing is better captured as a *material*-discursive practice rather than a *cognitive*-discursive one (see also Hultin & Mähring, 2017).

Communicative Constitution of Organization and Ventriloquism

Here, communicative constitutive theorizing becomes helpful, particularly the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) school of thought. This theory places communication front and center in studying and explaining organization and organizing and adopts a broad definition of communication that includes both human and other-than-human actants (Ashcraft et al., 2009). It argues that organization and organizing happen *through* communication, which is why any differentiation between the two is analytically or pragmatically construed, at best (Cooren et al., 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2019).

CCO-theorizing hence treats organizing not as *sensemaking* but, more broadly, as *communicating*. In adopting a broad definition of communication and pursuing a larger ambition of decentering analyses and dissolving divisions between discourse and matter (or sociality and materiality), it seeks to look beyond human actors, just like Latour and Barad. As François Cooren, one of CCO's leading architects, asks in his 2010 book (2010a, p. 1): "What if other "things" could also be granted the status of actors, agents, or actants in a

dialogical situation?" Cooren suggests addressing this question by problematizing who or what else speaks whenever we communicate. With his follow-up question (p. 2), he essentially complicates the conventional understanding of communication: "What if we could show that many different "things" (to be defined) invite themselves into our conversations and dialogues?"

In talk, actions, and utterances, organizations can be made present, rules and regulations can be called upon, objects such as a simple box of gloves can be drawn attention to, attitudes can shape the type and tone of reactions, and even abstract forms such as emotions, ideas, or values can be expressed (Caronia & Cooren, 2014; Cooren, 2010a, 2018; van Vuuren & Cooren, 2010). All these things and beings materialize through communication; they can literally and figuratively make their voices heard. Hence, various voices can be recognized in everything said and done, which is another way of saying that there are always multiple voices at play in organization and organizing phenomena (Cooren et al., 2012; Cooren & Sandler, 2014). CCO's notion of *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2010a) tellingly illustrates this multivoicedness. It compares the practice of making present additional voices in talk etc. to how ventriloquial artists embody and express the voices of their puppets in what they say and do. For example, just like a ventriloquist can articulate the voice of her dummy, so can an organizational member express the voice of her organization or profession.

From this reasoning, it could be contended that this section's previous words also make present the thoughts and voices of, for example, Karl Weick, Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, and François Cooren. Through its writings, this section invokes those authors and their ideas (sensemaking, ANT, agential realism, ventriloquism) which makes them of matter for the questions that this dissertation will ask and of consequentiality for the findings that it will produce (for similar reasoning, see Nathues & van Vuuren, 2022). Thinking in ventriloquial terms can thus reveal how the people, things, and abstractions that are referred to in communication (or actions, writings, etc.) are, in fact, additional actants of interactions (Cooren & Sandler, 2014). Thereby, a ventriloquial lens can potentially decenter analyses of conversations and situations beyond the immediate interactants and contribute to more complete and relational understandings of the many voices that collectively constitute organization and organizing, also within an interorganizational context.

This dissertation first develops the ventriloquial idea into an analytical framework that aids in systematically identifying the various *voices* that we can hear in (inter)organizational interactions (***Chapter III***). This framework is subsequently applied to study two core processes of interorganizational collaboration: How a shared strategy is formulated (***Chapter IV***) and how *boundaries* found within and around an interorganizational team are (re)negotiated (***Chapter V***).

1.4. Research Setting and Data Collection

The largest share of this dissertation is grounded in a Dutch interorganizational collaboration initiative that I had the privilege of following for two and a half years. Aligned with my work's interest in '***The Many Voices We Can Hear in Interorganizational Collaboration***,' the following parts provide a comprehensive description of this research setting, structured by its main actants (and therewith, their different voices): First, the initiative and the teams (including my position within this initiative), and second, the organizations and the individuals.

The Initiative and the Teams

The interorganizational collaboration initiative brought together 23 organizations located in mainly the Eastern parts of the Netherlands. It was partially funded by a European Funds for Regional Development (Europees Fonds voor Regionale Ontwikkeling (EFRO); project number PROJ-00729). Organizations could claim some of their expenses but also had to bring in resources (e.g., by contributing hours or providing access to technologies). The initiative emerged as a follow-up of a previous project, which likewise sought to spur and strengthen interorganizational collaboration efforts yet on a smaller scale (10 organizations were part of the first project).

The broad topic that guided the initiative was Extended Product Lifecycle Management (E-PLM). Participating organizations aimed to accelerate their production and innovation processes by using interconnected value chains beyond organizational boundaries. They were searching for new ways of integrating and interacting, both technologically and socially (between professionals), along the complete product lifecycle (i.e., from first product idea to engineering and assemblage up until customer usage and service). In doing that, they were hoping to benefit from collaborating with others:

> *"We want to develop our smart industry applications and product lifecycle management capabilities through cooperation and knowledge-sharing [...] to achieve a competitive edge [...] we learn faster using each other's knowledge."*
> – Quote from the official documentation of the initiative

Structuring and managing the interorganizational initiative was a complex endeavor. Nonetheless, it was mainly in the hands of only one project leader. Around this leader was a steering group composed of representatives of the participating organizations. This steering group was responsible for tracking the initiative's overall progress and held sparse but regular meetings to do so (approximately once every three months). Precisely, this group was following the output of a total of 40 interorganizational teams clustered into five thematical work packages. Each thematical work package had a work package manager, and each affiliated team had a team lead. Team leads had to report to their work package managers

and work package managers to the steering group and the overall project leader—and vice versa, when information had to be escalated down. Figure 1 sketches the set-up of the initiative.

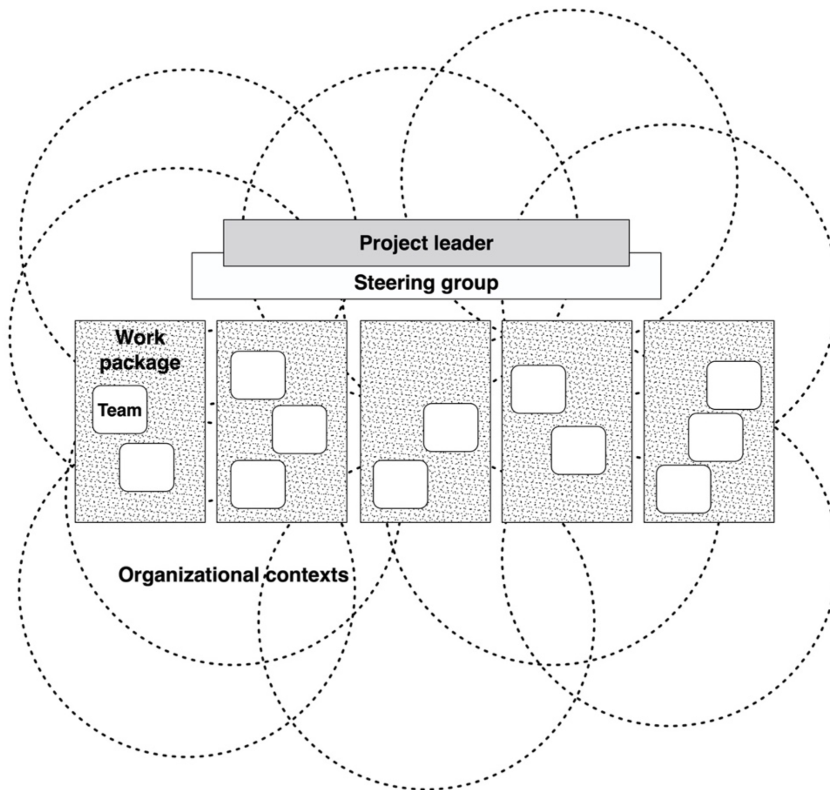

Figure 1: Sketched and simplified set-up of the interorganizational collaboration initiative (the circles signify the multiple organizational contexts)

The focus of this dissertation are the teams. In line with this dissertation's research assumptions and main research questions, I sought to be close to where the collaborative work was performed, which is also what the project leader and the steering group favored: They considered the numerous teams as the key catalysts and main arenas for innovation to happen and materialize, with the layers around them (the working packages and the steering group itself) solely providing support and infrastructure. I shared my findings with initiative members via practical writings and guidelines in exchange for my access to the initiative. Therefore, my doctoral research became a separate 'team' of the overall initiative—fluidly moving back and forth between the actual teams I was studying.

Despite the initiative's complexity, there were not many fixed structures that the teams had to comply with. On the contrary, it was mainly up to the teams themselves to set up the timelines of their work (e.g., their starting and end dates, if they wanted to collaborate for just a few months or perhaps even two years), to determine how often they would come together and in what manner (e.g., virtually or in-person), to agree on how they distributed tasks, responsibilities, and activities, or to decide who had the largest say on their overall objective.

Teams had considerable leeway for twisting or refining the purposes of their collaborative work according to their own needs and interests. While first plans and questions existed, teams could choose to change or adapt them, which a few indeed did. This, coupled with the thematic breadth of the five work packages, meant that teams were working on a vast range of topics: blockchain, servitization, performance-based logistics, cooperation culture, CAD-CAM transformation and integration, virtual and augmented reality, IoT, or predictive maintenance, to name just a few. The only aspect that remained firmly in place was the need to regularly report a progress update to the steering group (to also comply with the regulations of the funding body).

Much intriguingly, each team was a multiverse in itself: It brought together the initiative, the participating organizations, and individual professionals—who were hence both team members and organizational representatives at the same time.

The Organizations and the Individuals

In total, 23 organizations participated in the collaboration initiative and hence in one or often multiple of its interorganizational teams. Most organizations were working on high-tech solutions or offering related services. At the same time, organizations differed extensively regarding their sizes, structures, and maturities, which industries and markets they served, the length of the product and manufacturing lifecycles they handled, their company cultures and values, etc. For instance, one organization was a prominent, multinational player with great resources and advanced but often rigid structures and processes. Another company employed only a handful of people and was still figuring out its exact product and market with little to no standardized procedures.

The representatives that the organizations sent to the teams differed, too. The individuals had different functional backgrounds and often diverging ways of looking at topics and approaching problems, questions, and objectives. They were working in various functions and departments, with different levels of experience and at varying levels of seniority. Some had only just graduated while others had been working for 40 years; some were front-line employees handling the daily operational work while others occupied positions high on the hierarchical ladder and spent their days thinking about strategies and the future. Individuals also often brought different interests to their interorganizational teams, both personal and

organizational. These had to be merged into shared and collaborative goals in one way or another. Paradoxically, otherness thus often had to be both upheld and overcome, or both put in the spotlight and shoveled to the background. On the one hand, the whole idea of the interorganizational collaboration initiative was to capitalize on the diverse pool of knowledge, abilities, etc. that dissimilar individuals and organizations brought together. On the other hand, precisely this diversity sometimes foiled all chances of finding common ground.

As readers move through this dissertation, they will see back all these different voices—of the initiative, the project leader, the organizations, the teams, the individuals, and even additional ones. This dissertation will show how these voices entangle and integrate and how they detach and separate, from one moment to the next, in their ongoing quests to organize and perform interorganizational work.

Capturing the Mundane: Observations, Interviews, Database Access

A central premise in developing my strategy for data collection was to get close to the field and capture the mundane, in line with my research assumptions and main research questions. Therefore, I designed a holistic approach that covered observations (including video-recordings) of team meetings, in-depth interviews, and collecting team documents (e.g., project plans, update files, or presentation slides; all collected from teams' shared databases).

I started negotiating access to the interorganizational initiative as soon as my PhD journey had kicked off. At that time, however, the initiative had already been running for a few months, which meant that some teams had already made significant steps in their collective work. I decided against joining groups that were past their initial stages, as that would have meant missing too much of what had happened early in the collaboration. Moreover, I decided only to join teams that were regularly meeting face-to-face and in which at least three different companies came together.

I coordinated appointments with all eligible teams to introduce myself, present my broad research interest, and answer possible questions from team members. I obtained consent for interviews in four teams and observations and video-recordings in six teams (with two teams in which I was allowed to do both). I was further allowed to access the shared databases of all these teams.

Altogether, I observed and video-recorded 51 meetings of six different teams, totaling approximately 93 hours of video material. For the recordings, I used 360-degree-cameras[4] to always have the entire room on the picture. I made field notes to complement the video-recordings and document initial impressions, hunches, and feelings. I also used these notes to

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[4] Specifically, I used Kodak PixPro SP360 action cameras. I transformed the 360-degree-videos into a split-screen format using Kodak PixPro 360 VR Suite.

help me think back to the setting when I returned to the video-recordings for analyses. Whenever I observed teams, I took on the role of a still observer: For the largest parts, I was sitting, nipping on my coffee, watching, pressing buttons on my camera, or typing notes into my laptop. During meetings breaks, I engaged in informal conversations with team members. I sometimes asked for clarification of technical terms that they were using, but most often, we spoke more generally about the collaboration, members' regular work at their organizations, or how their days or weeks had gone.

Overall, I was as close to the teams as possible without being an actual member myself. At times, however, this line got blurry. When I had to report my research progress to the initiative's steering group, I had to go through the same structures and procedures as the teams I studied. In meetings, members would thus ask me how I complied with these structures, when updates were due, etc. I switched from being a still observer to being a fleeting colleague in these moments: I felt connected with them as if we were in the same boat or part of the same équipe.

In addition, I conducted 36 formal in-depth interpretative interviews with 19 members of four teams, interviewing each member twice except two that dropped out of their groups in between the first and second interview (resulting in 730 pages of single-spaced transcription). I collected teams' documents from their online databases (e.g., project plans, update files, presentation slides) for all the teams I video-recorded and/or interviewed. In total, I collected 365 documents.

The previous paragraphs have provided an overview of my entire data collection. This dissertation only draws on parts of this vast empirical material (see Table 1). Please note that ***Chapter III*** leverages a dataset that I originally collected for another research project and therefore does not show in Table 1. As part of my doctoral research, I wanted to address the question of a ventriloquial methodology (because of its great aptitude for analyses of the many voices that become expressed in interactions, as explained before). This existing empirical material was well-suited for this ambition: Five focus group interviews with 23 members of four different organizations speaking about their organizations' ideal futures and visions (transcription of 117 pages), which allowed me to explore how many different voices constituted such a central concept as vision. I used this focus group dataset with an explicitly methodological interest for my dissertation, so the contributions that I am drawing from this existing material are novel and attributable to what I studied and worked on as part of my doctoral journey.

Table 1: Overview of the empirical material collected in the interorganizational collaboration initiative and used in this dissertation

Team acronym	**Collected material**	**Usage**
Team One	Six in-depth interpretative interviews after the team's third meeting (103 pages of transcription) Team documents collected from the shared database before conducting the interviews (project plans, reports, presentation slides; 23 documents in total)	*Chapter II* uses the interviews as primary data source and the team documents (those collected before the interviews) as secondary material.
Team Two	Five in-depth interpretative interviews after the team's third meeting (102 pages of transcription) Team documents collected from the shared database before conducting the interviews (project plans, reports, presentation slides; six documents in total)	*Chapter II* uses the interviews as primary data source and the team documents (those collected before the interviews) as secondary material.
Team Three	Four in-depth interpretative interviews after the team's third meeting (55 pages of transcription) Team documents collected from the shared database before conducting the interviews (project plans, reports, presentation slides; 26 documents in total) Observations, field notes, and video-recordings (9.5 hrs.) of six team meetings	*Chapter II* uses the interviews as primary data source. As secondary material, it uses the team documents and the field notes (those collected before the interviews).
Team Four	Four in-depth interpretative interviews after the team's third meeting (91 pages of transcription) Four in-depth interpretative interviews after the team's eighth meeting (82 pages of transcription) Team documents collected from the shared database (project plans, reports, meeting minutes, presentation slides, animated videos; 26 documents in total) Observations, field notes, and video-recordings (13 hrs.) of eleven team meetings	*Chapter II* uses the first-round interviews (after the team's third meeting) as primary data source. As secondary material, it uses the team documents and the field notes (those collected before the interviews). *Chapter IV* uses all video-recordings and field notes as primary data source. As secondary material, it uses the interviews from both rounds and team documents.
Team Five	Team documents collected from the shared database (project plans, reports, presentation slides; 34 documents in total) Observations, field notes, and video-recordings (21 hrs.) of nine team meetings	*Chapter V* uses all video-recordings, field notes, and collected team documents as primary data source.

1.5. Overview of this Dissertation

This dissertation offers subjective insider accounts, momentary snapshots, processual sketches, and bottom-up theoretical insights into how differences are in dialogue—of how different voices converse—in interorganizational collaboration. This final section of the introduction provides an outlook on the four empirical/methodological chapters that follow.

Drawing on in-depth interpretative interviews and adopting ideas from sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005), ***Chapter II*** unpacks the *differences* that make a difference in interorganizational collaboration, including collaborators' subjective and interpretative practices of making sense of them: *Which differences do interorganizational team members perceive as meaningful when starting to collaborate, and how do they make sense of this otherness as either helping or hindering their collaboration?* By answering this question, Chapter II offers a broad insight into the vast range of differences that matter to collaborators themselves and provides a subjective, deeper, and more nuanced understanding of why differences are (de)valued.

Chapter III then develops the notion of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2010a) into a methodological framework (*How can ventriloquism be developed into a methodological framework for more systematic analyses?)*. This framework aids in identifying the various *voices* that become expressed in interactions and in analyzing voices' performative effects on organizing processes and practices. It constitutes one of the first attempts of the CCO school to explicitly engage in methodological work and therewith makes a vital contribution for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Chapters IV and V apply the ventriloquial analytical framework to longitudinally study critical processes of interorganizational collaboration, drawing mainly on video-recorded team meetings. Specifically, ***Chapter IV*** scrutinizes the many *voices* that partake in an interorganizational team's strategy coauthoring process: *Whose voices do we hear in interorganizational teamwork, and how do they take part in coauthoring collaborative strategy?* It illustrates how some voices are heard and integrated into what an interorganizational collective works on, while others are silenced and excluded from the strategy. It also elucidates strategy's ongoing becomingness, showing how voices can constantly be added or subtracted, with performative implications for what a team works on.

Chapter V reports how a visual artifact can both facilitate and thwart team members' communication and collaboration across and around the *boundaries* of their group (*How is boundary work accomplished when boundary objects materialize in multimodal modes?)*. It shows how collaborators can make present their organizations' voices through the visual in ways that either permeate or uphold organizational distinctions. Furthermore, it illustrates how the visual can inspire team members to figuratively look in the same direction, but also how this shared perspective can quickly diminish when new members join. Significantly, Chapter V

expands the ventriloquial analytical method with explicit attention to multimodality and equally considers the artifact's visual, verbal, and embodied materializations.

Table 2 provides a final overview of the chapters; before we move through them one by one. Altogether, these chapters and their efforts and exercises hopefully provide rich and novel insights into the multivoiced organizing processes and practices of interorganizational collaboration and enlightening answers to the two overarching questions that this dissertation pursues: *What differences make a difference—whose voices do we hear—in interorganizational collaboration? How do these voices shape and constitute how work unfolds and organizing is accomplished?*

Table 2: Overview of Chapters II to V

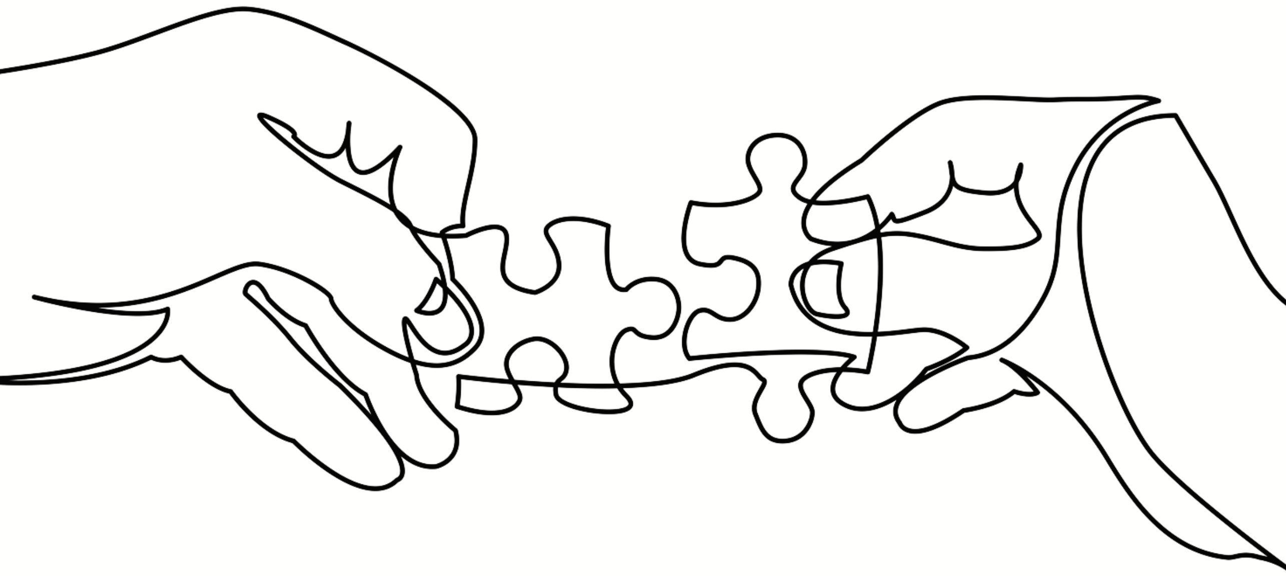
Chapter	Purpose	Related outputs	Coauthors
II Perk or peril? Making sense of difference at the start of interorganizational collaboration *Keywords:* coorientation, interorganizational collaboration, perceived member differences, representation, sensemaking	To more fully comprehend which differences matter in interorganizational collaboration and when and why they are interpreted as either helping or hindering collaborative practice. <u>Research question:</u> Which differences do interorganizational team members perceive as meaningful when starting to collaborate, and how do they make sense of this otherness as either helping or hindering their collaboration?	Chapter II is in the first round of R&R at *Small Group Research*. It has been peer-reviewed and invited for presentation at: *2020*: European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Special Interest Group on Professional Learning (SIG 14), Barcelona, Spain [canceled due to COVID-19] *2022*: European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Special Interest Group on Professional Learning (SIG 14), Paderborn, Germany	Maaike D. Endedijk & Mark van Vuuren
III Speaking about vision, talking in the name of so much more: A methodological framework for ventriloquial analyses in organization studies *Keywords:* communicative constitution of organizations (CCO), Montreal school, ventriloquism, vision	To develop a clear and systematic methodological framework for performing ventriloquial analyses in organization research that enables a relational and decentered study of who and what is acting in organizational situations. <u>Research question:</u> How can ventriloquism be developed into a methodological framework for more systematic analyses?	Chapter III is published in *Organization Studies,* 42(9): 1457–1476. It has been peer-reviewed and presented at: *2018*: European Group of Organization Studies (EGOS) colloquium, SWG 05: Organization as Communication, Tallinn, Estonia *2020*: Annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Organizational Communication Division, Gold Coast, Australia [moved virtual because of COVID-19] At EGOS, Chapter III was selected as the *Best Student Paper* of the sub-theme. At ICA, Chapter III has received a *Top Four Paper Award* and a *Top Student Paper Award.*	Mark van Vuuren & François Cooren

IV Coauthoring collaborative strategy when voices are many and authority is ambiguous *Keywords:* authority, communicative constitution of organizations (CCO), interorganizational collaboration, multi-voicedness, strategy-as-practice (SAP), ventriloquism	To scrutinize the different voices that get expressed and express themselves in situated conversations of inter-organizational teams and unpack their performative effects on how collaborative strategy is formed and authoritative positions are accomplished. Research question: Whose voices do we hear in interorganizational teamwork, and how do they take part in coauthoring collaborative strategy?	Chapter IV is published in *Strategic Organization*, Online First Publication. It has been peer-reviewed and presented at: *2020*: European Group of Organization Studies (EGOS) colloquium, SWG 05: Organization as Communication, Hamburg, Germany [moved virtual because of COVID-19] *2021*: Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Organizational Communication Division, virtual [because of COVID-19] At EGOS, Chapter IV was selected as the *Best Student Paper* of the sub-theme. At ICA, Chapter IV has received a *Top Four Paper Award* and a *Top Student Paper Award*.	Maaike D. Endedijk & Mark van Vuuren
V The paths and parts one picture paints: A multimodal take on how objects accomplish boundary work *Keywords:* boundary objects, boundary work, communicative constitution of organizations (CCO), interorganizational collaboration, materiality, multimodality, ventriloquism	To explore the situated, interactive, and processual practices of how boundaries are dealt with in interorganizational teamwork and problematize the persisting distinction between professionals and boundary objects in boundary work efforts. Research question: How is boundary work accomplished when boundary objects materialize in multimodal modes?	Chapter V is in the first round of R&R at *Human Relations*. It has been peer-reviewed and presented/invited at: *2021*: European Group of Organization Studies (EGOS) colloquium, sub-theme 55: Organizing Difference, Amsterdam, the Netherlands [moved virtual because of COVID-19] *2021*: Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management (AoM), Organization and Management Theory Division, virtual [because of COVID-19] *2022, May 26-30*: Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Organizational Communication Division, Paris, France	Mark van Vuuren & Maaike D. Endedijk

Chapter II.

Perk or Peril?

Making Sense of Differences at the Start
of Interorganizational Collaboration



Perk or Peril?
Making Sense of Differences at the Start of Interorganizational Collaboration

Team member differences can be found in many dimensions and seen as both perks and perils. But what makes one group focus on certain dimensions and differences' positive implications, while another collective notices other aspects and primarily sees trouble ahead? We address this question in the context of interorganizational teams' first stages, when impressions are limited and valuations need to be made promptly. Our findings from in-depth interviews offer a sensemaking perspective on perceived otherness and explicate when and why differences are interpreted as helping or hindering collaborative practice. Moreover, we illuminate how coorientation and representation dynamics shape otherness perceptions and valuations.

Keywords
Coorientation, interorganizational collaboration, perceived member differences, representation, sensemaking

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Chapter II has been coauthored with Maaike D. Endedijk and Mark van Vuuren. It is currently in the first round of R&R at *Small Group Research*.

It has been submitted and invited for presentation at:

- 2020: European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Special Interest Group on Professional Learning (SIG 14), Barcelona, Spain [canceled due to COVID-19]
- 2022: European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), Special Interest Group on Professional Learning (SIG 14), Paderborn, Germany

2.1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a steady surge in collaborative arrangements between organizations. Organizations team up to face complexity, optimize resources, or tap into new knowledge (Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Majchrzak et al., 2015): They form collectives that bring together their different representatives, often in temporary-bound projects (Sydow & Braun, 2018). In many respects, it is otherness that unites these organizations and their professionals, pooling differences to provide for richer sources and broader ranges of expertise, experiences, and perspectives (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Majchrzak et al., 2015). However, this promising rationale is not always actualized—at least not fully—as otherness can as well cause separation and alienation, such as when differences obstruct shared understandings or stand in the way of productive exchange (Gray & Schruijer, 2010). There is often a fine line between when a difference constitutes a perk or a peril for collaborative practice (Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2004).

Indeed, studies have revealed interorganizational teams' great potential, but they have also described their intricate and complicated workings (e.g., Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Yström & Agogué, 2020). Members are confronted with the challenge of navigating multiple distinctions that can both advance and undermine their collaboration. Initially, this means that they need to learn about each other's differences. But how do collaborators form an understanding of their team's otherness when just starting their joint work? What do they perceive as differences, and how do they make sense of these aspects as either helping or hindering their collaboration?

We draw on in-depth interviews conducted in four interorganizational teams to answer these questions. Two main objectives motivate our inquiry: First, we seek to comprehend better which differences members perceive as meaningful in their interorganizational collectives, including the subjective valuations and interpretations they form about them. This contrasts with research that has studied singular and/or researcher-determined differences or centered on generating broader input-output knowledge or cause-and-effect patterns (e.g., Choi, 2007; Fay et al., 2006; Kearney et al., 2009; Tyran & Gibson, 2008). While such work has offered relevant insight into the general implications and caveats of certain attributes, it has to a great extent left unexplored professionals' subjective and interpretative sensemaking of otherness (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). That is problematic, given that the workings and implications of differences within workgroups greatly hinge upon individual perception, as research efforts increasingly demonstrate (for a comprehensive review, see Shemla et al., 2016). One could further question if this work has tapped into a sufficient breadth of aspects that collaborators perceive as differences (Mannix & Neale, 2005; Oosterhof et al., 2009; Shemla et al., 2016; see also Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2017).

For example, in the particular context of interorganizational collaboration, we find it somewhat puzzling that studies explicitly talk about organizational distinctions in their front ends yet exclusively focus on individual differences in their research models or mix up various attributes into single variables (e.g., Backmann et al., 2015; Drach-Zahavy, 2011; Eriksson et al., 2016). Reviews of interorganizational collaboration list multiple organizational differences (e.g., varying industries, corporate cultures, interests, or practices; Jørgensen et al., 2012; Majchrzak et al., 2015), but these are often not yet treated as distinct or relevant aspects in research set-ups.

Second, we seek to appreciate some of differences' temporal dynamics, specifically the very moment that collaborators form an initial idea of their otherness (van Dijk et al., 2017). Studies have so far tended to focus on teams' later stages or have considered difference as a static quality altogether (e.g., Hentschel et al., 2013; Ilgen et al., 2005). In contrast, we understand professionals' perceptions and valuations of otherness as situated and emergent (Marks et al., 2001; Zellmer-Bruhn et al., 2008) and direct our attention to the first phase of collaboration. Especially in this phase, professionals need to learn about each other's differences while also reducing equivocality (Weick et al., 2005) to launch their collective efforts productively. Although impressions are limited, interpretations must be made promptly to move forward the joint work, with possibly lingering consequences as the group progresses. Considering a difference as a peril right at the start, even if based on only very few cues, can potentially cause persisting harm along the way.

This work makes a meaningful and relevant contribution to the literature on differences in interorganizational collaboration that can hopefully support teams in seizing the possibilities of their otherness rather than being impeded by them. Most importantly, we open up novel insight into collaborators' subjective and interpretative sensemaking practices of the differences they perceive in their interorganizational collectives.

We begin with a global but brief review of the literature on member differences and subsequently sketch a way towards a more team-member-driven, interpretative, and temporally nuanced account in interorganizational teamwork. Our method section describes our empirical material (i.e., the in-depth interviews) and analytical steps. Findings illustrate the varied differences that interviewees noted and explicate the sensemaking practices and starting points that animated how differences were perceived, interpreted, and valued as either helping or hindering collaborative practice. We end by discussing the broader meanings and implications of our findings. Amongst others, we reflect on our sensemaking approach to perceived otherness, nuance the workings of coorientation and representation dynamics in interorganizational collectives (Koschmann, 2016), and connect our insights to the recently proposed concepts of differential and distinctive belonging (Davis et al., 2022).

2.2. Theoretical Background

Revisiting Member Differences: Surface-Level, Deep-Level, Actual, and Perceived Approaches

Research on member differences studies how professionals differ from others in their work settings. In theory, this includes any possible distinction between two or more individuals (van Knippenberg et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016). We can differ in how we look, act, think, behave, reason, work, speak, etc. Attributes that quickly come to mind include gender, age, or ethnicity—perhaps because they are omnipresent in the debates and discourses of today's increasingly inclusion-focused society—but otherness can likewise emanate from distinctions in personalities, attitudes, or cognitive styles, and even from the contexts that we move through and work in day in day out.

The distinction that we are only starting to draw up are here is one of the most prevalent ones in literature: Typically, differences are grouped into so-called visible or "surface-level" (Harrison et al., 2002, p. 1029; see also Harrison et al., 1998) characteristics on the one hand (such as gender, age, or ethnicity; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007) and so-called nonvisible or "deep-level" (Harrison et al., 2002, p. 1029; see also Harrison et al., 1998) attributes on the other (such as personalities, attitudes, or cognitive styles; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). With that often comes a second, prominent categorization into 'actual' and 'perceived' differences. Studies of actual differences commonly seek to generate abstracted, group-level overviews of the amount and distribution of otherness present within a collective (Harrison & Klein, 2007), often in terms of easily codifiable attributes such as gender, age, education, or tenure. The focal locus of attention is the attribute in question and how—aggregated and summed up across individuals—this attribute either makes for a diverse group or not.

In much contrast, studies of perceived differences start with individual awareness of a person's characteristics (Shemla et al., 2016). Here, the focal locus of attention becomes the individual, with otherness perceptions primarily relying upon what one individual notes about another based on conversations, shared experiences, etc. Rather than producing indexes of how otherness is proportioned across a collective, studies interested in perceived differences thus aim for more individualized and textured accounts of those aspects that are salient to professionals themselves. Indeed, scholars have increasingly brought forward the arguments that differences must be perceived as meaningful if they are to impact work and that otherness is a more complex construct than just the aggregated sum of single parts (e.g., Edmondson & Harvey, 2018; Shemla & Wegge, 2019). A difference in age or tenure might technically exist on paper and might easily be accumulated into a group-level characteristic, but that does not readily imply that this attribute is equally meaningful to all members of a collective and an important factor in their work processes (Cunningham, 2007).

Our objective with this chapter is to harness the rich and nuanced insights that a perceived difference approach can open up (Shemla et al., 2016) while moving beyond any single attribute and beyond awareness. We aim to map the breadth of salient distinctions and better comprehend the depth of professionals' subjective and interpretative practices of making sense of these; within the particular context of interorganizational collaboration's first stages.

Member Differences in Interorganizational Collaboration: Towards a Sensemaking Perspective When Teams Start

In interorganizational collaboration, professionals from diverse organizations come together to work on common challenges, exchange knowledge, or collectively learn and innovate (Majchrazk et al., 2015). Typically, the driving rationale for setting up interorganizational collectives is to capitalize on otherness. A troublesome problem approached from different angles might be more effectively solved than had it been considered from only one perspective. Similarly, a tortuous challenge might be better tackled when diverse skillsets are combined and when organizations make productive use of complementary resources. Another essential motivation to bring together representatives of different organizations is the learning and innovation potential that resides in collaborating across distinctions (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011): We can learn a lot from engaging in conversations with others that do not share our backgrounds, viewpoints, preferences, abilities, styles, opinions, etc.

However, capitalizing on otherness requires that differences are (a) salient and (b) valued and appreciated. Expert knowledge, for example, only becomes a helpful resource when perceived and recognized as valuable (Baumann & Bonner, 2013; Faraj & Sproull, 2000; Treem et al., 2020). Yet, studies of perceived differences have convincingly shown that salience cannot be assumed (Shemla et al., 2016). Furthermore, inconclusive and ambivalent findings regarding the workings and implications of differences underline that otherness can have both favorable and adverse consequences (Bunderson & Van Der Vegt, 2018; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). That is particularly the case in interorganizational collectives, in which differences' potentials are only seldom realized to their full extent (Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Yström & Agogué, 2020). Two intuitive questions are: What are professionals perceiving as differences in their interorganizational collectives, and how are these aspects being made sense of?

These questions have not yet been satisfactorily answered to the best of our knowledge. While the idea(l) of perceived differences recognizes that people differ in which differences they notice and allows for more nuanced and subjective explorations (Shemla et al., 2016), the preponderance of studies continues to use perceived otherness to investigate "very similar questions to those studied with objective measures" (Shemla et al., 2016, p. 101). Typically, studies keep mobilizing epitomized input-output models (Bodla et al., 2018; Meyer, 2017) in which team composition is considered a central input to outcomes such as creativity,

performance, or decision-making. For instance, Backmann and colleagues (2015) study work style (dis)similarity and knowledge complementary on interorganizational teams' absorptive capacity, Drach-Zahavy (2011) scrutinize the effects of informational diversity on team effectiveness, and Eriksson and colleagues (2016) research how members' equivocality impacts interorganizational project performance.

Studies also continue to operate an "outsider perspective" (Oosterhof et al., 2009, p. 618) where researchers decide upfront which attributes are scrutinized (and, by implication, which differences matter) rather than enabling professionals themselves to list the attributes they find most relevant (Mannix & Neale, 2005). Hence, such an approach cannot map all aspects that may be salient and meaningful in a given context (Kearney & Voelpel, 2012; Shemla et al., 2016; Van der Vegt & Van de Vliert, 2005). Oosterhof and colleagues' (2009) work provides a notable exception, though in intraorganizational teams. These researchers adopt an "insider approach" (p. 630) to capture the breadth of salient differences, which reveals the complex nature of perceived otherness: Participating professionals listed a total of 497 diversity attributes, grouped into five broader clusters (i.e., extraversion, work pose, approach-to-work, task-related expertise, seniority).

We seek to further exploit the plentiful possibilities of a perceived difference approach by adding a sensemaking angle (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Specifically, our objectives are to comprehend which differences are noticed in interorganizational collectives more fully and reveal how they are subjectively and interpretatively made sense of during the early stages of working together. In other words, we pose the following questions: Which differences do interorganizational team members perceive as meaningful when starting to collaborate, and how do they make sense of this otherness as either helping or hindering their collaboration?

2.3. Method and an Outline of Findings

Empirical Context and Data Collection

We conducted our research in a Dutch interorganizational collaboration initiative. The initiative brought together 23 organizations that formed temporary interorganizational project teams. Organizations hoped to create synergies between their different interests, use complementary abilities, and foster their members' learning and innovative strength. In many respects, the initiative hence matched the rationale we have invoked before: At the bottom line, the interorganizational teams were formed to capitalize on otherness. This qualified the initiative as an appropriate context for our research objective of better comprehending perceived differences and, particularly, collaborators' interpretations and sensemaking practices of these.

Teams generally worked together for about one year; on highly diverse subjects: Topics ranged from blockchain to servitization to cooperation culture, to name only a few examples.

Participating organizations were mainly from the high-tech sector but differed on which products and services they offered and on characteristics such as size, maturity, or markets.

To learn about the differences that collaborators perceived as meaningful in the starting phase of their interorganizational teams, we rely on in-depth interpretative interviews (Langley & Meziani, 2020) that we conducted with members after their third team meeting. We conducted 19 interviews, covering four teams of the initiative (interviewing every member per team). We conducted our interviews with these four teams for two reasons. First, these teams were still at the start of their collaboration when we gained access to the initiative. Second, we obtained consent from all members only in these four teams. Interviews ranged from 35 to 70 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, totaling 351 pages of single-spaced transcription (Table 1). We draw on team documents (collected from databases) and field notes from team meeting observations (allowed in two teams, made by the first author) as supplementary data sources (Table 1).

Table 1: Interviews and supplementary data

Team	Member	Interview	Transcription	Additional data
One	Paul	45 minutes	16 pages	Team's plans and
	Alexander	50 minutes	20 pages	PowerPoints
	William	55 minutes	20 pages	
	Matt	45 minutes	14 pages	
	Christoph	40 minutes	13 pages	
	Ron	60 minutes	20 pages	
Two	Matt	35 minutes	11 pages	Attending meetings
	Marc	40 minutes	14 pages	as an observer
	Paul	40 minutes	12 pages	Team's plans and
	Harry	55 minutes	18 pages	PowerPoints
Three	Lars	60 minutes	26 pages	Team's plans and
	Oliver	70 minutes	20 pages	PowerPoints
	Greg	40 minutes	20 pages	
	Bob	45 minutes	17 pages	
	Lucas	50 minutes	19 pages	
Four	Anna	65 minutes	23 pages	Attending meetings
	Tom	55 minutes	20 pages	as an observer
	Ben	40 minutes	19 pages	Team's plans and
	Max	60 minutes	29 pages	PowerPoints
			Total of 351 pages	

We used an ego-network adaption to elicit perceptions and interpretations regarding member differences. In this technique, an individual ('ego') maps focal others ('alters') around him or her (Crossley et al., 2015; Van Waes et al., 2016; Figures 1 and 2). For our interviews, we framed the network's circles as reflecting the degree of otherness between the interviewee and his or her team members (the most outer circle representing the highest dissimilarity; whether otherness was seen as helping or hindering remained open at this point).

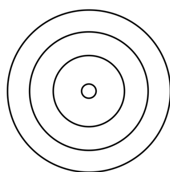


Figure 1: Sketch of a blank ego-network

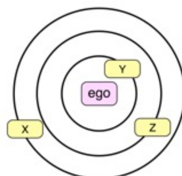


Figure 2: Sketch of a labeled ego-network

The interviewer explained the ego-network approach, asked interviewees to write down team members' names on sticky notes (these names and organization or place names were later pseudonymized), and invited participants to place the labeled sticky notes onto a DINA3 printout of a blank ego-network. Alters' positions were then examined along a semi-structured interview guide, which also listed questions on teams' general functioning. For example, questions included: *Can you explain to me why you have placed [person] in this position?*, *What differences come to your mind when thinking about [person]?*, *What do these differences mean for your team's work and success or failure?*, or *How is your team doing in general?* The interviewer ensured that conversations proceeded naturally and allowed room for exploring subjects as they were relevant to the interviewees. To ensure that the set-up was clear, we conducted three pilot interviews in teams that were part of the same initiative but not included in our actual data collection (as the consent of single members was not obtained). All interviews were conducted by the first author.

Data Analysis: A Phronetic, Iterative Approach

We opted for a phronetic, iterative approach (Tracy, 2020) to analyze our empirical material. This approach seeks to develop practically relevant knowledge (phronetic is derived from Greek *phronesis*, generally translated as 'practical wisdom') by iterating (i.e., going back-and-forth) between research questions, empirical materials, and literature. Rather than generating universal or highly abstracted insights, the approach seeks to spur dialogue and reflection between the practical phenomenon inquired, the collected data material, and previous literature that eventually results in novel, relevant, and contextually grounded knowledge. In the following, we describe the main steps we took throughout our analysis.

Familiarization and Thick Descriptions of Team Characteristics

Analysis began with intense familiarization with the interview dataset. All transcripts were produced by the first author and repeatedly read. First impressions were shared and discussed within the author team. Besides a variety of mentioned differences, we noticed that some interviewees talked about collective team goals while others only listed individual (organizational) objectives; or that some interviewees described their team as interdependent while others provided more independent depictions. Motivated by these initial hunches, we created a thick description for each team, delineating important team-level characteristics as they were expressed in the interview transcripts but also in team documents and field notes (e.g., was there a team goal? How was the collaboration described? Were members enjoying the work?). The same task was given to a research assistant to control possible differences in understanding. Thick descriptions were compared afterward to check for inconsistencies, but no major ones were spotted.

Identifying Perceived Differences and Unpacking Members' Sensemaking

We then proceeded to our research question: *Which differences do interorganizational team members perceive as meaningful when starting to collaborate, and how do they make sense of this otherness as either helping or hindering their collaboration?*

We filed all interview transcripts into computer-aided qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti) and marked every passage that mentioned a difference. We opted for a bottom-up approach and in-vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) of mentioned differences at this point as that allowed us to stay close to interviewees' subjective perceptions. Analysis and in-vivo coding proceeded team by team, member by member (applying 592 in-vivo codes). Once a team was completed, we produced narrative accounts of the differences mentioned per member. These accounts included details on how differences were interpreted and valued.

As with the teams' thick descriptions, the first author and the research assistant independently worked on these narrative accounts. The subsequent comparison allowed us to cross-check our understandings. We noted how otherness was often framed as either *helping* or *hindering* collaborative practice. For example, interviewees would describe a difference in experience as a helpful enrichment for their learning, while too narrow expertise was assessed as a possible complication. To account for these valuations more systematically, we revisited all transcripts and added codes to single out when differences were depicted as 'enrichment/helping' or 'complication/hindering.' We coded a difference as 'neutral' when mentioned, but no specific valuation was given.

In our next step, we grouped similar or related differences. We began by semantically and/or thematically clustering in-vivo coded differences (e.g., grouping 'creative,' 'creative mindset,' and 'creative ideas') and from there abstracted broader categories. Abstracting was guided by literature and formerly established categories (e.g., Baumann and Bonner's (2013) elaborations on expertise; Edmondson and Harvey's (2018) conceptualization of knowledge diversity; Faraj and Sproull's (2000) elaborations on knowledge and expertise; Jørgensen et al.'s (2012) writings on cultural, structural, and industry differences between organizations; Mannix and Neale's (2009) groups of age, education, functional knowledge, and experience; Mohammed and Angell's (2003) elaborations on personality heterogeneity; Oosterhof et al.'s (2009) clusters of seniority, extraversion, approach to work, and task-related expertise; van der Vegt and van de Vliert's (2005) conception of skills dissimilarity; or Williams et al.'s (2007) work style dissimilarity). Moreover, abstracting was informed by conceptual connections that interviewees themselves made (e.g., distinctions in organizational markets or industries were typically named with product or service offerings) and sporadically checked with interviewees when we met them within the initiative's broader setting. This resulted in a distilled set of 17 categories of differences (Table 2). For further overview, we sorted these 17 categories by their focal level: *individual* (split into functional, trait or state, and demographic) and *organizational*.

Table 2: Overview of differences categories, with totals, sorted by times mentioned

Level	Difference category	Description (shortened)	Empirical examples
Individual, functional differences	Work role, subject & hierarchy (n = 92)	This category includes differences in work roles and subjects and related differences in hierarchical levels. It can refer to differences in the tasks being performed (at one's organization or within the project) or subjects being worked on (e.g., software or prototyping). It can also refer to different job titles and hierarchies (e.g., descriptions of follower and leader roles).	"He is working on augmented reality, virtual reality." "Being the team leader, he is having more like a coordinating role or something."
	Working approach & preferences (n = 57)	This category includes differences related to someone's ways and ideals of working, such as whether a structured or chaotic working approach is preferred. It also includes differences in cognitive styles, such as descriptions of someone's explorative, practical, or theoretical way of making sense of their work.	"She is focused, but also not that much." "I think he is very good in separating the not very important issues from the more important issues that play in a company."
	Work experience (n = 51)	This category includes differences related to work experience levels. It covers different types of experience (e.g., not yet in day-to-day business life) and in both directions, i.e., both being less and more experienced.	"He does not yet have day-to-day experience." "He works a long time already; I think already 10 years at [Proto]."
	Functional background & perspective (n = 48)	This category includes differences in functional backgrounds, training, education, etc. It also includes differences in perspectives resulting from these different backgrounds (e.g., an engineer looking for technical details and a marketeer for user benefits).	"Different views, different worlds. He has a totally different background than I have." "There is a difference in mindsets, because he has a different education."
	Functional knowledge & expertise (n= 46)	Differences in functional knowledge and expertise are typically related to differences in functional backgrounds. However, this group is applied only when there is an apparent reference to knowledge or expertise, such as someone's extensive knowledge about specific processes or new technology.	"He has a lot of knowledge about service." "I think he is more familiar with all the terms and aspects that we are talking about."

Level	Difference category	Description (shortened)	Empirical examples
Individual trait and state differences	Level of outspokenness (n = 36)	This category includes differences related to someone's extent of communicating. Differences falling under this group describe how loud or silent someone is in the team and include a person's willingness to share knowledge or information with others or not.	"He is really great at sharing things, it's awesome." "He is very quiet; the discussion is going on for an hour and I haven't heard him."
	Level of ambition & eagerness (n = 35)	This category includes differences that describe someone's eagerness or ambitiousness, both as a general characteristic of a person or concerning the project. The category covers differences in both directions, i.e., both being less and more ambitious.	"He is maybe even more ambitious in the things he wants to achieve." "At first, he was really uncertain in what he was trying to achieve, why he was there."
	General personality, attitudes & behaviors (n = 22)	Differences relating to someone's way of behaving, his/her attitudes, or his/her personality fall under this category. Often, these are descriptions of how someone acts more generally as a person, without a link to functional or job-related aspects. For example, descriptions include someone's relaxed attitude, his/her interest in and care for others, or his/her satisfaction with life.	"He's bringing a lot of energy." "There's no hidden person, so he's very authentic in that sense." "She's open to everything. Everything is new and everything is wonderful."
	Communi-cation style (n = 16)	This category includes differences related to someone's way of communication. Differences falling under this group describe how someone expresses or articulates him/herself (e.g., very clearly and to-the-point or somewhat chaotic and complicated), not the extent of this person's communication (see 'Level of outspokenness').	"That's where he's calmer and therefore gets his point probably a bit better across than me." "I could learn from him, maybe communicating more directly."
Individual, demo-graphic differences	Age (n = 22)	This category includes differences in age in both directions, i.e., both being younger and older.	"We also have the younger generation asking the weird questions."
	Place (n = 1)	This category includes differences that describe where someone is living (such as town, area, or country).	"He lives in [place], I live in [place], that's a difference!"

Level	Difference category	Description (shortened)	Empirical examples
Organizational differences	Organizational goals & interests (n = 54)	This category includes all differences in organizational goals, interests, or hidden agendas. It also includes descriptions of working on different and possibly separate use cases due to diverging organizational interests.	"I see that in the relation between [Flex] and [Proto] the interests are different, but still, we can learn from each other." "There is a conflict of interest between the companies."
	Organization in general (n = 43)	This category is for differences that refer to someone's organization on a general level. This includes simple expressions such as naming a colleague's company.	"The place where he is working is different." "He is the guy from [Lore]."
	Organizational mindset (n = 21)	This category covers differences that refer to someone's mindset or way of thinking when related to or induced by the organization that this person is working for. This difference is often expressed together with someone's long tenure in a company, and his/her resulting mindset of only thinking in this company's terms, ways, etc. It is also often accompanied by references to being rigid and narrow-minded, demonstrating a lack of ability to change perspectives and consider subjects and issues from another company's viewpoint.	"His way of looking at things, from the [Proto] mindset." "He is from another company, so he looks from a completely other perspective." "His whole life he has been working at [Proto], so he has even more of a tunnel vision than I have."
	Organizational maturity & structures (n = 19)	Differences regarding organizations' maturities and structures fall under this category. Descriptions often refer to structures that are differently complex or formalized or talk about different organizational sizes and life cycles.	"He is working in a completely different environment. Very, very practical and also, when I need a solution, I make one." "Now, when you talk about [Topo], it's about 20, 25 people."
	Organizational offerings & market (n = 17)	Differences in organizations' products and services or their markets, fields, and industries fall under this category.	"The market, they are serving different markets." "They have a different product, in a different setting."

Level	Difference category	Description (shortened)	Empirical examples
Organi-zational differences (cont.d)	Organi-zational knowledge (n = 12)	This category includes differences that refer to an organization's knowledge brought to the project by a team member. The knowledge in question is predominantly attributed to the team member's organization rather than to this member's functional background or training. For example, interviewees could talk about wanting to access an organization's knowledge via the person representing this organization.	"They are fairly knowledgeable about how it's going at [Proto], what changes have been made, what was good or bad about those." "I can still learn a lot from [Proto] experience, so me learning from Marc which is actually not directly from Marc but via Marc, how things are organized at [Proto]."

To validate the logic of these 17 categories, we hired a second research assistant to assign one of the 17 categories to each passage that we marked as mentioning a difference (across all interview transcripts, supported by a codebook). We also asked her to code whether a difference was described as 'enrichment/helping,' 'complication/hindering,' or 'neutral.' She initially coded eight interview transcripts (two per team), resulting in a simple percentage agreement of 79.6 and a Krippendorff's α of 0.672 (compiled in Atlas.ti). We discussed deviations afterward and refined the codebook. She then coded the remaining eleven transcripts, resulting in a simple percentage agreement of 88.6 and a Krippendorff's α of 0.820. Thereafter, we once more discussed (the few remaining) deviations until agreeing on all codes. Chi-square analyses were carried out to understand better what categories of differences were most often perceived as helping or hindering collaborative practice.

We then zoomed out from the member onto the team level. We produced four narrative descriptions (one per team) that listed the most salient difference categories and members' evaluations and interpretations. To get a fuller grasp on why differences were valued as either helping or hindering, we iterated back to the interview transcripts and our initial, member-based accounts and filled up our narrative descriptions with details of members' meaning-making practices around the differences they perceived. Thus, we increasingly turned towards the second part of our research question and deeper understandings of how members made sense of their teams' otherness.

We expanded and refined the narrative descriptions until we were satisfied that each provided a rich and rigorous depiction of which differences were noted and how they were interpreted. Through subsequent reflection and comparisons across the teams, we could abstract our insights into four primary sensemaking practices (Table 3, next page). We further noticed that the narrative descriptions differed on whether "separation" or "variety" (Harrison & Klein, 2007, p. 1199) were foregrounded and on the focal point(s) that dominated the accounts (self-to-team dissimilarity, subgroup splits, or team heterogeneity; Shemla et al., 2016). We, therefore, returned to the team thick descriptions that we created during data familiarization, this time examining them for commonalities and distinctions. We grouped the four teams into two clusters (Table 4, next page) depending on whether they were described as or as not (yet) engaging in coorientation (i.e., the process of aligning actions to common objectives; Koschmann, 2016).

Table 3: Sensemaking practices of individual and organizational differences

	Valued as helping the collaboration	**Devalued as hindering the collaboration**
Individual differences	Team members valued individual differences as *helping* their collaborative practice when they *expanded* their own abilities, skills, etc. or *complemented* the team.	Team members devalued individual differences as *hindering* their collaborative practice when they *distracted* from the team's project or *narrowed* its scope.
Organizational differences	Team members valued organizational differences as *helping* their collaborative practice when their *organizations could learn from another organization through representati*on within the team.	Team members devalued organizational differences as *hindering* their collaborative practice when organizational differences constituted *insurmountable gaps* (too different to be overcome) or *wall-like boundaries* (members were too firmly anchored in representation roles).

Table 4: *Team clusters*

Team engaging in coorientation	**Teams not (yet) engaging in coorientation**
Team 4	Team 1, Team 2, Team 3
Characterized by:	*Characterized by:*
- Collective organization	- Fragmented organization
- Shared goal and use case	- Separate goals and use cases
- Interdependent	- Independent
- Variety emphasized	- Separation and disparity emphasized
- Focus on team heterogeneity	- Focus on self-to-team dissimilarity and subgroup splits
Implications on difference perceptions:	*Implications on difference perceptions:*
- Focus on individual differences and treating one another as individual team colleagues	- Agentic presence of organizations, often first treating one another as org. representatives - Ind. differences are noted too, but often come second or are related to org. distinctions

2.4. Findings: Illustrations and Elaborations

Overall, interviewees talked about a range of differences (see Table 5): They mention individual differences, with a large emphasis on functional dimensions (50%), but also refer to less job-related aspects in traits or states (18%). Demographic differences are named a few times (4%) but are generally described as not of much matter for the collaboration. The second-largest category of differences is organizational differences (28%).

The differences diverge in how they are valued and interpreted (X^2 (6, N = 592) = 99.37, p < .001; see the left part of Table 5). Where individual functional differences are often seen as *helping* the collaboration (47%) and less often as *hindering* (13%), this is the other way around for organizational differences (45% as *hindering* compared to 20% as *helping*). We see a rather equal distribution for individual trait or state differences (39% as *hindering* and 35% as *helping*).

Table 5: Overview of difference categories, with valuation and per team (He = Helping; Hi = Hindering; N = Neutral), sorted by times mentioned

Level	Difference category	Helping Total (%)	Hindering Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	TEAM 1 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 2 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 3 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 4 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TOTALS
Individual, functional differences	Work role, subject & hierarchy	36 (41%)	11 (12%)	45 (47%)	22 *(10; 2; 10)*	10 *(3; 3; 4)*	32 *(5; 3; 24)*	28 *(18; 3; 7)*	**92**
	Working approach & preferences	33 (58%)	6 (10%)	18 (32%)	10 *(7; 1; 2)*	9 *(7; 1; 1)*	12 *(6; 2; 4)*	26 *(13; 2; 11)*	**57**
	Work experience	26 (51%)	4 (8%)	21 (41%)	26 *(10; 1; 15)*	7 *(4; 0; 3)*	9 *(7; 2; 0)*	9 *(5; 1; 3)*	**51**
	Functional background & perspective	9 (19%)	14 (29%)	25 (52%)	24 *(7; 6; 11)*	12 *(1; 5; 6)*	8 *(1; 2; 5)*	4 *(0; 1; 3)*	**48**
	Functional knowledge & expertise	33 (71%)	3 (7%)	10 (22%)	23 *(16; 2; 5)*	6 *(3; 0; 3)*	3 *(3; 0; 0)*	14 *(11; 1; 2)*	**46**
	SUBTOTALS	**137 (47%)**	**38 (13%)**	**119 (40%)**	**105 (*50; 12; 43*)**	**44 (*18; 9; 17*)**	**64 (*22; 9; 33*)**	**81 (*47; 8; 26*)**	**294 (50% of totals)**

Level	Difference category	Helping Total (%)	Hindering Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	TEAM 1 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 2 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 3 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 4 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TOTALS
Individual trait and state differences	Level of outspokenness	12 (33%)	14 (39%)	10 (28%)	13 *(9; 3; 1)*	1 *(0; 0; 1)*	12 *(0; 7; 5)*	10 *(3; 4; 3)*	36
	Level of ambition & eagerness	7 (20%)	22 (63%)	6 (17%)	6 *(2; 3; 1)*	16 *(1; 13; 2)*	9 *(2; 6; 1)*	4 *(2; 0; 2)*	35
	General personality, attitudes & behavior	12 (55%)	2 (9%)	8 (36%)	5 *(1; 2; 2)*	3 *(3; 0; 0)*	5 *(1; 0; 4)*	9 *(7; 0; 2)*	22
	Communication style	7 (44%)	5 (31%)	4 (25%)	6 *(3; 1; 2)*	2 *(1; 0; 1)*	6 *(3; 3; 0)*	2 *(0; 1; 1)*	16
	SUBTOTALS	**38 (35%)**	**43 (39%)**	**28 (26%)**	**30 (*15; 9; 6*)**	**22 (*5; 13; 4*)**	**32 (*6; 16; 10*)**	**25 (*12; 5; 8*)**	**109 (18% of totals)**
Ind. demo-graphic differences	Age	1 (5%)	2 (9%)	19 (86%)	5 *(1; 1; 3)*	1 *(0; 0; 1)*	13 *(0; 1; 12)*	3 *(0; 0; 3)*	22
	Place of living	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 *(0; 0; 0)*	0 *(0; 0; 0)*	1 *(0; 0; 1)*	0 *(0; 0; 0)*	1
	SUBTOTALS	**1 (4%)**	**2 (9%)**	**20 (87%)**	**5 (*1; 1; 3*)**	**1 (*0; 0; 1*)**	**14 (*0; 1; 13*)**	**3 (*0; 0; 3*)**	**23 (4% of totals)**

Level	Difference category	Helping Total (%)	Hindering Total (%)	Neutral Total (%)	TEAM 1 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 2 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 3 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TEAM 4 Total *(He; Hi; N)*	TOTALS
Organizational differences	Organizational goals & interests	2 (4%)	48 (89%)	4 (7%)	14 *(2; 11; 1)*	9 *(0; 9; 0)*	30 *(0; 27; 3)*	1 *(0; 1; 0)*	54
	Organization in general	6 (14%)	4 (9%)	33 (77%)	12 *(0; 4; 8)*	5 *(1; 0; 4)*	23 *(5; 0; 18)*	3 *(0; 0; 3)*	43
	Organizational mindset	6 (29%)	13 (62%)	2 (9%)	14 *(5; 8; 1)*	4 *(0; 4; 0)*	3 *(1; 1; 1)*	0 *(0; 0; 0)*	21
	Organizational maturity & structures	8 (42%)	4 (21%)	7 (37%)	13 *(6; 3; 4)*	4 *(2; 1; 1)*	1 *(0; 0; 1)*	1 *(0; 0; 1)*	19
	Organizational offerings & markets	1 (6%)	4 (23%)	12 (71%)	12 *(1; 3; 8)*	1 *(0; 0; 1)*	4 *(0; 1; 3)*	0 *(0; 0; 0)*	17
	Organizational knowledge	10 (83%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	8 *(6; 2; 0)*	2 *(2; 0; 0)*	2 *(2; 0; 0)*	0 *(0; 0; 0)*	12
	SUBTOTALS	**33 (20%)**	**75 (45%)**	**58 (35%)**	**73 (*20; 31; 22*)**	**25 (*5; 14; 6*)**	**63 (*8; 29; 26*)**	**5 (*0; 1; 4*)**	**166 (28% of totals)**
	TOTALS	**209 (35%)**	**158 (27%)**	**225 (38%)**	**213 (*86; 53; 74*)** (36% of all differences)	**92 (*28; 36; 28*)** (16% of all differences)	**173 (*36; 55; 82*)** (29% of all differences)	**114 (*59; 14; 41*)** (19% of all differences)	**592 (100%)**

Individual Differences as Helping Collaborative Practice: When Otherness Expands or Complements

Individual differences are depicted as helping the collaboration when they are interpreted as *expanding* or *complementing*, either benefitting the individual (expanding own abilities etc. by learning from a colleague's difference) or the team (differences complementing one another in productive ways). This shows to be the case both for functional and trait- or state-related attributes. If we zoom in, we see that the attributed valuations are related to the specific difference category, both for the functional differences (X^2 (8, N = 294) = 38.02, $p < .001$) and for the trait- or-state-related differences (X^2 (8, N = 109) = 17.36, $p = .02$). In other words, how individual differences are perceived appears to be dependent on the specific type of individual difference.

On broad lines, *individual functional differences* are often seen as helping (47%). Especially differences in *functional knowledge & expertise* are interpreted positively (71%), but also differences in *working approach & preferences* (58%), *experience* (51%), or *work role, subject & hierarchy* (41%). In contrast, differences in *functional background & perspective* are described as helpful in only 9 out of 48 cases (19%).

When talking about Anna's expertise, Tom (Team Four), for example, emphasizes how he can "learn a lot from her [...] because [he] didn't know anything about it before," just like Alexander (Team One) when he describes his and Paul's different levels of experience. Specifically, Alexander explains how he tries "to learn from guys like Paul," using their "latest theory and different views on the world" also to keep himself "sharp." In turn, Paul portrays Alexander's long experience and extensive knowledge as valuable resources for his own growth. Noteworthily, Paul seems to ground his perceptions and interpretations of Alexander in the team's situated collaboration, invoking those moments when Alexander provided rock-solid answers to questions being posed:

> "He has lots of knowledge [...] I admire him for that, he is really great at sharing things; if you ask him any question, he most likely has an answer, and he can always back it up with research or a test he has performed."

Functional differences are also presented as helping when they complement each other in fruitful ways. For example, when talking about their functional backgrounds, Ron (Team One) explains how his and Paul's distinctions combined lead to rich input for their joint work. Specifically, Ron explains how Paul "has more of a business background," "thinks differently on subjects," and hence brings "ideas that I wouldn't think of" to the group. Similarly, both Oliver and Lars' (Team Two) descriptions of one another emphasize the positive effects of their complementary work roles. Oliver expresses it as follows:

> "We have different functions, focus points [...] he's thinking about the current, I'm thinking about the future; so, I generalize [...], and he has the daily headache about all kinds of practical things which I like to forget."

Some answers show a strong focus on project-specific work roles. Both Anna and Tom (Team Four), for instance, highlight Ben's function within their group: Ben is "the planner, the scheduler, keeping track of what everyone does," as Anna phrases it, or "the manager of the team [which] is very valuable," as expressed by Tom. In contrast, Anna and Tom themselves are more concerned with the content side. About Max, another team member, Tom says: "He is very practical, so where Anna, Ben, and I are academical, he's practical." Here again, Tom emphasizes that their otherness is "additive" when he explains how Max's practice-driven approach helps them not lose sight of ideas' "day-to-day applicability."

Interviewees also talk about *individual trait or state differences*. Especially distinctions in *general personality, attitudes & behavior* (55%), and *communication style* (44%) are valued as helping collaborative practice. For example, Marc (Team Two) remarks on Harry's upbeat and energetic vibe, which makes their work more dynamic and enjoyable:

> "He is more positive than I am *((laughing))* a more energetic appearance; it's always great to work with that sort of people."

Other interviewees mention their colleagues' general openness, which helps teams be creative and explorative. In his depiction of Paul, William (Team One) articulates it as follows: "He is not bound by any boundaries, very free in how to think." Anna (Team Four) appreciates the same thing about Tom ("He is like, oh, that's also possible, oh, I just picked that up; and it's a really good thing") and invokes a situation in which Tom could make sense of an Excel file that was "just a weird record of things" to her and the others thanks to his open and creative mindset.

Individual Differences as Hindering Collaborative Practice: When Otherness Distracts or Narrows

Individual differences are depicted as hindering the collaboration when they are perceived as too strongly *narrowing* conversations or *distracting* from the project. This again shows to be the case both for functional and trait- or state-related attributes.

One category of *individual functional differences* that is often named as hindering the joint work is *functional background & perspective* (interpreted negatively in 29 percent of all mentions). This is especially the case when team colleagues are unwilling to reason beyond their functional viewpoints. For example, both Marc and Harry (Team Two) explain how they experience difficulties understanding Matt, who is firmly locked up in his functional domain. Marc phrases it as follows:

> "He is very much driven by technology, his own interest [...] when I work with him, I need to be constantly aware of whether we are really talking about the same thing or if we mean something completely else."

Additional complications appear to emerge from differences in *work role, subject & hierarchy,* or members' *working approach & preferences* (assessed negatively in 12 respectively 10 percent of all cases). For instance, Harry expresses the following about Matt:

> "What he is working on is so different, it is hard to get the point. Like, I think you mean that, and then it's, ah, no- no- no, that's not the point, so it's hard to get on the same page."

In another team (Team Three), Lars remarks that Greg's too complex reasoning leads to discussions "from one problem to the next problem and the next problem," with Greg himself "drowning in his own problems."

Other aspects that are mentioned as complicating the collaboration concern *individual trait- or state-related differences*. Here, particularly distinctions in *level of ambition* are interpreted as standing in the way of collaborative practice (assessed negatively in 63 percent of all cases). For example, Paul (Team Two) laments that Marc "doesn't seem to be investing much time into the project," which he perceives as "just letting go." Similarly, Oliver (Team Three) seems to be missing a certain drive in Bob:

> "With the others, you see that there is a form of initiative, of 'I want to solve a problem.' And when I look at him, uhm, he doesn't, he doesn't want to."

In addition, also lacking *outspokenness* (39%) or differences in *communication style* (31%) or *general personality, attitudes & behavior* (9%) appear to complicate collaboration. For instance, Oliver continues his depiction of Bob with the following statement:

> "He is very quiet. The discussion goes on for an hour, and I haven't heard him. What he tells are sensible things, maybe solutions, but it's very limited [...] the relation is not that fruitful."

In another team (Team One), both William and Alexander (Team One) portray Ron as lacking social abilities, even though he contributes valuable content expertise. William describes it as follows:

> "Projects like this rely on social aspects, but he kind of struggles with that [...] when I want to ask him a quick question, it doesn't work, I don't know why, but it feels passive, kind of awkward, and that's on a social level."

Alexander provides a particularly interesting account of how he noted Ron's lacking social skills. His statement clearly illustrates the friction he perceives in the team and, once again, highlights how interviewees seem to ground their perceptions and interpretations of differences in the exact details of their shared interactions:

> "There are moments that he loses the connection with the meeting, with us [...] sometimes I think, okay, are you still here with us?"

Finally, Ben (Team Four) explains how Tom's "tendency to always think in a staggered way, to always explore everything which is around" leads their team from one idea to the next, which distracts from the team's focus and progress. Ben's particular interpretation of Tom's openness and his explorative mindset is noteworthy as it contrasts Anna's more positive explanations (as described before). It appears that the same difference can be made sense of in opposing ways, which underlines the situated intricacy of working with differences.

Organizational Differences as Helping Collaborative Practice: When Learning Happens Through Representing

Generally speaking, organizational differences are more often seen as hindering (45%) than helping (20%) collaborative practice. However, their precise implications depend on the respective category (X^2 (10, N = 166) = 129.62, p = < .001). For example, especially differences in *organizational knowledge* (83%) and *organizational maturity & structures* (42%) are often seen as an asset for the team.

Organizational differences appear to be valued favorably *when organizations learn from one another through representation dynamics*. Here, the advantage leads to improving the skills and abilities of one's organization rather than combining complementary strengths for collective advancement. Alexander's statement about his team colleague Ron (Team One) and his organization's more practical structures illustrates this dynamic:

> "What I want to learn from him and from all the [Flex] people is, okay, they are in a very practical organization, how do they maneuver in such an organization, in relation to the very complicated and strict organization that we have. I want to learn from them, okay, how is it working in such a company? What can we learn from that?"

Note how Alexander changes from talking about individuals ("what *I* want to learn from *him*") to speaking about and in the name of companies ("*they* are in a very practical organization [...] What can *we* learn from that?"). Therefore, his statement describes how organizations can learn from one another in interorganizational collectives and draws attention to important representation dynamics that are present in such groups.

Harry's elaborations on Marc (Team Two) and the mature structures of Marc's company also illustrate these learning-through-representing dynamics. The details of Harry's utterances point to organizations' preeminent presence: Below, we hear Harry talking and his organization that is made present through him. Like Alexander, Harry speaks in the name of his organization ("us," "we"). It seems that, at times, team members treat one another first and foremost as organizations planning for organizational learning "*via*" the individuals that represent them:

> "[Flex] can still learn a lot from [Proto], so me learning from Marc which is actually not directly from Marc but via Marc, how things are organized at [Proto] [...] it is us learning from [Proto], and [Proto] hopefully learning from our out-of-the-box ideas as we're much younger."

Curiously, some interviewees explain that they participate in their team mainly to understand better other organizations' languages, cultures, etc. For instance, Matt (Team One) shares that he joined the team "so that there is someone within [Topo] to understand the language of other companies;" a rationale that is likewise present in Lucas' account (Team Three): "For us, it is important to understand how companies like [Lore] think." Members appear to be seeking to generate knowledge about other organizations for their own company, as is also implied in Harry's elaborations (Team Two):

> "Understanding how their company works, it's really a small world in itself, we want to understand how that party, kind of like an animal, a political entity, how that is built up."

Organizational Differences as Hindering Collaborative Practice: When Distinctions Become Insurmountable Gaps or Wall-Like Boundaries

Organizational differences appear to complicate collaboration when individuals are only anchored in their representation roles (thinking exclusively from their organization's perspective) or when members cannot see a possible benefit from the other organization as their otherness simply is too extensive. That is, organizational differences are perceived as *hindering* when they constitute *wall-like boundaries* or *insurmountable gaps*. This is relatively more often the case with differences in *organizational goals & interests* (89%) and differences in *organizational mindsets* (62%).

The following statement by Paul (Team Two), here talking about Matt, is an illustrative example of how organizational differences can constitute wall-like boundaries:

> "He often starts speaking very much from what [Topo] does; sometimes it is difficult to follow [...] because he is in this software world, that's such a different world, the whole company, the culture, his way of thinking, his starting points, that's all simply completely different."

Paul describes how Matt's way of thinking is strongly driven by his organization, which impedes productive exchange. Alexander's elaborations add further evidence to this friction when he explains how he had "completely no match" and "was lost within two minutes" when Matt pitched his company's product, "only presenting tiny little details about how this solution was built."

Paul also depicts Marc as "very much locked up in his company" and as taking "completely his perspective onto the things we discuss," which causes "distraction in the communication." Similarly, he describes Christoph as "mostly talking about how things work at [Proto]" and as "having difficulties to change perspectives." In particular, Paul invokes the analogies of

"[Proto] glasses" and "eye patches" to convey the significant implications of how Christoph's organization colors and limits his view. Ron, in turn, speaks about Alexander's "tunnel vision" and explains how Alexander matches the image of the "typical [Proto] guy":

> "He doesn't look very objective or with a broad view, not really into how other companies, other people would approach things."

Ultimately, this makes that "a wall to what's going on in the rest of the world" emerges between Alexander's organization and its surroundings, which also materializes in team meetings and activities. The following statement by Paul powerfully summarizes the problematic consequences of overly strong organizational mindsets:

> "Company culture, how things go, without you realizing that becomes some sort of automatism, and if the person next to you does not have this automatism, then things go wrong, quickly [...], but it's difficult to say when you have this automatism or not, it's such a fluid, intangible thing."

Besides constituting wall-like boundaries, organizational differences can also lead to insurmountable gaps—when organizations differ to such an extent that no common ground can be found, and no basis for collaborating can emerge. For instance, Alexander (Team One) vocalizes his worry about possible frictions resulting from different maturity levels:

> "The main worry that I have is that [Flex] has just started a service department, [Topo] they don't have such a department, and we are working for decades with such a department. That's a main difference that we must be aware of."

Christoph's elaborations further detail these different maturity levels and their implications (including resulting in different organizational goals and interests). Note again how both Alexander and Christoph are acting as spokespersons for their organizations, arguing predominantly from their organizations' perspectives:

> "All companies are at really different levels, like completely; the focus is completely different for each company. So, it's really difficult to communicate; the focus that we have for [Proto] is really on third-party hardware and software, whereas that's not really an issue for one of the other parties. You're not really doing the same thing."

Marc and Harry (Team Two) talk about possible conflicts of interest between their organizations. Especially Marc stresses that these are solely organizational ("not personal ones, but from the organizations"). He presents his and Harry's organizations as pursuing incompatible goals, which Harry's elaborations confirm as he essentially equates the organizations with their representatives: "There are differences in ambitions between [Flex] and [Proto], so me and Marc basically."

The Big Difference? Coorientation Versus Representation

As our elaborations have shown, team members note a breadth of differences already early on, including both individual and organizational dimensions. A closer examination of team characteristics reveals that the teams differ in *what* differences are mentioned (X^2 (9, N = 592) = 62.15, $p < .001$) and in *how* these are assessed and valued (X^2 (9, N = 592) = 43.48, $p < .001$). Organizational aspects appear to be mentioned almost exclusively by members of teams that are not (yet) engaging in *coorientation* (Teams One, Two, Three); that is, teams are not (yet) seeking to align actions to shared goals (Koschmann, 2016). *Representation* dynamics seem to dominate in these teams, explaining why organizational differences are highly salient. Individual attributes appear relevant to both the coorienting team (Team Four)[5] and the not (yet) coorienting teams.

When the Team is Coorienting: A Focus on Individual Distinctions

Members of the coorienting team (Team Four) describe their group as one collective, talk about a single, shared use case, and depict their team as interdependent. For instance, Tom describes the team as "very integrated, and we all have specialized roles," while Ben explains how members "all have different kinds of competencies which contribute in different ways to the project." Members appear to be enjoying their joint activities. Max, for example, describes their work as "professional fun" and emphasizes how much he likes working with his team colleagues. Anna's descriptions overlap with Max's. In particular, she values that "all people in the team think it's interesting" and that they "all put in effort."

In line with members' coorientation efforts, members seem to be taking their joint project as their vantage point for making sense of member differences and predominantly focus on how individual skills, abilities, etc. can be combined (or not) for the team's activities or their own development. Organizational attributes are mostly backstaged; members speak as team members or individual professionals much more than as representatives of organizations.

When the Team is not (yet) Coorienting: Individual and Organizational Distinctions

The more loosely coupled teams (Team One, Two, Three) are characterized by a more fragmented structure and set-up. Members appear to be pursuing their own goals and thus develop separate use cases to work on, with little to no effort to form a collective team goal. Ron (Team One) describes it as follows:

[5] Also, Team Four only values a small minority (12%) of the differences as a threat to their collaboration, much lower than Team 1 (25%), Team 2 (39%), and Team 3 (32%).

> "Every company has its own goals [...] it is more like three different discussions, but not one thing, one goal."

In line with this loose set-up, teams are generally described as independent: Members "do not necessarily need each other to reach their goals," as Lars (Team Three) puts it, or "the team is vaguely formulated and loosely coupled," as articulated by Oliver (Team Three). Some interviewees hence question whether their team "can really become one collective" (Paul, Team Two) or can "achieve its goals" (Greg, Team Three).

Overall, organizations clearly come first in these teams: Organizational interests dominate planned activities, organizational goals co-exist without being integrated, and often interviewees name their and others' organizations rather than speaking about individual team colleagues (or speak as their organization, as we have shown before). This points at organizations' preeminent and agentic effects: Much of members' sensemaking of their team's otherness appears to be driven by the organizations that figuratively stand behind them and color their view. In particular, it appears that members think as organizations when forming initial understandings and interpretations of their team, which explains why organizational characteristics become highly salient. Individual distinctions are noticed, too, but often only after having mentioned organizational differences or in combination with an organizational characteristic, such as when a team member's strict and rigid thinking is explicitly linked to strict and rigid organizational structures ("Greg has his own strict rules, but maybe also because [Proto] has stricter rules," Lars, Team Three).

2.5. Discussion and Contributions

We have examined and illustrated which differences are perceived as meaningful at the start of interorganizational teamwork, why and when they are interpreted as either helping or hindering collaborative practice and finally, how team coorientation or representation dynamics can influence these perceptions and interpretations. In the following, we aim to delineate how a sensemaking perspective can complement current ambitions of studies into perceived otherness. Furthermore, we deepen the links between our insights and conversations on coorientation and representation and link our work to the recently sketched concepts of distinctive and differential belonging (Davis et al., 2022). We end by outlining possibilities for future research and practical implications.

Making Sense of Member Differences

Our findings offer an insider view and sensemaking-inspired perspective on the differences that make a difference in interorganizational collaboration. They expose in greater breadth which attributes become salient and unpack in more depth the value and meaning that collaborators attach to these. Together, this provides novel and nuanced insight into when

and why otherness is interpreted as either beneficial or disadvantageous—as either *perk* or *peril*.

Overall, members noted ample distinctions, including both job-related and less job-related aspects and both individual and organizational dimensions. Our work therewith confirms findings on the multiplex nature of perceived differences in teams (Oosterhof et al., 2009). Noteworthily, many of the specified aspects fall under the broader cluster of nonvisible or deep-level differences, even though teams were only just commencing their collaboration. This contradicts earlier work which has argued that visible characteristics are more prevalent than nonvisible ones during initial interaction stages (Harrison et al., 1998; Harrison et al., 2002). It appears that a collective does not necessarily need long tenure for members to note a vast breadth of differences.

Our findings further extend previous work by accentuating organizational attributes as an essential group of distinctions. When making sense of their group's otherness, collaborators did not only regard one another as individual team members but, likewise, as organizational representatives (Hardy et al., 2005; Lewis et al., 2010; Rockmann et al., 2007). This insight challenges the dominant separation of otherness attributes on the one hand and contextual dimensions on the other: What a team member seems to be bringing to the table are not solely her characteristics as an individual person but also details from the contexts that she is walking and working in every day (Akkerman et al., 2006). In other words, it appears that different environments can inform and thus become part of what is perceived as otherness (see also Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2017).

Our findings therewith clearly underscore the necessity for research to move beyond visible or individual differences (Oosterhof et al., 2009; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). We need more holistic studies of what is perceived as otherness, which means that deep-level attributes (both job-related and non-job-related) and broader environmental aspects must be considered. This is an increasingly relevant undertaking with teams spanning more and more contexts (organizational, disciplinary, departmental, industrial, etc.) in our progressively complex, flat, and connected corporate world. If we move through and bring together diverse contexts so regularly, we need to understand better how the otherness that emanates from these settings plays into the functioning of our workgroups. The sensemaking-inspired approach that this chapter has taken can offer a helpful apparatus and vocabulary to do so, with its firm grounding in actual settings, situated enactments, and contextual (albeit extracted) cues (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005).

In addition, a sensemaking-inspired approach might also aid in addressing current opacities and confusions regarding differences' sometimes-ambivalent implications (e.g., Bunderson & Van Der Vegt, 2018; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Such inconclusive findings suggest that we cannot rely on solely generalized main effects but need richer, deeper, and more contextualized insight into the workings of differences.

Sensemaking invites us to do precisely that, namely, identifying a number of meaning-making practices that provide orientation as to when and why otherness is (de)valued. Instead of categorizing a singular attribute as either beneficial or hampering and developing recommendations for exclusively this aspect, we might perhaps be better served by following the alternative trail that a sensemaking-sensitive perspective lays out: First mapping the range of differences perceived by professionals themselves and subsequently apprehending their interpretation of how these differences matter.

Adding a sensemaking angle to investigations of perceived otherness suggests a novel way of studying member differences; one that expands insights beyond "noticing or perceiving cues" to also the consequential practices of "creating interpretations" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 59) and that hence can thoroughly address "how people appropriate and enact their 'realities'" (Brown et al., 2015, p. 265). These extensions position sensemaking as a promising response to Shemla et al.'s (2016) plea to start pursuing different questions and offering new answers when we study perceived otherness: From charted indexes about *what* differences are noted to richer and more textured understandings about *how* they are interpreted and made sense of.

Coorientation and Representation and Differential and Distinctive Belonging in Interorganizational Collaboration

Sensemaking studies also often discuss identity issues, given that identities can greatly influence how situations are interpreted (Brown et al., 2015). Weick (1995) further stipulated that sensemaking is typically grounded in only selected cues and rests on plausibility rather than accuracy. As our findings have shown, whether one identifies as an organizational representative or as a team member can profoundly impact otherness awareness and meaning: An individual acting as an organizational spokesperson will look for different aspects than a member who identifies with her group.

Specifically, our findings indicate an apparent tension between *coorientation* and *representation* dynamics within interorganizational collectives. At one end, when teams seek to align their goals (i.e., when they engage in coorientation; Koschmann, 2016), collaborators are invited to think and act primarily as team members, sufficiently 'distanced' from their organizations (Cartel et al., 2019). They pay attention mostly to individual differences and background organizational commitments and considerations. At the other end, when team members are

pursuing separate objectives rather than trying to align their actions, collaborators remain 'anchored' in their roles as organizational representatives (Cartel et al., 2019): Organizational positions are prioritized over shared interests (Rockmann et al., 2007) and use cases are aggregated rather than integrated. It is thus of no big surprise that organizational differences appear to be much more prominent in these groups. However, while Koschmann's work associates these latter dynamics with failure, our insights sketch a more nuanced picture. Even when representation prevails, (inter)actions can lead to beneficial outcomes, such as when organizations learn from (*through*) one another. Such (inter)actions might not be genuinely collaborative, but there are also not solely failures.

In many ways, professionals working in heterogenous, difference-filled teams need to be able to unite, coordinate, and collaborate through their otherness (Farchi et al., 2021). Very recently, Davis and colleagues (2022) have therefore argued that groups need to move from what they call "differential belonging" toward "distinctive belonging" (both p. 91). The first practice stresses becoming aware of differences, but it generally results in separation as it does not stretch beyond recognizing otherness. In contrast, distinctive belonging seeks to sensitize team members to the particular *benefits* of their differences, thereby spurring unity and collectiveness and making a group "more *groupy*" (Meneses et al., 2008, p. 496; italics in original). In the groups we studied, we saw a form of differential belonging in the three teams not (yet) engaging in coorientation and a form of distinctive belonging in the one team that did coorient. Echoing sensemaking's expositions on identity and extracted cues (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005), what someone is there for might determine what this someone will perceive. The final section of this chapter translates these very premises and findings into a practical recommendation.

Future Research Directions

Multiple paths for future research can be derived from our work. For example, articles could study how difference perceptions and interpretations develop over time, possibly also mapping spill-over effects (i.e., how initial impressions influence later ones). Moreover, studies could scrutinize the effects of surface-level differences such as age or gender in a more nuanced manner—while they were named infrequently in our empirical material, they might have contributed to the perception of other, more invisible aspects nonetheless (Phillips & Loyd, 2006). Therefore, it would be particularly interesting to study salient differences in the webs or relations they occur in: Which differences are regularly noted and named together? How precisely are they nested, connected, or interrelated? Including differences *and* similarities (Phillips et al., 2006; van Emmerik & Brenninkmeijer, 2009) in these webs or relations could be another fruitful extension. For example, how does the presence of one or multiple similarities influence the interpretations of certain differences? Can frictions that emerge from differences be spanned by similarities?

A sensemaking approach could furthermore help us explore the exact ways through which otherness comes into play in actual interactions. Our findings indicate that perceptions and interpretations of others' differences seem to be grounded in situated conversations and local moments (similar to, e.g., team member roles; Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2016). Further examining how they show in these conversations could potentially lead to much richer accounts of which otherness dimensions become salient and why and how precisely they do so.

In addition, differences' implications could be observed as they transpire in real-time, which could complement prospective or retrospective sensemaking accounts. Eventually, this might enable researchers to point the finger at differences and their performative effects as interactions unfold, opening up a promising new line of inquiry: How can we spot otherness in interactions? What are differences' actual (not just expected or recounted) effects? Could we, in fact, observe how differences *narrow* or *distract* conversations or how they *complement* or *expand* one another? Kourti and colleagues' (2018) idea of *positioning* could be a helpful springboard here: Whether a professional is talking from the position of her organization, her profession, etc. could be traced as team members converse, which potentially enables a first grip on how otherness attributes materialize in unfolding interaction.

Finally, this chapter's insights and conclusions are based on only a limited number of interviews conducted in a singular setting. While this fitted our explorative ambitions of gaining in-depth and context-bound knowledge, future work will need to cross-check our findings in both similar and different settings (e.g., in collectives that structurally resemble the teams and setting that we have studied, but also in ones that perhaps have more fluid and dynamic membership, or that run without a pre-set expiration date). Depending upon the targeted level of generalization, future endeavors might also want to work with larger empirical samples.

Practical Implications

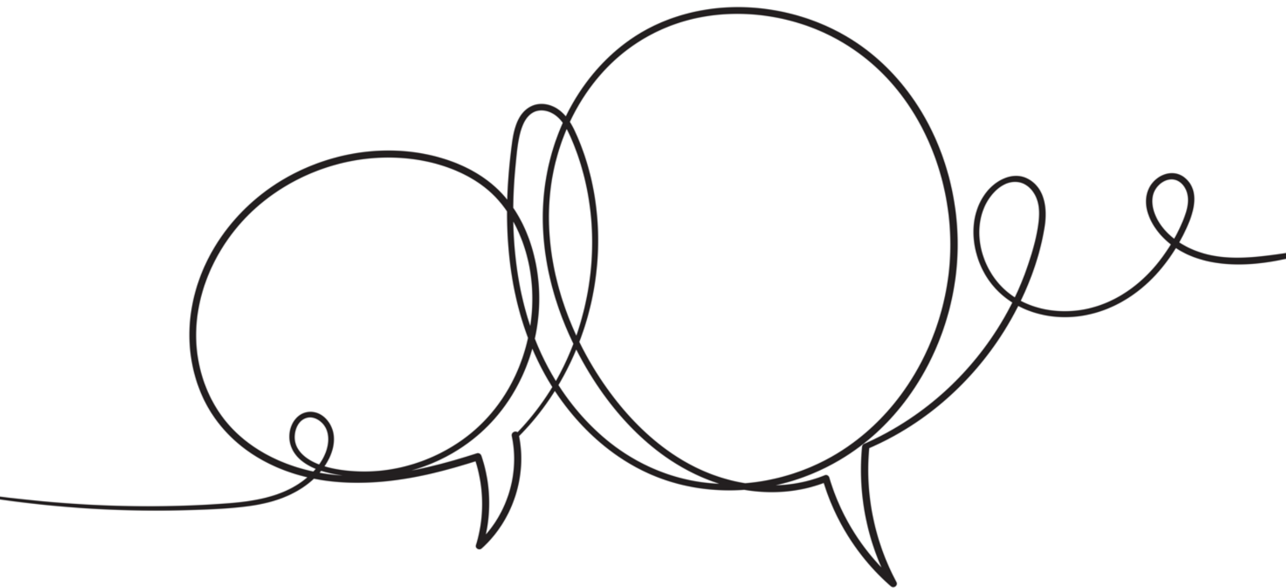
Collaborators need to wear a number of different hats, especially in interorganizational teams: They are a member of the team, their education and profession, their department, their organization, and so on (Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Hardy et al., 2005; Sydow & Braun, 2018). Depending on which role or perspective they prioritize, they might perceive certain attributes and not others and think and act differently. Our work illustrates the variety of otherness attributes that can impact collaboration processes favorably and adversely. Awareness of this variety can aid practitioners in noting a broader range of differences and better spotting possible red flags, such as when a colleague only talks in the name of her organization and is in no way coorienting with the team.

Reminding this colleague and other members and oneself of the multiple hats that everyone is constantly wearing might help collaborators make constructive sense of their joint work and the perceived otherness between them. This chapter underscores the need to look beyond individual attributes and consider the broader, contextual aspects that professionals bring to their workgroups. Collaborators must switch back and forth between these aspects (plus other distinctions) and their collective work so that connections and relations between the differences they bring together in their group can be knotted. In working together, differences do not need to be blended until each is no longer distinctly identifiable. Instead, echoing Davis and colleagues' (2020) appeal for distinctive belonging, differences should be made salient and upheld, with solid connections established between them.

Chapter III.

Speaking about Vision,
Talking in the Name of So Much More

Introducing a Methodological Framework
for Ventriloquial Analyses in Organization Studies



Speaking About Vision, Talking in the Name of So Much More: A Methodological Framework for Ventriloquial Analysis in Organization Studies

Organizations have long been treated as stable and fixed entities, defined by concrete buildings, catchy names, and strategic goals neatly written on paper. The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) school proposes an alternative, practice-grounded conceptualization for studying organizations as emerging in communicative (inter)actions. In so doing, CCO invites organizational scholars to trace back organizational phenomena to *how they are communicated into existence*. The concept of *ventriloquism* can help us explain the communicative constitutive view as it depicts how various elements of a situation are communicated into being and make a difference in interaction. However, ventriloquism lacks a proper methodological outline. Taking employee conversations about visions—a classic constituent of organizations—as our venue, we created a four-step framework for ventriloquial analyses and explored how visions are talked into existence. In this chapter, we introduce and illustrate our analytical framework, showing how to identify, order, and present ventriloquial effects. We thus provide organizational (communication) scholars with a new methodological tool that facilitates the systematic inquiry into organizing and the organized from a communicative constitutive perspective.

Keywords
Communicative constitution of organizations (CCO), Montreal school, ventriloquism, vision

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3.1. Introduction

Organizations have long been treated as stable and fixed entities, defined by concrete buildings, catchy names, or strategic goals neatly written on paper. The 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' (CCO) perspective, which increasingly finds its way into studies of organizational phenomena (Schoeneborn et al., 2019), propagates a more fluid outlook where organizations emerge in communication, through interaction (Ashcraft et al., 2009). In other words, communication is pictured as the process by which organizations are (de)constructed in action (Vásquez et al., 2016).

In this chapter, we focus on the *ventriloquial approach* (Cooren, 2010a), a concept developed within the so-called Montreal school to reveal the organizing and disorganizing properties of communication. Ventriloquism illustrates how people give voice to other beings—policies, missions, facts, persons, etc.—that can then be deemed as participating in an interaction (Cooren et al., 2013; Cooren & Sandler, 2014). By so doing, ventriloquism calls into question the prevalent reduction of communication to people interacting with one another and shows that interactions include additional elements of a situation that are voiced through what people say or do (e.g., when a clerk invokes an administrative rule to turn down a customer request). Human interactants can also be led to say things because of attachments that they have (e.g., the clerk might say what he says because his institution—through its managers and job descriptions— enjoins him to enforce the rule). Humans are both *ventriloquists* and *dummies*, and organizations are talked into existence through this oscillating dynamic: They make things and people speak to achieve their goals, as much as these things and people make them speak through what they say and do. Ventriloquial analyses allow us to reveal this hybrid character of multiple voices through unfolding discourse in interaction.

Yet, ventriloquism's intuitive appeal as a metaphor for unpacking organizational talk is in need of concrete means for identifying ventriloquial acts (Boivin et al., 2017; Kuhn, 2014). To our knowledge, no methodological framework is available that (1) provides guidance for showing how a person is led to say what she is saying or what voice can be recognized in what she is saying and that (2) allows us to systematically substantiate the claim that people are both ventriloquists and dummies while they talk (Cooren, 2010a, 2018). We provide this guidance and systematicity in this chapter. Beyond that, this chapter also shows how a ventriloquial analysis offers a unique way to provide evidence about *what matters* or *counts* in an organizational situation, knowing that what matters or counts ends up constituting it. The ventriloquial method calls into question the classical divide other approaches explicitly or implicitly institute between the interaction on one side and the elements that this very interaction is about on the other side (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, 2011; Fairclough, 2005; Hardy & Thomas, 2015; Phillips et al., 2004). In other words, it provides the premises of what a relational viewpoint on discourse analysis could look like.

This chapter sets a first but important step for the increased appreciation and inclusion of methods in communicative constitutive theorizing. Its main contribution lies in its methodological outline of ventriloquism. We created a straightforward and systematic framework that offers a new analytical tool to organizational (communication) scholars and that promotes thoroughness, inclusiveness, and cross-case comparability. We developed this framework by iterating between reviewing previous ventriloquial analyses (e.g., Caidor & Cooren, 2018; Cooren et al., 2013; Wilhoit & Kisselburgh, 2017) and analyzing visionary talk. The latter appeared to us as a suitable genre given visions' centrality to organizations (Kantabutra, 2009), their multi-focality in interpretations (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004; Cole et al., 2006), and thus their multi-vocality in expressions (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015).

We begin this chapter by summarizing ventriloquism's conceptual merits, application practicalities, as well as its current methodological underdevelopment. We then introduce our ventriloquial framework and show how its four phases can guide analysts through identifying, grouping, relating, and showing ventriloquial effects.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Ventriloquism's Conceptual Underpinnings: Staging, Agency, and Relationality

Following the CCO perspective, communication occupies a formative role in organizations as organizational phenomena—rather than being static and given—emerge and are accomplished in communicative, interactive, and dynamic practices (Cooren et al., 2011). Translated to visions, this would mean that visions cannot be reduced to the words managers put on paper but that they are also found and formed in organizational members' conversations (i.e., on the *terra firma* of interaction, as Cooren (2006a) put it). These conversations offer ways for visions to materialize and "be communicated into being" (Cooren, 2010a, p. 33), that is, to exist and be reproduced in organizational situations.

Recent work representing the Montreal school has shown that conversations do not have to be reduced to what people do (Cooren, 2015). To name just two examples, Bencherki (2016) speaks about buildings' ability to talk and participate in interactions through objects as hygrometers or cameras, while Brummans (2007) illustrates the agentic implications that a euthanasia declaration can have when faced with severe illness. The notion of *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2010a) is particularly appealing as it illustrates how human interactants can give voice to other beings (they *ventriloquize* a hygrometer, camera, or declaration) as well as how humans can come to speak and act for other things (they *are ventriloquized* by a value, feeling, principle, etc.; Brummans & Cooren, 2011; Cooren, 2012; Cooren & Sandler, 2014). While it has become customary to associate agency with categories such as intentionality, choice, and selfhood (Martin et al., 2010), the Montreal school, and ventriloquism in particular, thus

propose to use agency in a broader sense to include everything that appears to *make a difference* or to *do something* in a situation (Bencherki, 2016; Caronia & Cooren, 2014; Cooren, 2004). For instance, a yellow sign indicating 'Caution: Hard hat area' makes a difference on a construction site by reminding workers and visitors to wear helmets. Of course, the people who had the sign installed were actually aiming for this reminding, but without the sign the reminding could not take place. The presence of the sign thus makes a difference, which means that it is doing something (for similar reasoning, see Latour, 1996, 2005).

More precisely, we can see that agency is *shared*: The sign acts *in the name* of the people who had it installed, but it can also be said that it acts *in the name* of the law these people abide by. Similarly, if the sign can remind people to wear helmets, it is also because the latter are able to interpret it as doing so (they know how to read signs). Concretely, the sign can therefore do something because the *people who interpret it make it say* that they should wear helmets, but also because *the sign makes the people say* that they should do so. The same logic applies to the people who had the sign installed: *The sign makes them say* that they oblige workers and visitors to wear helmets, but this is also what *they make the sign (or the law) say*.

Comparing communication to a form of ventriloquism consists of acknowledging this incapacity to determine an absolute source to agency. Instead, ventriloquism conceives of agency from a relational ontology, that is, as a joint mediation shared among various beings (Caronia & Cooren, 2014; Cooren et al., 2012; Kuhn et al., 2017) that altogether co-enact a situation (Cooren et al., 2013; Cooren & Bencherki, 2010). If a worker sees a visitor not wearing a helmet, she can simply point to the sign (a gesture that consists of ventriloquizing it) to make the sign say that this visitor should get a helmet. The act of ventriloquism is important here, as it is a way for the worker to imply that it is not only she who says that the visitor should wear a helmet, but also the sign, the people who had it installed, and the law that enforces this provision.

In other words, with ventriloquism, we see that communicating is always about implicitly or explicitly *staging* various beings that are supposed to express themselves in a given situation. From a relational perspective, this also means that what something or someone is or does always depends on the relations that end up defining it, him, or her, which is precisely what a ventriloquial perspective allows us to unveil. The worker who points to the sign can be seen as an enforcer of the law but also as a momentary spokesperson for the organization she is working for. In many respects, it is also her employee status that possibly makes her feel authorized to remind the visitor to wear a helmet. All these relations thus not only *participate* in what is happening in this situation but also *define* its ins and outs.

In contrast to other approaches to organizational discourse (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, 2011; Fairclough, 2005; Hardy & Thomas, 2015; Phillips et al., 2004), a ventriloquial approach negates the classical divide between what constitutes the interactional scene (i.e., people speaking about various things) and what is supposed to surround this scene (i.e., what is talked about in these acts of communication).

The world, in *all* its instantiations, can end up saying things through what people or other elements of a situation communicate. Ventriloquism thus aligns with CCO's core premise of simultaneously engaging ideas of the material and linguistic turns (Schoeneborn et al., 2019), but is unique in its decentered consideration of agency and materiality as conversational resources rather than physical manifestations. In so doing, ventriloquism can ascribe agentic qualities even to absent, missing, or not-yet-existing beings, as long as they materialize—come to matter—in communicative turns (Cooren, 2018). Imagine that a worker laments the risks and dangers of the specific construction site he is working on. To make his case, this worker might point to the *lack* of safety signage, making their *absence* participate in the situation through communication—irrespective of their physical (non)presence.

Ventriloquism's Practical Technicalities: Figures and Vents

In more practical terms, ventriloquism consists of "identifying *in the name of what or whom* a given actor appears to speak" (Cooren, 2010a, p. 135; italics in original). It hereby also consists of identifying what *animates* this actor, an animation that often is to be found in the *attachment* a person expresses vis-a-vis what she is ventriloquizing. That is because all elements work in two ways (Cooren, 2010a): Any being can be seen both as an actor (a ventriloquist) and a passer (a dummy). For instance, when someone positions herself as letting facts speak ('Look at what happened!'), we can see this person as the ventriloquist, to the extent that she is making these facts speak. However, we can also see her as a dummy to the extent that it is these facts' existence and importance that supposedly led her to say what she is saying. Every action or activity can be scrutinized for what made it possible, that is, for its passive dimension or passivity (Cooren & Bencherki, 2010).

While ventriloquial effects are principally bidirectional, methodologically speaking it is relevant to discern what is most visible in an interaction as one aspect can be emphasized over the other, that is, an actor can (un)intentionally position herself as either more of a dummy or as more of a ventriloquist (Cooren, 2010a; Cooren & Sandler, 2014). For instance, if a superior chastises her employee for bypassing her, she can actively ventriloquize the command structure to lend authority to the appropriateness of her complaint ('We have a chain of command, I remind you!'). The employee might justify his conduct by explaining that he was acting on the CEO's order, an order that supposedly led him to act the way he acted ('It's not my fault, I was following orders!'), making him the dummy. Ventriloquism is about speaking and acting in the name of other beings (the command structure, the CEO's

order) in order to make a convincing case for some other beings or audiences (Cooren & Sandler, 2014).

In the artistic performance of ventriloquism, ventriloquists call themselves 'vents' and their puppets 'figures'. A *vent* makes someone or something do or say something, it animates a dummy to speak, in the same way as a principle that matters to us (such as equality) leads us to speak up in situations of perceived inequity. A *figure*, in contrast, is being made to do or say something by someone or something else, similarly to a rule that is made to say something when pointing out someone's wrongful behavior. This distinction between vents and figures can be helpful to manifest whether a ventriloquial effect highlights its active or passive dimension. Analyzing communication episodes from a ventriloquial perspective thus amounts to identifying, on the one hand, the figures that are implicitly or explicitly invoked and made to say things by people, and on the other hand, the vents that lead people to say what they say and act how they act.

For instance, if someone says, 'What worries me the most is this new regulation that our organization has to follow,' this person chooses to position herself as *animated* by something that appears to matter to her: the new regulation. She positions herself as the dummy animated by a specific *vent*: the new regulation, which is presented as leading her to say what she is saying and feel what she is feeling. As said, figures can be invoked *explicitly* or *implicitly*. An explicit invocation means that the utterance directly mentions the figure (literally: ex-plied, unfolded, open). She would say something like, 'This new regulation gives a bad image of how our organization handled data before,' which would have positioned her as the ventriloquist making the *explicit figure* of the new regulation say something about her organization. An *implicit figure* (literally: im-plied, wrapped up, hidden) would be invoked if she said, 'How we have to handle data now differs a lot from how we handled data before.' The difference lies in the way the figure appears: either through a direct reference in which the figure is explicitly materialized or enveloped within an utterance (Cooren et al., 2013).

Taken together, ventriloquism presents a powerful concept for unpacking organizational talk and illustrating the communicative constitutive view of reality, revealing what substantiates these realities in everyday organizational practice. Yet, the concept is in need of a methodological outline and concrete means for research and analysis (Boivin et al., 2017; Kuhn, 2014). This is where we want to make our contribution, using visionary talk as an empirical case.

3.2. Empirical Case: A Ventriloquial Analysis of Visionary Talk

To outline a framework for ventriloquial analyses, we studied employee vision conversations. Visions express long-term goals and provide direction; they are ubiquitous in organizations and associated with effective leadership (Carton et al., 2014; Kantabutra & Avery, 2010).

However, studies have increasingly emphasized that visions also need to be *ventriloquized* by other organizational members and have identified a substantial incongruence between vision constructions of leaders and employees (Berson et al., 2001; Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Visions thus appear to be multi-focal, multi-vocal, and central in organizations, which we believe makes them a suitable and exciting genre for our endeavor of outlining a systematic framework for ventriloquial analyses.

As vision conversations are not readily observed at the employee level, we used focus groups. We secured entrance to four German organizations: a regional bank, a fire brigade, a hospital, and a direct-selling business for sensual products. We organized five focus groups (two in the direct-selling business) with 23 participants (four or five participants per session), all conducted by the first author. Because of our employee-level focus, management was excluded. Moreover, HR, marketing, and communication employees were excluded as their work can touch upon vision development, implementation, and dissemination, which could have induced them to simply repeat official statements. To take advantage of shared experiences and for participants to be comfortable, participants were selected to obtain positions at similar levels and to know each other well (Ritchie et al., 2003). Two managers requested to join one discussion but were denied doing so to preserve a trusting environment.

In the discussions, we used a semi-structured approach with a flexible set of questions centered around participants' ideal future state for their organization and the official vision (Collins & Porras, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Levin, 2000). We started discussions with an open question: *If you think about an ideal future state of your organization towards which it strives, what is it?* This question did not explicitly ask about vision as we wanted to avoid a reproduction of statements as possibly learned by heart and because the label 'ideal future state' appeared more specific. In the later parts of the discussion, we handed out organizations' official visions and asked participants to reflect on them.

All discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, translated from German to English, and filed into Atlas.ti (117 pages of single-spaced transcription). Identifying names were anonymized. We took field notes to capture impressions of the atmosphere and to include descriptions of participants' backgrounds and relationships.

3.3. A Methodological Framework for Ventriloquial Analyses

We will now introduce our framework for ventriloquial analyses. We see this framework fit for various research endeavors, as long as it is acknowledged that communication also consists of expressing, materializing, and presentifying beings that are not reduced to people talking to each other—whether that is in (natural) interactions or mediated through written text (e.g., company publications, see Basque & Langley, 2018). What matters more than data type (spanning observation, shadowing, interviewing, and archival data in CCO research, see

Boivin et al., 2017) is that the framework helps to decenter analyses and uncover the multiple voices that shape situations and realities.

Our ventriloquial framework comprises four phases, summarized in Table 1. Phase 1 concerns the initial identification of vents and figures. This phase corresponds to other ventriloquial analyses (e.g., Cooren et al., 2013; Long et al., 2018; Wilhoit & Kisselburgh, 2017), but adds structure and inclusiveness by grounding the identification of ventriloquial effects in three questions (Table 2). A pre-set research question is not a condition for Phase 1: A data set can just as well be harvested for ventriloquial effects without a research question, which can then emerge from first findings. In Phase 2, structure is added to the inventory of ventriloquial effects by sorting and ordering vents and figures, followed by further integration in Phase 3. Phase 4 is about presenting ventriloquial findings alongside real-data excerpts (again corresponding to previous studies, e.g., Caidor & Cooren, 2018; Cooren et al., 2013).

Table 1: Four-step framework for ventriloquial analyses

Phase	Steps
1-Identifying	Identifying explicit and implicit invocations (figures) and animations (vents)
2-Grouping & assigning activities	2a. Grouping vents and figures into clusters 2b. Assigning activities to clusters 2c. Grouping clusters into collections and identifying main activities
3-Relating	Relating clusters and collections to main voices by tracing back chains of authorship, possibly including a visual model
4-Showing	4a. Selecting vignettes 4b. Showing findings along vignettes

Phase 1: Identifying

Phase 1 is about identifying the vents and figures that are invoked or come to express themselves in interactions, whether mediated or not. This phase corresponds to the initial steps that other ventriloquial studies have taken. For example, Cooren and colleagues (2013) started their ventriloquial analysis of tensions by identifying figures and vents in various situations in which humanitarian workers found themselves; Wilhoit and Kisselburgh (2017) focused on the figures that participants mobilized in their investigation of bike commuting as resistance; and Long and colleagues (2018) identified figures invoked around graduate parenthood. Our Phase 1 is built on the same starting point but adds structure to this identification of ventriloquial effects by grounding it in three questions (Table 2). These questions help focus attention on three key types of ventriloquial effects (i.e., explicit invocations of figures, implicit invocations of figures, and animations by vents, see Cooren, 2010a).

Whenever we encountered meaning uncertainties during Phase 1 of our analysis, we checked back with participants. This happened most often for the fire brigade group where additional insight was needed to correctly interpret the abbreviations participants used.

Addressing the three ventriloquial questions to our transcripts helped us to be specific and inclusive, which resulted in a list of 243 vents and figures. The following (shortened) interaction between hospital employees illustrates how we identified vents and figures along three examples (in italics, numbered, and included in Table 2, next page). The underlined passages conventionally mean that they were pronounced with a raised voice. Further illustration and detail (alongside excerpts of our data) is provided later in this chapter once we have worked through all four phases of our analytical framework.

Sandra: Particular contact persons for particular issues.
Trese: It is better.
Anki: Yes, and for employees it is easier, too. Because we can more easily guide patients. Like when one comes, you now tell them you can go there, and there, and you can choose. And then they ask, 'Who do you think is better?' (1). And we as employees cannot give a judgment (2). […]
Trese: Well, it is nice if a doctor is very broad in his abilities. But I think they can better do one thing very well and [that-
Anki: [And importantly keep care of the patients from start till end and NOT operating [and then- (3)
Trese: [Exactly!
Anki: Never seeing the patient again.

Explicit figures are directly named or clearly unfolded in an utterance, while implicit figures materialize more indirectly. Their presence is enfolded in utterances and behavior (Cooren et al., 2013) and needs to be unpacked by analysts. In addition to addressing the question of Table 2 to the data (*What voice(s) can be recognized in what a person is saying?*), it helped us to think about what a person might want to say with what she is saying and what voices build a basis for her utterance. For vents (*What leads a person to say what she is saying?*), we found repetition and voice level changes helpful indicators of a person's emotions or attachments vis-à-vis values, principles, attitudes, etc. If someone repeatedly brings up the same idea, this person's strong attachment to this idea might be animating her to do so, again and again. Jointly reflecting (Gilmore & Kenney, 2015) on the *experience* of conducting focus groups also helped, as participants' emotions and animations often stuck with the first author, given the discussions' localized nature. For example, the first author realized the overwhelming sentiments of frustration and anger present in the fire brigade discussion when reflecting with the second author on her expectations (which included hearing about meaningfulness and fulfillment, given the work of helping people) and experiences (which were far from any meaningfulness or fulfillment).

Moreover, it helped us to think about whether the situation would have unfolded in the same way if a vent were not animating an interactant. For example, when we identified anger as a driving force for how the interaction unfolded, we tried to envision the situation without this anger. Were there alternative explanations for the participant's raised voice, snappy diction, and pounding fist on the table? If not, we assumed that we witnessed this emotion as animating this person.

Table 2: Ventriloquial questions addressed to the transcripts

Explicit invocation	**Implicit invocation**	**Animation**
Directly naming a figure	Indirectly staging a figure	Vents that act upon another actor
What is a person invoking with what she is saying?	*What voice(s) can be recognized in what a person is saying?*	*What appears to lead a person to say what she is saying?*
In the example: Anki is directly naming customers' voices and behaviors (1).	In the example: Anki is indirectly staging the hospital's hierarchy and her and coworkers' status as employees, as well as the hospital's rule that employees are not allowed to help patients decide on a doctor (2).	In the example: Anki appears acted upon by her principle of putting patients first when she interrupts Trese (3). While it is considered impolite to interrupt, good patient care seems of such relevance to her that her attachment to this principle appears to lead her to interrupt Trese and to bring forward the aspect of treating patients well throughout the entire process.
Role of Anki: Acting as *ventriloquist*, making other voices speak	Role of Anki: Acting as *ventriloquist*, making other voices speak by implicitly referring to them	Role of Anki: Acting as *dummy*, made to speak up by what matters to her

Essentially, all elements of a situation imply agentic qualities, but they need to materialize in processes of communication to matter and be treated as a figure or vent (Cooren, 2018; Cooren & Sandler, 2014). As an illustration, the mere existence of a meeting guidelines poster does not make the poster a figure. However, as soon as the poster is invoked by a meeting participant or as soon as its guidelines appear to direct behavior (through animation), the poster counts as a figure or vent—materialized and brought to matter through processes of communication. In other words, anything and anyone can potentially be identified as a figure or vent, but a necessary condition is that a figure is implicitly or explicitly invoked, or a vent is recognized as animating someone or something else. This also means that figures or vents can only be un-folded by an analyst if they had been en-folded in an interaction, text, etc.

before. The question of whether a figure or vent is present is a purely analytical one, which can practically and pragmatically be addressed by approaching data with the three ventriloquial questions of Table 2. The framework thereby affords systematic corroboration of findings across researchers, data sets, and readers.

Phase 2: Grouping and Assigning Activities

Phase 1 results in a rich list of ventriloquial effects in need of structure. Phase 2 is about ordering this inventory in three steps. First, we grouped all vents and figures into *clusters* (as first thematic groupings); iteratively and constantly comparing between transcripts. For example, we grouped loneliness, frustration, discouragement, etc. into *feelings*; along two actor categories (own or others). Budgets, drawings, plans, and schedules were grouped into *planning/organizing documents*; and comradeship, solidarity, teamwork, togetherness, and trust were grouped into *values among co-workers*. In our case, this resulted in 59 clusters. Iterating back to literature and previous work can support this grouping (especially when research questions are rather narrow) but should not be considered compulsory. When working with pre-existing structures, analysts should be careful to approach these with some flexibility and impartiality so as to avoid imposing pre-fixed categories on insights gained.

We then supplemented each cluster with the activity participants were engaging in when invoking a figure or being animated by a vent (e.g., *instancing* others' practices, *attributing* others' values or attitudes, or *feeling* own emotions). Thereby, we got an idea of participants' activities when making sense of visions and of how ventriloquial effects entered the interactions. In total, we added ten activities: remembering, instancing, feeling, attributing, thinking, adducing, including, excluding, exemplifying, and comparing.

Next, we grouped clusters into *collections* (24 in total) and sorted activities based on contextual or causal linkages. For instance, we grouped all values, principles, and ideologies into *ideological characteristics* and rules, policies, and laws into *directives*. All activities could be sorted into either *envisioning* (general state for a possible future; e.g., a cleaner world) or *translating* (specific actions leading to an envisioned future; e.g., picking up trash on beaches).

Phase 3: Relating

Phase 2 results in grouped clusters and collections of ventriloquial voices. Phase 3 is about relating these so far separated clusters and collections into an integrated structure by tracing back chains of authorship. In our case, we related clusters and collections to two main authorship sources. The first group were all figures that invoked managerial, corporate, and official voices (e.g., management's actions, external organizations, or directives).

For example, we related a rule that was invoked by participants of the fire brigade discussion but that was originally implemented by management to this first group, as management's voice was imbricated as authoring this rule. The second group were the vents and figures that aligned with team, professional, or other voices (e.g., team members' feelings, other employees' actions, or technologies).

Phase 3 will probably look different in other projects. How vents and figures can be related to one another and which authorship sources appear most prevalent will always depend on the research aim, previous studies, and own findings. In our case, besides employees' and management's clear imbrication in the ventriloquial voices we identified, drawing this hierarchical distinction also appeared logical given that our inquiry departed from this juxtaposition (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Moreover, tension-loaded relations between these groups became apparent throughout our analysis and we found it important to highlight this conflicting relationship. Nonetheless, relating vents and figures around two main voices is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, Phase 3 should be guided by the objective of gaining a structured and integrated idea of the figures, vents, and authors constituting a construct of interest.

We visualized all voices that we identified in our ventriloquial analysis of visionary talk (see Figure 1). In line with our framework's steps, Figure 1 distinguishes between vents and figures, the different types of vents and figures, and the two main groups that we identified (managerial/corporate/official and team/professional/other voices). The figure cuts across the focus groups and organizations of our data set as we here aim to offer readers the greatest possible inventory of ventriloquial effects (rather than comparing vision constitutions across companies).

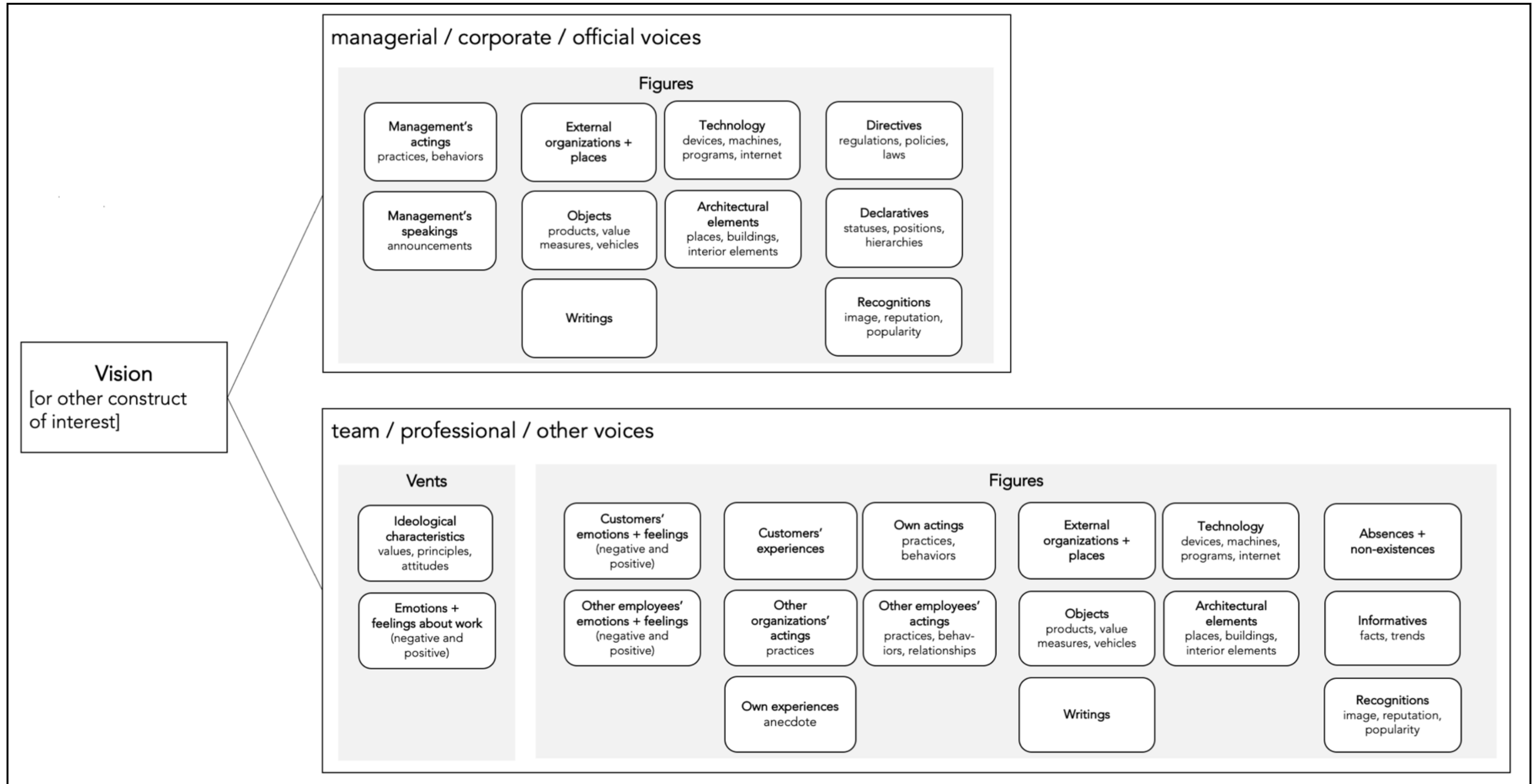


Figure 1: Vents and figures of employee visionary talk

Phase 4: Showing

Aligning with previous ventriloquial papers that presented real-data excerpts for showing vents and figures (e.g., Cooren & Bencherki, 2010; Cooren et al., 2013), Phase 4 is about selecting "powerfully illustrative" sequences (or vignettes, see Langley & Abdallah, 2011, p. 127) and accompanying these with an elaboration of the voices that manifested themselves in them. We generally found the density of ventriloquial effects a good indicator of a sequence's vividness. Number, focus, and length of the vignettes depend on the research endeavor and can range from one vignette of a specific situation (Cooren, 2010b; Cooren & Bencherki, 2010; Cooren et al., 2013) to multiple, shorter sequences that illustrate different aspects of a studied construct (Fauré et al., 2019; Long et al., 2018).

We believe that an approach building on real-data excerpts adds credibility to ventriloquial analyses as vignettes (alongside thorough explanations) enable analysts to demonstrate how ventriloquial effects were visible in an interaction, text, etc. and, simultaneously, allow readers to judge the soundness of analyses and findings (for more on vignettes, see Denis et al., 2001; Denis et al., 2010). Along vignettes and their elaborations, readers can trace the thinking of authors, while authors can convey complex accounts of what has been observed.

3.4. The Ventriloquial Framework in Use: Illustrations from our Visionary Talk Analysis

In the following, we present two vignettes on employees' own visions (Vignettes 1 and 2) and two vignettes on employees' sensemaking of official visions (Vignettes 3 and 4). These vignettes and their elaborations give further illustration to the vents and figures we identified in our data set when applying our framework (specifically Phase 1 *Identifying*) and exemplify possible ways of showing and communicating ventriloquial findings to readers (Phase 4 *Showing*).

Vignette 1: Envisioning the Ideal Future

In Vignette 1, we see participants of the fire brigade envisioning a future without ambulance services, more personnel, and less overwork. Their envisioning departs from aspects they disapprove of. Tensions exist between participants' workloads and management's practices.

412 Xaver: Well, my idea is, as I said, if we keep the ambulance, and it is already much now.
413 Just look at how much or eh read and look into the position planning. Many small
414 fire brigades are getting rid of the ambulance. They are starting now to recruit
415 employees and privates [...] The tendency will move towards people getting rid of
416 the ambulance, also the cities, the big ones, they will get rid of the ambulance Or
417 will change work hour models. Like very clearly changing things because it is simply
418 not doable [...]
419 Klaus: And as well, I am of the opinion, as Xaver, that the ambulance here is not acceptable
420 and if we would get rid of the ambulance, we would e:::h create another thing. We
421 would have enough free personnel to get rid of this overwork=
422 Frank: =That, yes!
423 Klaus: So that means that the personnel of the ambulance would go back to the fire brigade
424 personnel. Maybe thereby setting up a fourth tour, and we can keep the 24-hours shift
425 and can ultimately do a 48-hours week. That means, working for 24 hours, 48
426 hours of permanent free time. And thereby (.) and that like continuously [...] That
427 is why my vision for the next generation would be that the ambulance would be
428 dropped, that they can completely focus on the fire brigade job, that they do not
429 have to do overwork, that they don't feel obliged to do so from the top, and that
430 finally it is complied to how it has to be done here.

Vignette 1: Envisioning the ideal future

As conveyed by the numerous passages where his words are underlined, Xaver appears animated by feelings of stress and frustration about his workload (lines 412–418), both expressing themselves through his increased voice level. To illustrate the truthfulness of this work overload, Xaver invokes the brigade's "position planning" (line 413). As this planning is created by management, Xaver implicitly accuses management as responsible for the overload. He also blames the ambulance as responsible (line 412). Put differently, both the ambulance and management are presented as conflicting with his image of a doable workload and thus better future. To prove that this image is possible, Xaver invokes the cases of other fire brigades that characterize the elimination of ambulance services as a general trend (lines 413–416).

Next, we see Klaus joining and supporting Xaver in his opinion towards the ambulance (line 419). As Xaver, Klaus envisions a reduced workload and a more distinct task field (lines 427–429). Klaus adds an additional reason for dropping the ambulance by exemplifying a future practice that could help overcome current overwork (lines 420–421, 423–426). He also implicitly invokes additional figures that are presented as contradicting employees' ideal of a realistic workload: management's overwork rule, their pressure-making practices, and his and colleagues' accompanying feelings of obligation (all line 429). Finally, Klaus implicitly invokes the official voice of law (line 430), which is presented as yet another figure conflicting with current work practices and which further strengthens employees' position and their claim for less overwork.

As we see in this illustration, many figures (the planning, other brigades, future practices, the law, etc.) are ventriloquized as explicitly or implicitly *supporting* the vision that Xaver and Klaus have for their brigade, a vision where the ambulance would disappear, allowing their workforce to focus on their prime mission: fighting fires. We also see how other figures are presented as obstacles to this vision (the ambulance and management's overwork rules) to the extent that they are ventriloquized as *working against* what is envisaged, feeding into the sentiment of frustration that can be felt. Indeed, it seems to be this frustration that animates the entire interaction, whether it is the enumeration of current ills with a raised voice or the composition of a better future through numerous figures. From a ventriloquial perspective, the situation Xaver and Klaus say they are facing and the frustration this situation evokes thus *call for* their vision, which then materializes through a series of concrete decisions that, according to them, would have to be made to improve their work conditions.

Vignette 2: Translating the Ideal Future

Vignette 2 is taken from the hospital's discussion. Participants envisioned a future with more humanity towards patients and now translate this vision into specific aspects: What would a future with more humanity towards patients look like? The translation is challenged by the objecting behavior of two participants.

759	Anki:	Well, and I think the first step is not to come into the room with five people, stand
760		up in front of the bed and look strangely, but as a doctor to sit down on a chair next
761		to the patient, or on the corner of the bed, and then quietly say "We found this and
762		that and that and this is what we are going to about it." And that's about it.
763	Sandra:	That's only on <u>TV</u>.
764	Lena:	<u>On TV</u> ((*laughter*))
765	Anki:	Or in the Netherlands. There they have these big curtains which they close, then
766		they sit down on the bed corner.
767	Dani:	[Yes.
768	Anki:	[And then calmly explain to the patient what he has and what will be done about
769		that. But also, what you don't have in the Netherlands is this barrier. The barrier
770		between patient and doctor.
771	Lena:	Exactly.
772	Anki:	Precisely. That's it!
773	Dani:	But rather, basically, you are very much the same. Of equal worth.
774	Lena:	Yes.

Vignette 2: Translating the ideal future

Anki translates into the future what was already envisioned by contrasting doctors' current behavior towards patients (lines 759–760) with future, more humane practices (lines 760–762). Doctors' current practices and behaviors are presented as conflicting with Anki's ideal of putting the patient first, which also appears to lead her to exemplify the vision from the patient perspective in such detail. Further indication that this principle matters to Anki is apparent beyond this vignette as she brings up a similarly patient-centered perspective twelve

more times. Her *attachment* to this principle thus keeps ventriloquizing itself in her talk about the hospital's future.

Anki's exemplification of future doctor behavior is met with skepticism by part of her audience. Instead of acknowledging what Anki ventriloquized, Sandra and Lena invoke a television show and its embellished projections to push against and question Anki's sayings (lines 763–764), which is further emphasized by Lena's laughter (line 764). However, Anki restores the justifiability of her exemplification by invoking the practices of Dutch hospitals (lines 765–770) and their "big curtains" (line 765) as a symbol for privacy and humanity. According to her, these actual practices demonstrate that her ideal is not fiction. We see the Dutch hospital example further strengthened when Dani joins Anki's position and explicitly invokes the "barrier between patient and doctor" (lines 769–770) that does not exist in the Netherlands, positioning Dutch hospitals once more as illustrating that more humanity towards patients is possible; a standard that she appears to aim for, too.

A principle of equality appears to simultaneously animate Dani: If this principle were not of relevance to her, she would possibly not have invoked an example that centered as strongly on equality as the example that she did, in fact, invoke. Moreover, throughout the discussion, Dani invokes notions of equality or complains about inequality (five times), stressing her attachment to this principle as well as its significance for her conceptualization of the hospital's ideal future. At this point, Lena dissociates from her objecting stance and associates along their now collective exemplification of more humanity (lines 771, 774).

In this illustration, we see how a lot of work is done to concretize what at first sight looks like an abstract vision: more humanity towards patients. Anki and Dani translate this abstraction into multiple, concrete behaviors and practices for doctors and, by referring to Dutch hospitals, show that what is envisaged here actually exists elsewhere and is not just something one would find on TV. The vision materializes through concrete examples because it seems to *matter* to Anki and Dani (possibly also because of its close association with their principles and values), a mattering that also leads Anki to denounce the German doctors' current practices, ventriloquized as contradicting their patient-centered perspective and vision.

Vignette 3: Confirming the Official Vision

Vignette 3 is an excerpt from the direct-selling company (group 1). Participants are discussing one aspect of their organization's vision: Being a movement that improves people's lives. The organization (here referred to as *Date*) aims to foster a more open society and wants to contribute to customers' sexual autonomy. Participants appear to agree with these aspects of the official vision.

204	Nina:	The sentence right here, that Date is a movement that improves the life of many, eh (.)
205		I always consider myself as a kind of information scout. You know, even women aged
206		over 50 that also do these parties. They say "Wow, this was really informative and I
207		learned things I did not know yet." And also, we have many young girls who don't
208		have any experience and you show and tell them it is about their lives. Like I said, I
209		have two girls, and I'm really happy that they get a different perspective on their own
210		lives. And can share it to the houses where it didn't work quite as well.
211	Jessie:	And overall you make society more open. Some are really uptight.
212	Nina:	Yes, really providing information, information.
213	Anne:	And being there as a contact person.
214	Nina:	Contact person, yes. In how many houses you are, kind of.
215	Jessie:	It's a great feeling to know that they trust you so much. That they tell you the wildest
216		stories. Most often, after the parties, when everyone's gone, I talk with the host at least
217		for an hour. You know, when I pack my stuff back into my case, you simply get to
218		talk. And then you realize how much that woman trusts you.

Vignette 3: Confirming the official vision

Showing how the official statement concretizes in her own experience, Nina invokes her positive work attitude: "I always consider myself as kind of an information scout" (line 205), an aspect of her personality that is supposed to demonstrate what improving the life of many means for her. Nina also grounds the statement in customers' experiences (lines 206–208), explicitly giving her elderly customers a voice (lines 206–207) and implicitly invoking her younger customers' mindsets and experiences (lines 207–208). Through this ventriloquation, her work attitude and her elderly and young customers thus appear to confirm the truthfulness of the official statement.

Nina is joined by Jessie, who explicitly invokes the impacts on "society" (line 211) which she says their organization has, which adds further evidence to the vision's truthfulness. We see Anne translating the statement to even another aspect of their work: "And being there as a contact person" (line 213), which also shows how the statement translates into their daily routine. This latter aspect is reinforced by referring to the number of households participants are part of (line 214), again emphasizing their work's impact. Eventually, animated by what could be identified as a form of pride (line 215), Jessie explicitly invokes customers' trust, which she substantiates by instancing an anecdote of her own experiences (lines 215–219).

In this illustration, ventriloquation consists of mobilizing multiple figures that are implicitly or explicitly presented as confirming the truthfulness of the organization's vision. Whether it is Nina's personality, the elderly customers whose voices are reproduced, Anne's availability vis-à-vis her clients, or the trust that some women demonstrate to Jessie, all these figures are supposed to show that participants' everyday work routine connects to the abstracted goal of improving life with remarkable ease. There does not seem to be any gap between the vision's abstractness and the participants' day-to-day experience as the ventriloquations of figures allow these two levels to naturally intertwine.

Vignette 4: Objecting to the Official Vision

In Vignette 4, participants discuss an aspect of the hospital's official statement: transparent, professional communication. This aspect concerns communication towards patients and communication from management to employees. Participants object to this part of the vision statement as it does not appear to match their everyday work experience. The atmosphere is heated and emotion-loaded, and voice levels increase.

973 974 975 976 977 978	Trese:	Yes, but as I said, they have such a strong accent. And if you have such a persons in the emergency ambulance, and then you as a patient are already troubled because of an emergency, and then someone comes to you who has such a strong accent and then talks very quietly. And you sit there as family member or patient and you really freak out. You get really desperate. You feel as if you as well have gone to a hospital in Cambodia.
979	Anki:	Yes.
980	Trese:	It's like that, isn't it?
981 982	Anki:	Yes, absolutely. And back to willingness to communicate, maybe that's meant for us employees. But that's another story.
983	Dani:	Yes.
984 985 986 987 988 989 990	Anki:	Because we always get to know everything at the very end. When everything has already been decided. And we are not asked for opinions at all. This is a fact. We are always just confronted with done things. Such as Dr. Karev, who has always been in the emergency ambulance, he is now in the orthopedic department and we have to work for him, too. And also, all the people that before have never been assisting him, now have to do so. So that means they have to put on casts, pull off the strings, and so on.

Vignette 4: Objecting to the official vision

In an attempt to verify the importance of professional and transparent communication, we see Trese translating the statement to doctors' present and past practices. However, she appears to only find objecting evidence in form of the invoked lack of German language ability (line 973), which she implicitly presents as contradicting the importance the hospital officially attributes to communication. She also invokes the case of specific doctor behavior towards patients (lines 973–976) and starts speaking in the name of a "family member or patient" (line 976), invoking their fear, helplessness, and insecurity (lines 976–978). All these figures appear to add detail and strengthen her translation. Eventually, to further illustrate the language gap, she explicitly adds a comparison to a "hospital in Cambodia" (line 978).

Noteworthily, rather than substantiating the statement in the communication directed at her, Trese first substantiates it in the communication towards patients. She thus appears animated by a principle of putting patients first, which leads her to take on the patients' perspective and which conflicts with the doctor behaviors she describes. If this principle were not of matter to Trese, she probably would have not initiated the discussion from the patient perspective that she here assumes and ventriloquizes. Instead, she probably would have centered on her own

position and the communication directed at her. Interestingly, both Anki (see Vignette 2) and Trese seem to be animated by this principle. Throughout the focus group discussion, this also appeared to be the case for the three other colleagues. This raises the question of whether the principle is of personal relevance to participants or whether it is a deeply engrained part of their professional identity. It might not only be the principle animating participants but possibly their professional identity speaking through them, too.

Through what appears to be feelings of anger and frustration, Anki contradicts the official statement about management–employee communication by invoking her own experiences with management practices and behaviors (lines 981–990). Management's practices and behaviors are here presented as conflicting with the ideal of transparent communication set forth in the official vision, and Anki's apparent anger and frustration appear marked by the increase of her voice level and the repetition of her utterances. Furthermore, by explicitly invoking what she presents as the factuality of the situation (line 985), she adds authority and weight to her utterances. She finally adds a recent example to the interaction that spans a managerial decision, a doctor's work field, and her own and other employees' work practices (lines 986–990), which all implicitly illustrate her positioning by giving it more detail.

Overall, this vignette is marked by feelings of frustration and anger as consequences of the apparently irreconcilable mismatch between what the official vision statement says and what participants experience (e.g., family members' helplessness) and value (e.g., Trese's principle of putting patients first). Both for the communication towards patients and towards employees, participants check the official statement against multiple figures of their work experience and routine that they ventriloquize and that unanimously contradict it, be it doctors' lacking language skills, patients' insecurities, or management's decisions and behaviors. From a ventriloquial perspective, the situation at the hospital, materialized through a series of figures, speaks against the organization's vision as on paper. In contrast to what we have observed in Vignette 3, we thus here see the two levels (vision's abstraction and participants' day-to-day experience) parting, separating what participants experience in their daily work from what management has put in writing.

A Ventriloquial Analysis of Visionary Talk: Summarizing Insights

Strategists design visions to have impact. However, as long as visions remain too abstract, they "will never materialize" (Carton et al., 2014, p. 39), which means that *they will not matter* to employees as hoped for. We saw how conversations offered visions actual ways to materialize, that is, to exist and be (re)produced by relating visions to everyday organizational practice. Our ventriloquial analysis enabled us to understand the details of these materializations by connecting an abstract concept to the *specific people, things, and sources* that talk vision into being through ventriloquial dynamics—or not (Cooren, 2010a).

Understanding visions appeared to be imperatively coupled with a process of translating visions' broader abstractions into more tangible and comprehensible aspects (e.g., doctors' and management's behaviors in Vignette 4; see Kopaneva & Sias, 2015), even if this translation concerned yet-to-exist realities (e.g., future doctor behavior in Vignette 2; see Bencherki et al., 2016). Our participants looked for what (un)substantiated or (de)materialized their organizations' visions by ventriloquizing figures of everyday practice to show *what they have to say* about what is envisioned by management. Our participants also appeared to be influenced by values and principles (e.g., Anki's principle of putting patients first in Vignette 2), feelings (e.g., Xaver's anger in Vignette 1), as well as practices they observed but that conflicted with their own ideals (e.g., doctors' behavior towards patients in Vignette 2). This stresses how visions' connection to activities, values, etc. is key to *make visions matter for organization members*. Accordingly, we suggest perceiving visions as visionary in the truest sense of this word, that is, as detailed verbal portraits that easily and truthfully materialize in figures of everyday practice. Strategists need to present *a vision that is worthy to be ventriloquized by members and that they themselves ventriloquize* in their behavior. Ventriloquial analyses can help identify sources for strategists' claims beyond conventional abstractions.

3.5. Discussion

We have outlined a first analytical framework for ventriloquism that we developed iterating between analyzing visionary talk and reviewing previous ventriloquial studies. To our knowledge, our efforts constitute the first attempt to approach ventriloquism from a purely methodological lens. Our chapter offers organizational (communication) scholars a methodological tool that can systematically guide them through ventriloquial analyses, that is, through identifying what leads a person to say what she is saying or what voice can be recognized in what she is saying. It thus offers a framework that helps explain how organizational elements are talked into existence by uncovering what substantiates them in everyday communication (Cooren, 2010b).

Our chapter addresses recent critiques and calls for further explication of methods, outlines, and systematicity in communicative constitutive theorizing more generally (Boivin et al., 2017) and ventriloquism specifically (Kuhn, 2014). The framework's straightforwardness promotes its application, also among scholars less familiar with CCO. The analytical questions that any interaction, text, etc. is approached with ensure that ventriloquial effects cannot be reconstructed at random and sensitize the ventriloquial analyst for her possible agentic effect during analysis. Moreover, the framework's systematicity promotes the inclusiveness of ventriloquial analyses as the three analytical questions account both for the palpable character of figures (i.e., explicit and implicit) and ventriloquism's essential bi-directionality (i.e., including vents, which have mostly been absent from previous ventriloquial studies, e.g., Long et al., 2018).

The idea of interplay between activity and passitivity, invocation and animation, or figure and vent is one of ventriloquism's most central tenets, which is why we need both figures and vents for a ventriloquial analysis. Figure 1 and the inventory of vents and figures that it offers can inform and sensitize future work by reminding researchers to look for the whole range of potential figures and vents rather than just providing incidental illustrations. Following our systematic framework also allows training of the analyst's ventriloquial eye in a structured manner. This is important as analysts might ultimately not only want to unfold ventriloquial effects in one particular situation but to be able to compare findings across individuals, studies, and cases (Kuhn, 2014).

The various vents and figures that the framework helps us identify oftentimes carry the form of *nouns* and refer to the *substance* that builds a reality or situation (Burke, 1945/1962; Chaput et al., 2011). They represent what *matters* to the human participants, whether positively or negatively, in harmony or contradiction, which explains why they *materialize* in discussions (Bencherki et al., 2016; Cooren et al., 2012). Yet, voices do not multiply by themselves and need to enter an interaction through an *action*, *condition*, or *experience*, that is, through a *verb*. To account for this active dimension, our framework supplements the nouns of vents and figures with verbs (Phase 2). In so doing, and in contrast to previous ventriloquial analyses (e.g., Long et al., 2018), our framework answers not only the question of *what* communicatively constitutes realities but likewise the question of *how* voices enter interactions. We consider this dimension a crucial addition as it highlights the continually in flux and processual character of organizational phenomena that the communicative constitutive school advocates (see also Langley & Tsoukas, 2017).

Ventriloquism's *both-and* perspective of activity and passitivity raises the critical question of whether people shed responsibility for their actions, hiding behind the things that made them do what they did. However, a relational stance to agency, as ventriloquism assumes, implies relative, not absolute, ownership. If everything that is accomplished is a product of a configuration of agencies (Van Vuuren & Cooren, 2010), then people are always, at least partially, responsible for their actions. When we carry out an order, for example, we still share responsibility for our actions as we let this order pass through us (Cooren, 2016). The more we become aware of this ventriloquial nature of (organizational) actions, the more we must do what we can to examine our role in them.

We hope to see two directions. First, we hope to see future work that refines our framework. In particular, we encourage methodological papers to focus on (a) identifying ventriloquial effects and (b) presenting findings, as these activities appeared most decisive for performing a ventriloquial analysis. Indeed, if we further play out the metaphor of ventriloquism, then ventriloquial communication does not end with what a person invokes with what she is saying (or what animates her to say what she is saying) but continues with another person's affirmation or denunciation of what was animating her or what was invoked (see Vignette 2).

Ventriloquial communication can lead to ordering, consensus, and relative harmony, as much as it can lead to disordering, dissensus, and tension-laden conflict (Cooren et al., 2013). We believe there is important ground to be made in appreciating these dynamic complexities of ventriloquism. Three questions stand out: How can we systematically trace various voices when they are continually in flux and dialogue? How can we investigate and explain their possible stabilization across time and space? And how can we account for and present changes in activity and passitivity, when a vent is turned into a figure and vice versa?

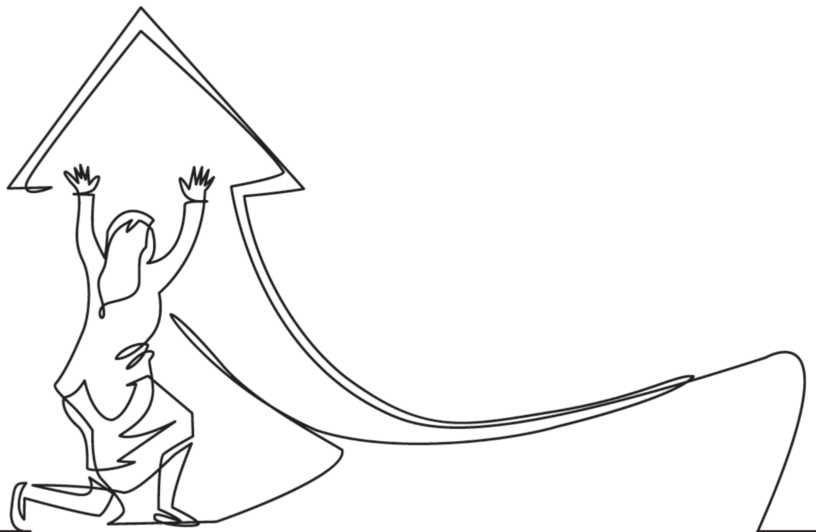
Second, we encourage scholars to apply our framework and embark on ventriloquial explorations of organizational phenomena, including values, missions, and identities. For instance, what would it mean for our understanding of values if we move from values-as-performed (Gehman et al., 2013) to values-as-animating? We can also imagine ventriloquial analyses of organizational activities, such as strategy-making or brainstorming. Which ventriloquial voices partake in these activities, and what is their effect? How does, for example, the invocation of higher hierarchical voices influence the unfolding of ideas and creativity? Such analyses will not only help in advancing our understanding of the communicative practices that constitute organizational realities, situations, and activities, but will also contribute to further breaking up the perpetual disconnect between the various voices that materialize (themselves) in interaction, conversation, and sensemaking.

To end, the framework we have presented can itself be seen as *speaking in the name of other voices*, such as our experiences, thoughts, and discussions, scholars and articles that inspired and guided us, our focus group participants, the inspiring voice of a great mentor, and many more. What we envision is this number of voices growing in future research. And for that, we hope that this chapter will animate deep thinking, insightful exploration, and systematic application.

Chapter IV.

Coauthoring Collaborative Strategy

When Voices Are Many and Authority is Ambiguous



Coauthoring Collaborative Strategy When Voices are Many and Authority is Ambiguous

In interorganizational teams, processes are more complex and structures less clear than in intraorganizational settings. Different perspectives come together and authoritative positions are often ambiguous, which makes establishing what to do problematic. We adopt a ventriloquial analytical lens and pose the question: How exactly do interorganizational team members build a collaborative strategy under these conditions, in their situated interactions? Our findings show how many different voices (individual, organizational, team, and other) shape members' strategy-making and reveal these voices' performative authoritative effects: Members established their team's strategy and produced the needed authority to do so through three coauthoring practices, namely, the *proposition*, *appropriation*, and *expropriation* of voices. When members switched between the practices and different voices, these voices were either woven together or moved apart. We sketch a conceptualization of strategy as a *relational assemblage* and develop a process model of strategy-coauthoring to illuminate these dynamics.

Keywords
Authority, communicative constitution of organization (CCO), interorganizational collaboration, multivoicedness, strategy-as-practice (SAP), ventriloquism

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4.1. Introduction

How is a collaborative strategy authored when conditions are complex, equivocal, and ambiguous? Who can speak in the name of a new collective and decide what this collective will do? We think that these questions are at the heart of interorganizational collaboration. This increasingly prominent form of organizing is characterized by two major complications. First, a collaborative strategy—what to do—needs to be formed amid manifold and possibly competing perspectives. Typically, organizations have different aims and ways of doing things (Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2005), as do the professionals that represent them (Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Huxham & Vangen, 2004). Second, because conventional hierarchical or market structures do not apply, authority relations tend to be less clear than in single organizations (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Koschmann & Burk, 2016). This further complexifies integrating the manifold perspectives. In this chapter, we bring together these two complications and scrutinize their interplay on coauthoring collaborative strategy.

If successful, interorganizational teams provide a unique opportunity to leverage synergies. Members can exchange valuable expertise, access complimentary resources, and together tackle complex challenges (Majchrzak et al., 2015; Sydow & Braun, 2018). In practice, however, these collaborations often fail or perform below expectations (Yström & Agogué, 2020). The collaboration literature stresses the importance of common purposes and shared interpretations of activities and goals to prevent frustration, inefficiencies, and so on: Collaborators need to come up with a collaborative strategy that clearly lays out what their group does and where they seek to go (e.g., Gray & Schruijer, 2010). However, when competing perspectives and obscure authority relations confound decision-making, defining this shared path can be very problematic (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Koschmann & Burk, 2016).

In fact, we have little insight into the actual practice and concrete ways of accomplishing this integration, alignment, or unanimity. That is where we seek to contribute. Members need to build their collaborative strategy as part of their situated efforts, but how precisely they do so, how they manage their collaboration's ambiguous authority structures, and which exact role the different perspectives play (individual, organizational, team, etc.) are questions that yet remain to be more thoroughly problematized. Already in her early work on collaboration, Gray (1994, p. 290) writes, "whose voices are dominant and whose are silenced is a key question to explore." We interpret this statement as a prompt to investigate in more detail how the many perspectives of interorganizational collaboration become aligned into a collaborative strategy (or not) and pose the question: Whose voices do we hear in interorganizational teamwork and how do they take part in coauthoring strategy?

To realize this ambition, we place communication front and center and consider collaboration, strategy-making, and authority as ongoing communicative processes: What a collaboration does and who has a say on that emerges and continuously evolves in collaborators' situated conversations. We can find traces of such an understanding already in the early collaboration literature (Donnellon et al., 1986; Gray et al., 1985). Novel work on strategy and particularly *Strategy-as-Practice* also shows an increased interest in the performative effects of language-in-use, most recently evidenced in a *Strategic Organization* themed issue on communicative perspectives (Vaara & Langley, 2021). Vaara and Langley call for research that illuminates in detail how strategy-making happens through language and they draw attention to novel theoretical and methodological approaches to communication such as the 'Communication Constitutes Organization' (CCO) perspective (Cooren et al., 2011). This perspective argues that organizations and organizational phenomena come to exist in communicative practice and, therefore, takes seriously communication's consequentiality for how strategy is constituted (Bencherki et al., 2021) and authority is produced (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009).

Specifically, we use this perspective's concept of *ventriloquism*. Cooren (2010a) introduced this metaphor to illustrate how interactants make present additional voices whenever they communicate—much like a ventriloquial artist expresses the voice of her puppet. For example, an interorganizational team member could speak in the name of her organization and make present their value statement to express disagreement with a strategy (e.g., "for us, this is not acceptable; what you are suggesting has no connection with our value proposition's sustainability standards"). From a ventriloquial viewpoint, not only the team member is doing the talking here; we also hear her organization's voice through what she says. Ventriloquism considers these voices as agentic participants in conversations and proposes that they make important differences for how situations unfold (Cooren, 2015), for how authority is enacted (Vasilyeva et al., 2020), and thus also for what can eventually become a group's strategy. A ventriloquial analysis (Nathues et al., 2021) then enables a novel and fine-grained take on the voices we hear in interorganizational collaboration and their implications for coauthoring collaborative strategy.

We analyzed 11 video-recorded meetings of an interorganizational team that deviated from its original plan and reauthored its objectives and actions. This gave us the unique opportunity to study how a collaborative strategy is built from scratch, in situated communication. This study proposes three coauthoring practices (*proposing*, *appropriating*, and *expropriating* voices) that unravel the dynamics of the collaborative strategy-coauthoring process and that illuminate the performative and authoritative effects different voices can have on strategy. We also sketch a conceptualization of collaborative strategy as a *relational assemblage* (Kuhn, 2021) of voices that *integrate* or *separate* and argue that strategy materializes from the connections formed between these voices. This proposition invites us to think about

strategy-making as a process of piecing together and moving apart, enacted in and through communication.

Our findings and ideas make important contributions to the literature on (interorganizational) collaboration and strategy. They show how the integration of different voices into a collaborative strategy is constituted in communication and accomplished through ongoing interaction. This is important because it accentuates how collaborators can enact strategic agency through subtle but powerful communicative practices. Our ventriloquial analysis unpacks these communicative practices in rich detail, captures their consequentiality for strategy-making, and demonstrates how seemingly small and conventionally overlooked communicative details matter for strategy.

4.2. Theoretical Background

We start by revisiting three important elements of our study: (a) interorganizational teamwork and strategy-making, (b) multivoicedness and ventriloquism, and (c) authority and authoring.

Interorganizational Teamwork and Strategy-Making

Whether to combine resources, exchange knowledge, or co-develop solutions, organizations increasingly recognize that partnering with others is essential for innovation and continuation (Majchrzak et al., 2015). At the same time, interorganizational processes are more complex and structures less clear than in intraorganizational settings (Sydow & Braun, 2018). Organizational aims and interests frequently diverge, leading to conflict and frustration (Gray, 1985; Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2005). Collaboration furthermore requires that members share power (Gray, 1994) which means that they cannot rely on pre-existing hierarchical relations. Instead, coordination and control—for example, over which organizational aims will be prioritized—need to be exercised through interactional practices, such as managing the agenda or mobilizing organizational resources (Koschmann & Burk, 2016). To move forward their collective, interorganizational teams are therefore faced with the continuous challenge of channeling their plurality into a shared direction that all parties find acceptable (Gray & Schruijer, 2010). In other words, members need to construct a collaborative strategy: What is it that they collectively seek to do?

The *Strategy-as-Practice* literature unpacks how professionals formulate and implement strategies as part of their everyday activities (Johnson et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). This work demonstrates a growing interest in language's performative effects on strategy-making, most recently evidenced in a *Strategic Organization* themed issue on communicative perspectives (Vaara & Langley, 2021) but also apparent in earlier work.

For instance, studies have identified the discursive practices that characterize strategizing (Vaara et al., 2004), have examined how texts contribute to strategy-making (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011), or have elucidated the situated role of ambiguity and multivocality in socially accomplishing strategy (Aggerholm et al., 2012). Samra-Fredericks (2003) provides one of the most detailed accounts in her conversation analysis of how managers build shared meanings of strategic matters. Her analysis reveals the consequential effects of seemingly trivial communicative moves, such as invoking a metaphor or using varying personal pronouns.

Asmuß and Oshima (2018), Bencherki and colleagues (2021), and Cooren and colleagues (2015) likewise showcase communication's important role for strategizing. These authors draw from 'Communication Constitutes Organization' thinking, which puts forward a dynamic conceptualization of organization as forming in everyday communication (Cooren et al., 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2019). This perspective negates the distinction between organization, on the one hand, and communication, on the other, and argues that communication always defines—constitutes—what becomes organizational (Cooren, 2012) and, therefore, also what becomes strategic. Specifically, Asmuß and Oshima (2018) study how proposed strategy changes are dealt with and show how entitlement questions and different strategic roles emerge and are (re)negotiated in situated interactions. Cooren and colleagues (2015) unpack the complex web of matters and concerns that substantiate strategy and illustrate how this web forms and is (de)valued communicatively. Finally, Bencherki and colleagues (2021) focus on strategy's initial formulation and provide detailed insight into the communicative practices that concerns need to move through to eventually constitute strategy (i.e., presentifying, substantiating, attributing, and crystallizing).

These authors' 'Communication as Constitutive' take on strategy-making appears valuable also for our ambition: When communication is constitutive of strategy, then paying detailed attention to conversations should help us understand how interorganizational team members decide what to work on. Moreover, the two phenomena that we believe complicate collaborative strategy-making in interorganizational teamwork (multivoicedness and ambiguous authority relations) are communicative by their very nature (Aggerholm et al., 2012; Bourgoin et al., 2020), which renders such a take even more relevant.

Multivoicedness and Ventriloquism

The notion of multivoicedness has increasingly appealed to researchers of organizational communication. In its most basic reading, it stresses how different organizational actors can have different viewpoints (Jørgensen et al., 2012) but also how one and the same person can express various voices (Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2017).

The metaphor of *ventriloquism* was introduced to spotlight the different voices that interactants can make present when they communicate (Cooren, 2010a; Cooren & Sandler, 2014). Broadly speaking, just as a ventriloquist speaks and acts in the name of her puppet, organizational actors can speak and act in the name of their supervisors, their organizations, rules they must follow, and so on. Invoking these voices makes these other agents participate in the conversation: They actively contribute to what is discussed (Cooren, 2015). Ventriloquism hence broadens the interactional scene beyond the present humans and puts forward a decentered conceptualization of agency where action, including strategy-making, is distributed across a chain of invoked voices (Castor & Cooren, 2006). A ventriloquial analysis can therefore enable strategy researchers to pay close attention to the diverse voices that can be heard in interactions and to consider them as potentially influential for the direction a collaboration is heading toward.

One could argue that especially in interorganizational teams, multiple voices are at play as professionals with dissimilar views, organizational interests, and so on are assembled (Gray & Schruijer, 2010). Matters brought up can be of differing personal or organizational relevance, but collaborators also need to form a unified group and speak with a shared voice (Hardy et al., 2005; Sydow & Braun, 2018). Members could also make present the voices of external stakeholders and larger contexts (Phillips et al., 2000), or even of seemingly abstract sentiments and considerations such as ideals, principles, and feelings (Cooren, 2012). Lewis and colleagues describe members' focus on their organization as a "me-orientation" (2010, p. 468); Hardy and colleagues use the label "assertive talk" (2005, p. 69). Both notions stress how collaborators prioritize organizational needs over team concerns. We would argue that collaborators' individual professions, backgrounds, and so on can also be part of this group when personal interests are prioritized over team interests. Lewis and colleagues propose a "we-orientation" (2010, p. 468) to depict when collaborators speak as one team and prioritize their collective benefit; something that Hardy and colleagues call "cooperative talk" (2005, p. 69).

Overall, this multivoicedness complicates the process of coauthoring a collaborative strategy: The different voices can jostle one another and push and pull collaborators in between them. Collaborators will want their voices to be heard to contribute to the collaborative strategy. However, some voices might be louder than others. Eventually, the different voices might therefore come to "engage in a contest for audibility and power" (Belova et al., 2008, p. 493). But how then does this contest play out?

Authority and (Co)Authoring

Compared with traditional organizations, interorganizational collaboration is characterized by more elusive authority relations (Koschmann & Burk, 2016). Authority is less anchored in centralized positions or structures (Barley, 1996) and needs to emerge from interaction

(Bencherki et al., 2020) to provide for the minimum direction that is needed for collective action (Taylor & van Every, 2014).

In keeping with the 'Communication Constitutes Organization' perspective, Porter and colleagues (2018) move from authority to studying the practice of *authoring* and emphasize authority's emergent, local, and communicative nature (see also Koschmann & Burk, 2016). Moreover, they frame authority as "which voices will be heard" (2018, p. 873), which is similar to Benoit-Barné and Cooren's (2009) idea of accomplishing authority by invoking others' agency through speech (see also Bourgoin et al., 2020). It also links back to Gray's (1994, p. 290) question about "whose voices are dominant and whose are silenced" and reminds us of Vaara's (2010, p. 44, italics added) call to study "who gets to participate in the *authoring* of strategies." We therefore adopt Porter and colleagues' (2018) conceptualization of authority for our inquiry and, given interorganizational collaboration's multivoicedness, further specify it as the practice of *coauthoring*. We propose that coauthoring the strategy of an interorganizational collaboration requires articulating one's voice as speaking for the team amid manifold additional voices.

These additional voices can have important consequences for coauthoring attempts. Voices that say the same can be compelling allies (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009) as they can enable a single person to speak with the power of a crowd (Bourdieu, 1991). For instance, members could strengthen their suggestion with their organization's reputation, but they might also invoke the industry's voice or mobilize their expertise to legitimate their proposal (Kwon et al., 2014). In these examples, the additional voices that members invoke back up their utterances and thereby help them *coauthor* their preferred course of action.

Voices can also be invoked to resist a strategy, such as when a group's voice is skillfully distanced from a proposal (Bourgoin et al., 2020) or when different organizational voices push for incompatible concerns. For instance, one member's attempt to change a group's strategy might be inhibited by disconnecting this member's voice from the collective's shared voice and thereby excluding this member from strategy-making (Tavella, 2021). Alternatively, an attempted strategy alteration might also be dismissed by invoking voices that help outvote it.

Interorganizational collaboration's multivoicedness and its ambiguous authority relations thus complicate creating alignment and forming a shared interpretation of what to do. We seek to unpack this complexity, studying situated interactions: Whose voices do we hear in interorganizational teamwork, and how do they take part in coauthoring collaborative strategy?

4.3. Method

Case and Data

As part of a larger project, we secured access to an interorganizational collaboration initiative aimed at strengthening regional business development. The initiative was supported by a regional investment fund and had a duration of 3.5 years. It brought together 23 organizations, consisting of high-tech companies and service providers that differed in characteristics such as maturity, structures, and markets. Organizations formed teams to work on joint strategic challenges (e.g. servitization implementation, business model transformation). As perspective exchange was an essential goal, teams were always composed of members from different organizational and professional backgrounds. Teams had to report their progress to the steering group overseeing the initiative but, apart from that, were themselves responsible for determining what exactly they worked on or how they distributed responsibilities and executed activities. This confirmed that authority structures were elusive.

The first author joined the initiative as an academic researcher. She was not actively involved in any subject matter discussions but followed teams through observations, interviews, and database access. Her continuous access to multiple teams enabled her to build a profound understanding of the initiative, its motivations and structures, and its members (as both organizations and individuals). The second author joined the initiative as an academic consultant: She was part of the steering group and helped monitor the project but never attended an actual team meeting. This positioned her as a distant insider. The third author joined the research after data collection was finalized. He never had any contact with the initiative and hence added a valuable outsider perspective.

The present study is built on the material we collected in one of the initiative's teams (Table 1). This team was supposed to work on the implementation of a digital product sheet that would follow products through their production cycles, logging and communicating information through automated procedures. However, members considered it more relevant to work on automation mechanisms beyond production processes as problems typically occurred not in manufacturing but the procurement of product components. They hence reauthored their objectives and activities once they started collaborating, exploring the possible implementation of a decentralized hub that brought together suppliers and organizations to automate and accelerate procurement processes. That gave us the unique opportunity to study how a new collaborative strategy was built from scratch. We followed the team from the first to their final meeting.

The team had four members from three organizations (pseudonymized): Max worked as an engineering manager at Proto, a large organization operating in sensitive markets. He joined the team as his organization was searching for more efficient ways of organizing their prototyping. Tom worked as an IT architect for Flex. He described himself as a technology

expert but less experienced in production processes. He joined the team because of his technological interest and because his organization sought to test more flexible production and procurement handlings. Ben and Anna worked for Hali; Ben as a senior project manager and Anna as a temporary consultant. They joined the project because of their (organization's) technological interest. Moreover, their company aimed to build a better network with companies in the region. The members did not closely know each other before their joint work started. Max and Tom had met twice (in the context of the overarching initiative). As Anna had just joined the company, she and Ben had met only once.

The team came together for eleven meetings. As a non-participant observer, the first author attended nine meetings (Meetings 1–8 and 11). She was replaced by a trained assistant for the two meetings she could not attend (9 and 10). All meetings were video-recorded with a 360-degree-camera, to capture the fine-grained, interactional data that we needed to understand how members communicatively established their collaborative strategy. Additional materials were used to develop a comprehensive contextual understanding and corroborate emerging insights. These included fieldnotes, documents (e.g., meeting minutes, reports), and two interviews with each member, once in the collaboration's initial phase and once halfway through (Table 1).

Table 1: Data overview

Meeting	**Video footage (min.)**	**Field notes (pages)**	**Documents (pages)**	**Interviews**
1	50	2	n/a	
2	80	2	n/a	
3	90	2	Minutes (3)	After 3rd meeting
4	90	3	Minutes (3)	(40-65 min.)
5	60	2	Minutes (3)	
6	70	2	Minutes (3)	
7	105	3	Minutes (2)	After 8th meeting
8	60	2	Minutes (2)	(40-50 min.)
9	70	3	n/a	
10	55	3	n/a	
11	40	2	Final report (41)	
	770 minutes	*26 pages*	*57 pages*	*405 minutes*

Data Analysis: A Ventriloquial Take on Coauthoring Strategy

We chose ventriloquism as our analytical lens. With its detailed attention to communication's constitutive effects (Cooren, 2012), voice invocation (Cooren & Sandler, 2014), and authority (Vasilyeva et al., 2020), ventriloquism appeared useful to help us understand how members built a collaborative strategy amid diverse perspectives and elusive authority structures. It also offered a novel and potentially enriching take on strategy-making that we sought to further

explore. Following the ventriloquial analytical framework recently proposed by Nathues et al. (2021), we moved through four phases.

Phase 1: Identifying. The framework lists three analytical questions to identify ventriloquial effects. The first question (*what is a person invoking with what she is saying?*) aids in identifying explicit voice invocations, such as when a professional openly speaks in the name of her organization (e.g., "for us, for our company, it is very important that supply chain processes run smoothly"). The second question (*what voice(s) can be recognized in what a person is saying?*) helps to unpack implicit voice invocations. Here, a voice is not straightforwardly named, but present in a more enfolded manner, such as when a professional implicitly refers to a rule members must follow at her company (e.g., "we have to do it that way at my company, there's no way around that"). Identifying these implicit invocations requires intense familiarization with the material and a deep understanding of the setting, in our case enabled by the first author's prolonged field presence. The third question (*what appears to lead a person to say what she is saying?*) aids in identifying possible animation effects, that is, when voices can be identified as the driver or motivator of someone's utterances or actions. Typically, animation effects are characterized by attachments, such as when the attachment to a principle or value makes a person interrupt and disagree (e.g., "I'm sorry, this doesn't work for me, maximum data protection is really important to me").

Equipped with these analytical questions, the first author analyzed all video-recordings; combing the data for individual, organizational, collective, and other ventriloquized voices (also considering pronoun use, Taylor & van Every, 2014). Paying attention to implicit invocations, for example, helped identify the voice of caution that one member was implicitly invoking when suggesting an initial focus on investigation. The animation question was particularly helpful to grasp that the same member's behavior was driven by the strict security regulations that his organization had in place. All passages where members discussed strategic options were marked using computer-aided qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti, for easy traceability) and transcribed (92 pages, single-lined). To avoid dependence on a single person's interpretations, all authors jointly analyzed portions of these transcripts. The first author also studied meeting minutes, the team's final report, her fieldnotes, and interview transcripts for better orientation and corroboration of emerging insights. This additional material was especially helpful for cross-checking our interpretations of implicit voices and animations. We also presented our final analysis to the team we followed to review our interpretations and indicate possible inconsistencies. None were found.

Phases 2 and 3: Ordering and relating. Our interest in interorganizational collaboration's multivoicedness already provided us with some structure (me-orientation and we-orientation; individual, organizational, team, etc.). However, ordering and relating the many invoked voices that we identified proved to be even more complex. For example, we found that members spoke with a singular first-person pronoun ("I") while referring to their

organizations. Similarly, when members spoke with a plural first-person pronoun ("we"), this could refer to both their organizations and their team. We reviewed the literature for guidance on how to clarify this nested complexity and found Ashforth and colleagues' (2011) distinction between *intrasubjective I*, *intersubjective we*, and *generic subjective it* helpful. While their take on pronouns addresses the nestedness of identities in organizations, it helped us articulate the complexities of invoked voices in strategy-making, too. Figure 1 provides an overview of the voices we identified. Specifically, we found that members spoke as an *intrasubjective I* to refer to themselves as *individuals* or as *organizational representatives* and vice versa addressed each other as individuals or as organizational spokespersons with what we call an *inter-subjective you*. We could also group two ways of speaking as an *intersubjective we*, where *we* referred to either *one's organization* or the *team*. Finally, we found instances where members referred to the team or organizations as *it* or where they made present additional voices, such as when they spoke from positions of caution or expertise or when they invoked the initiative's voice. We grouped these additional voices under the label *generic subjective it*.

Figure 1: The nested multivoicedness of interorganizational strategy-making

	Intrasubjective I	Intersubjective You	Intersubjective We	Generic subj. It
Individual	*I-as-individual*	*You-as-individual*		
Organizational	*I-as-organization*	*You-as-organization*	*We-as-organization*	*It-as-organization*
Team		*You-as-team*	*We-as-team*	*It-as-team*
Other				*It-as-other* (e.g., supplier, caution)

To better understand how the collaborative strategy emerged and evolved, we created thick descriptions for each meeting, chronicling the main discussions threads. We particularly focused on strategic tensions, that is, moments where members had to decide between different options.

We then grouped discussion threads, identified voices per meeting, and abstracted timelines of how threads, tensions, and voices fluctuated (Langley, 1999). For further zooming in, we selected two central threads of the team's strategy: (a) their general decision to work on a certain technology (which we call "hub") instead of the digital document they were supposed to develop and (b) their discussions on whether this hub should be an open or closed system. Within these two threads, we differentiated voice invocation between members (who invoked which voices), which showed how individuals were invoking different voices as they were

engaging in different strategy-coauthoring practices. We identified three such practices (Table 2): (a) *proposing* individual, organizational, and other voices to coauthor the collaborative strategy, (b) *appropriating* the team voice to coauthor the collaborative strategy, and (c) *expropriating* the team voice to detach themselves from the collaborative strategy.

Table 2: The three ventriloquial coauthoring practices

Coauthoring practice	Description
Proposing individual, organizational, and other voices	A team member invokes her individual, organizational, or any other voice while coauthoring or attempting to coauthor the team's strategy. This is essentially a practice of multiplying the authors behind a suggestion, idea, etc.: The member makes present additional voices that argue for her strategy proposal with her.
Appropriating the team voice	A team member invokes the team's collective voice and claims it as her own when coauthoring what the collaborative strategy is and is not. She expresses her possession of the team voice, thereby appropriating the power to speak and decide for the group.
Expropriating the team voice	A team member refrains from or stops invoking the team's collective voice to detach herself from what is being or what has been coauthored as the collaborative strategy, thereby excluding herself from the collective and its strategy.

Phase 4: Showing. The presentation of our findings broadly follows a 'conceptualized composition' format (Berends & Deken, 2021). Phases 2 and 3 have already introduced our insights on nested multivoicedness and coauthoring practices. In Phase 4, we selected five meeting episodes to present as vignettes, to open up richer insight into the empirical dynamics. We use the discussion section to develop a process model of the coauthoring practices and their implications for strategy-making.

4.4. Empirical Episodes

In this section, we zoom into five episodes to illustrate how interorganizational team members coauthored their collaborative strategy in their situated conversations through ventriloquial acts. Table 3 (next page) provides an overview of the vignettes.

Table 3: Overview of vignettes

Vignette	What is at stake?	Coauthoring practices and invoked voices	Outcome
1, from meeting 1	Max and Tom seek to change the team's strategy	Max and Tom accomplish authority and coauthor the new strategy by *proposing* additional (mostly organizational) voices that back up their ideas. Moreover, they *appropriate* and exercise control over the team voice, confirming each other's suggestions but correcting Ben's version. Consequently, Ben *expropriates* the team voice and does not contribute to the new strategy.	Reauthored strategy: The team will work on a hub
2, from meeting 2	Details of the new strategy are worked out	Max and Tom accomplish authority and coauthor additional details of the new strategy by *proposing* organizational voices that argue with them. They also speak from positions of expertise and experience and continue *appropriating* and dominating the team voice. Ben *appropriates* the team voice by relating to Max and Tom's new strategy, which enables him to partially join the strategy coauthoring process.	Detailed strategy: Prototype and security needs are added
3, from meeting 4	Additional security details of the strategy are discussed	Tom aims for an open system and seeks to accomplish authority and coauthor the strategy in that direction by *appropriating* the team voice and *proposing* an imagined supplier's voice as his ally. Max aims for a closed hub and seeks to accomplish authority and coauthor the strategy in that direction by questioning Tom and making present (*proposing*) his organization's security needs.	Opposing strategies are authored: closed vs open system
4, from meeting 7	The team defends their strategy to an outsider	All members defend their strategy by *appropriating* a much-shared team voice that excludes their guest. They accomplish authority by having each other's backs and *proposing* organizational voices and the voices of their hub's main actants as allies of their strategy.	Strengthened team voice and collaborative strategy
5, from meeting 10	The team reflects on their strategy	Anna reflects on and distances herself from the team's strategy. She authors her reflection and accomplishes authority by *expropriating* the team voice and *proposing* individual voices. Max and Tom initially defend the team's strategic choices and accomplish authority by *proposing* organizational voices as allies. However, they then start aligning with Anna's critical evaluations.	Reflections of the strategy are authored

Vignette 1: Authoring a New Strategy

When the team starts collaborating, meetings are characterized by great voice diversity. Two members in particular ventriloquize many voices: Max and Tom are eager to change the team's strategy and mobilize different voices to do so. Instead of working on an advanced digital product sheet, they seek to work on a hub to solve their organizations' strategic challenges around procurement[6]. They have just suggested this new strategy. Vignette 1 is taken from the team's first meeting. Only Max, Tom, and Ben are present.

1	Ben:	And now we are trying to develop a [hub] but it's not=
2	Max:	=No eh we are investigating whether it is eh (.) feasible to develop a [hub]. I think that's-
3	Tom:	Yes, yes […] your [sheet] is somewhere on your server e:::h (.) so we thought e:::h okay
4		maybe we can have some way of e:::h eh letting the- the supply chain participate eh in
5		gathering the information for your eh eh prototype.
6	Max:	Yes, that's one and what we also see is eh well the sheet as we use it within [Proto] uhm
7		it doesn't need any eh improvement or so. And you have eh within your company
8		((*looking at Tom*)) you have your own way of working, which is well more or less similar?
9	Tom:	Yes ((*nodding*))
10	Max:	Of course, it's in another way implemented but the way of thinking is more or less
11		similar […] and we see actually that this is convenient enough and also, I think for (.) for
12		you ((*looking at Tom*)) it's not necessary to have a complete new sheet to be programmed.
13	Tom:	Actually, our core business is building prototypes with [Flex] so we do that rather well.
14		Our whole organization is built around the idea of quickly eh- eh prototyping
15		something, so we can build something within three months, a big machine […] but
16		also, it's not really a problem over there ((*pointing at Max*)) so the sheet itself, the kind of
17		information you need and how to format that information.
18	Max:	Yes […] so that's the idea we have. So, what we have to do now is investigate whether
19		that is even possible, if parties are willing to participate?
20	Ben:	And- and- and in this project you want to investigate that? Or you want to develop [hub]?
21	Max:	First start with investigation!
22	Tom:	Investigation would be nice because we don't have a team member that actually knows
23		something about [hub], the technical aspects. I've heard it in the newspaper eh-
24	Ben:	But you want to be a user of [hub]? Is that what you want to do?
25	Max:	We want to investigate whether we can be a user of it.
26	Tom:	Yes.

Vignette 1: Authoring a new strategy

Picking up on the new strategy that Max and Tom have suggested shortly before, Ben expresses his view of what the team ("we") will work on (line 1). However, he is interrupted by Max who counters Ben's suggestion with a more detailed and simultaneously less ambitious version: Rather than "develop[ing] a [hub]" (line 1), the team should investigate "whether it is eh (.) feasible to develop" this hub (line 2). By correcting Ben, Max positions

[6] Note that the team had sufficient freedom to change their activities and objectives. While a plan already existed, reauthoring the strategy was not constrained by important structural factors.

himself as being able to speak for the team and decide on its strategy: He knows better than Ben what the team should do. It also appears that Max is mobilizing the voice of caution here. His humbler suggestion of focusing on investigation first (not development right away) could be read as expressing his ability to lead by the use of reason, further substantiating that Max should be the one speaking and deciding for the team. Tom agrees with Max and elaborates on their rationale for dropping the original idea and instead working on a hub (lines 3–5). Tom appears to be able to speak with the team voice too, as if he and Max would make up the collaboration and Ben would not (yet) be part of it. In other words, Max and Tom *appropriate* the team voice to outline a new strategy and, simultaneously, keep Ben from doing the same.

Max then provides another argument for changing the team's strategy and working on a hub by explicitly invoking his organization's voice and implicitly invoking his colleagues' voices when he refers to "we" and "[Proto]" and stresses how their product sheet "doesn't need any eh improvement" (lines 6–7). Max's exact phrasing here is a literal example of how voices are multiplied ("that's one and what we also see," line 6) to strengthen one's authoritative position. In what seems to be an attempt of adding further voices, Max then seeks a similar organizational affirmation from Tom, now addressing him as an organizational representative ("you have eh within your company," line 7). Tom once more backs up what Max says (line 9), and Max continues on the point he is trying to make: That product documentation during manufacturing and the product sheet should no longer be focused on. He again invokes his organization's voice ("we see actually that this is convenient enough," line 11) and also starts speaking as Tom's organization (lines 11–12). Tom then himself elaborates on his organization's strengths and structures, substantiating the fact that his organization does not need a new product sheet by invoking their fast turnarounds (lines 13–15). We also see him invoking the voice of Max's organization, referring to "over there" (line 16) while pointing at Max. Tom explicitly points out that the sheet is "not really a problem" (line 16) to which Max agrees (line 18). Multiple voices are hence *proposed* by Max and Tom as pressing for a new team strategy: Not just their own (as the ones able to speak in the team's name), but also the voices of their organizations, their organizational colleagues, and their product sheets.

Max then translates the various concerns brought up into a succinct collaborative strategy. He switches to talking with the team voice and authors what they must do: "What we have to do now is investigate whether that is even possible" (lines 18–19). Note how Max uses the verb "investigate" to describe the team's core activity, as he did at the very beginning (line 2). Ben, who has been silent for a while, questions Max for more detail (lines 20, 24). While he initially referred to the team as "we" (line 1), Ben now addresses his collaborators as "you" (lines 20, 24). It appears as if he is granting the others (and their organizations) full authority to decide on what the team is going to work on: Max and Tom are able to speak as the team

(*appropriating* its voice) and to coauthor a new strategy through invoking (*proposing*) multiple voices, while Ben *expropriates* the team voice and does not join the strategy-making.

The new strategy hence emerges from an asymmetrical mobilization of voices. Because Max and Tom switch between the practices of proposing and appropriating, their organizations' voices and the team voice are being pieced together. In contrast, Ben moves from appropriating to expropriating the team voice, which, at this point, separates his voice from the team and its emerging strategy.

Vignette 2: Spelling Out Strategy Details

Members have decided to drop the original plan. Consequently, they need to further specify their new strategy: What exactly will they focus on in working on this new subject? In Vignette 2 (from the second meeting), two aspects are discussed: prototypes and security requirements. Anna is present for the first time but mostly takes on a listening role. As she did not join the first meeting and hence did not coauthor the strategy that was discussed then, she might possibly not yet feel authorized to contribute.

1	Ben:	So, we eh but eh for defining the requirements eh first we have to define the prototype?
2	Max:	Hm-hm.
3	Tom:	Yes.
4	Ben:	Then we know which components we are looking at […] and then we see if it is really
5		feasible or if it is too expensive or-
6	Max:	Yes, because -cause I- I eh we since we are in the [X] industry (.) we have a huge firewall.
7		That's also things we need to investigate. You also have your firewall= ((*looking at Tom*))
8	Tom:	=Yeah, but I work next to the boss of the firewall so ((*laughing*))
9	Max:	It's a bit easier! But we have eh three different grades of eh- of eh internet. And- and-
10		the- and the so- so some parts are actually physically separated so- (.) so we need to
11		understand a bit also what are the IT requirements […] defining a prototype is not that
12		difficult. We are making many and also [Flex] you are making ma- eh only prototypes.
13	Tom:	Hm-hm, yes.
14	Anna:	Should they actually be made or is it just really prototype? Like just on computer.
15	Tom:	I would not dare to wait for development […] electrical components are kind of all the
16		same, there's a serial number on it, eh a product number, manufacturing number, and
17		then you can order them everywhere so if that's your prototype, your first one, then of
18		course you can scale to multiple=
19	Max:	=Yes but- but- but we, we have some additional eh requirements in these kinds of
20		areas, so we also want eh we also want to know what kind of export licenses are behind
21		those components.
22	Ben:	So that comes in the requirements?
23	Max:	Yes, that comes in the requirements.

Vignette 2: Spelling out strategy details

The vignette begins with Ben—speaking with a collective "we" (line 1)—suggesting how to approach one aspect of the new strategy. He appears to be slightly unsure about speaking as the team (and adding to their strategy), indicated by his hesitation ("we eh but eh," line 1). This changes after Max and Tom agree with his proposition (lines 2–3); their affirmation

seems to put Ben in a more comfortable position when he authors the collaboration's next steps in his next turn (lines 4–5). Note how Ben is picking up on the feasibility objective ("if it is really feasible," lines 4–5) that Max has emphasized in Vignette 1: Ben is essentially *appropriating* the team voice and contributing to its new strategy by appropriating what Max said as representing the team before.

We see Max attempting to add another aspect that is of relevance to his organization to the next steps Ben has outlined (lines 6–7). Interestingly, Max starts speaking as an individual ("I") but then switches to speaking as his organization's spokesperson ("we"), presumably to lend more weight to the addition he is trying to coauthor into the strategy: It is not just him but also his organization that needs this addition to be included. Max explicitly invokes his organization's "industry" and "firewall" (line 6) and then switches to speaking in the team's name again ("things we need to investigate," line 7) as if to ensure that his organization's concerns are adopted by the team. Subsequently, Max addresses Tom and his organization (specifically also their firewalls, line 7), presumably to add additional voices that push for including his security concern in the team's strategy. However, Tom weakens rather than supports Max's suggestion (line 8). Specifically, by stressing his close proximal distance "to the boss of the firewall" (line 8) and by his joking tone, Tom presents Max and Proto's security concerns as not being of much relevance to himself or his organization. We can observe an interesting dynamic of strategy-coauthoring here: Voices *proposed* as important for the collaborative strategy by one member can be accepted as such by others, but they can likewise be questioned, contested, or made to say something else. In other words, once expressed, proposed voices escape the full control of their articulator—especially so when a voice that is proposed belongs to someone else that is also in the room.

Max resorts to adding additional organizational voices to emphasize their need for security. Specifically, he invokes their "grades of [...] Internet" (line 9) and their "physically separated" parts (line 10). These virtual and physical structures as well as the organizational voices Max made present before (the industry and firewall) thereby join him in authoring details of what the team should work on (lines 10–11). Altogether, they essentially dictate or require that security concerns are coauthored into the team's strategy. We can observe how Max continues *appropriating* the team voice but also how he *proposes* many additional voices to coauthor the new strategy's details. These voices help him accomplish a strong authoritative position: Because we also hear Max's organization speaking through him, the significance of his additions is amplified.

Only afterward Max comes back to the prototypes (line 11). Now talking for both his and Tom's organizations (line 12), he emphasizes how defining prototypes is not difficult. This time Tom agrees (line 13). Anna has a question about the prototypes (line 14), but Tom swiftly explains how a few numbers are sufficient for what the team intends to do (lines 15–18). Tom seems to be speaking from a position of experience and expertise, materializing through his

effortless enumeration as well as his exact phrasing: He categorizes Anna's question as a risk the team cannot "dare" (line 15), thereby at least partially expressing that he knows better. This points to his continued authority over the collaborative strategy, even if Tom is not explicitly speaking in the team's name here.

Tom is interrupted by Max, who voices additional requirements. Speaking once more for his organization ("we," line 19), Max names "export licenses" (line 20) as crucial information that needs to be included "in the requirements" (line 23). It could be said that Max's organization again joins him in authoring details of the new strategy, but we could also say that Max implicitly positions himself as animated by his organization and its interests, acting merely as a medium through which organizational concerns are brought forward. The interviews we conducted with Max's team colleagues corroborate this impression: Team members repeatedly described Max's behavior as strongly driven by his organization and its strict procedures. Ben instantly accepts Max's addition (line 22). This once more shows how Max, just like Tom, still seems to possess much authoritative power over the team's voice and strategy, greatly influenced by the *proposition* of organizational voices.

Overall, the team's new strategy gains further detail in this second meeting. Especially Max's switches between proposing organizational voices and appropriating the team voice increasingly enmesh these different voices into the bundle constituting the team's strategy.

Vignette 3: Authoring Opposing Strategic Options

With the joint work progressing, the team's strategy is further specified. However, Max and Tom cannot agree upon one aspect: Whereas Max appears driven by his organization's strict security policies and presses for a closed system, Tom envisions a more open structure to meet his organization's needs for adaptiveness and flexibility. In Vignette 3 (from the fourth meeting), members discuss this tension.

1	Anna:	And I was wondering eh (1.0) is it important to keep your data anonymous like uhm
2		that the suppliers uhm or as a company is it important not to show to the suppliers that
3		you are the company that buys the eh (.) the parts? ((*looking at Max and Tom*))
4	Tom:	I would say it's (.) we need to keep it public because as a supplier if I see 'Okay your
5		company is located in my region okay, I will reply to that one and not to the guy in
6		China'. And it's important to know what kind of stuff is actually available so you can
7		request it. So, you need to have some- eh it needs to be public.
8	Max:	Restricted public. It should be eh public to the suppliers restricted (.) not to the other
9		eh customers.
10	Tom:	Why?
11	Max:	Well why should you know e:::h what I want to buy? […] I'm always a bit reluctant of-
12		of having all the data for everyone open.
13	Tom:	For the actual use case, for the longer term, you need something to be open. To have
14		some kind of e:::h adaptive response to the world.

Vignette 3: Authoring opposing strategic options

Anna raises a question about whether the hub should be "anonymous" (line 1). She speaks with a generic vocabulary, talking about "suppliers" (line 2) and "company" (lines 2, 3) instead of naming any particular one or speaking with her organization's voice. This contrasts with many of the behaviors we have observed in previous meetings, especially those of Max and Tom who often spoke for their organizations and named their suppliers. Interestingly, Anna seems to be addressing her question about anonymity at Max and Tom (line 3) not as individual professionals but as organizational representatives ("as a company," line 2). This might be a consequence of the increasing entanglement of the team's strategy with Max and Tom's organizational voices.

In his response, Tom, however, starts speaking not as an organizational representative but as himself ("I," line 4) and then switches to using the team's "we" (line 4) as if to emphasize that keeping the hub public is important not just for his organization but for the entire team. He also starts speaking "as a supplier" (line 4), invoking this supplier's voice to make a better case for his argument (lines 4–5). It is not just him saying that the hub should be public but also one of this hub's main participants, which helps Tom emphasize the significance of his point. In other words, while *appropriating* the team voice, Tom also *proposes* the voice of an imagined supplier to strengthen his "public" (line 4) version of the strategy. The fact that he mobilizes the team's and this supplier's voices, although being addressed as an organizational representative, points at a possible rearrangement of authority sources: At least for Tom, representing the team now seems to weigh more than representing his organization.

Max disagrees with Tom, stating that the hub should be "restricted public" (line 8). He explains his general attitude toward data-sharing, describing how he prefers to be cautious (lines 11–12). One might wonder how far Max's attitude is influenced by his organization, which has strict security regulations in place (as we learned in Vignette 2, but also across meetings and in interviews with Max and the others). Max brought up security issues many times, often in relation to his organization, which is why we could assume that his organization here is leading him to disagree. In many ways, Max appears to be the voice of security concerns in the team. It is *through him* that security aspects are expressed and eventually become coauthored into the collaborative strategy.

Whether to design an open or closed hub is not resolved in this meeting. Tom and Max are authoring different strategies, which also changes their way of addressing one another: While they spoke with a shared voice before, there now exists a me-you dialectic between them, where each seems to be *appropriating a different version of their team voice*. Tom and Max continue surrounding themselves with additional voices; however, these voices now lay out opposing strategic details. What is best for the team, presented as such by Tom, is no longer also what is best for Max's organization.

Vignette 4: Defending the Collaborative Strategy

Members find a compromise in an open but anonymized system. Potentially everyone can access this open system, but the identities of buyers and suppliers will be sealed and visible only to an intermediate party. A narrowed version of their strategy hence emerges. In Vignette 4 (from the seventh meeting), a guest is present. Phil, who is also a member of the initiative the team is part of, met Ben at a gathering and wanted to learn more about the team's project. Phil does not have any hierarchical relationship with the others, and except for having met Ben once, does not yet know the team members. Max has summarized what the team has been working on, including the system's anonymization, when Phil starts sharing his opinion.

1 Phil: Yes and eh so when I was thinking about it and we also discussed a little bit ((*looking at*
2 *Ben*)) we were thinking about how you can have a kind of anonymous e:::h eh say
3 procurement type of e:::h especially when it's confidential. Suppose yeah eh [Proto]
4 they will have a new product and they don't want eh they want to get quotes for that
5 but eh- [but you don't want everybody to know
6 Max: [But we don't share our bill of material […] even- even in this part, the seller
7 of components they eh it is not necessary that they know who the buyer is, there is
8 e:::h how do we call that there is a-
9 Ben: Transport company-
10 Max: Yes, so there is a transport company in between like bol.com or something like that.
11 Ben: Yes.
12 Max: So, a company in between. That was also for us, for [Proto], a quite important reason
13 that we secure the data […]
14 Anna: So now it is more the idea that the company eh requests parts and then the suppliers
15 can react on that. So it's more in the hand of the suppliers that they are actively
16 searching for companies that need their parts, instead of the company e:::h looking
17 around if suppliers have that […] and we left then the payment out of scope.
18 Tom: Everything could be done in a normal database. But we like wanted to try a [hub] […]
19 Max: I think what is important that's what we have written down in the beginning actually
20 so the goal of this is not to use [hub] but to see whether it is feasible to continue with
21 it. So, a bit different than all the other initiative programs.

Vignette 4: Defending the collaborative strategy

Phil starts speaking as himself ("I," line 1) but switches to a more collective "we" (lines 1–2) shortly after, when he explains how he already discussed some ideas with Ben. That positions him closer to the team, presumably to appear less of an outsider, and is reinforced when he starts speaking about the hub as an anonymous and confidential system (lines 2–3). When Phil starts elaborating on precisely this anonymity, he invokes the voice of Max's organization, outlining their needs (lines 3–5). While Max allowed his team members to speak as his organization (e.g. Tom in Vignette 1), he does not yet seem to be granting this power to Phil when he already starts correcting Phil while he is still talking (line 6). Interestingly, Max uses a generic vocabulary in his explanations (lines 6–8). Instead of naming his organization or its suppliers (as he generally did before), he speaks about "seller" and "buyer"

(lines 6–7). When he cannot think of one word, he asks his team colleagues for help, speaking with their shared voice: "e:::h how do we call that" (line 8), as if they have established their own collective terminology. Max clearly *appropriates* the team's voice, contrasting the team's collectiveness to Phil's singularity.

Shortly after, Max invokes his organization's voice (lines 12–13); this time to justify the team's strategy rather than to impose his organization's view onto the collaboration (as in Vignette 2, for example). It appears as if Max's organization is no longer *proposed* as only Max's ally but now also as the team's. While before, making present his organization's voice helped Max to strengthen his authority over the team's strategy, invoking this very voice now helps him to defend the strategy that he coauthored. One could say that, over time, the different voices became pieced together to such an extent that the concerns that characterize Max's organization now also characterize the team and what it does.

When Anna explains some processes in more detail, she too adopts a generic vocabulary, speaking about "the company" (lines 14, 16) or "the suppliers" (lines 14, 15) rather than naming any particular one. She also *appropriates* the collective "we" (line 17), something she has not often done before but which here stresses how she positions herself as part of the team, in contrast to Phil. Tom adopts the team's collective voice as well when explaining how they "wanted to try" (line 18) working on a hub. Max adds to that by making present their goal again (line 20). He stresses their focus on checking feasibility and compares their work with other projects (lines 20–21) that are less exploratory, thereby also emphasizing their uniqueness. That is important as it highlights the team's distinguishability as one collective group that is different from the initiative's other teams and, therefore, also different from the team(s) that Phil, their guest, is part of.

Overall, it seems as if Phil's presence (i.e., the presence of an outsider) makes the team move closer together. Members speak with a much-shared team voice and collectively stand behind their strategy, clearly distinguished from their guest.

Vignette 5: Authoring Strategy Evaluations

The team manages to build a first prototype. However, as we see in Vignette 5 (from the tenth meeting), Anna concludes that their way of designing the hub has ultimately not been a good strategic choice. Initially, her skepticism is met with counterarguments by Max and Tom. After a short while, however, it appears that Max and Tom start reconsidering their conclusions.

1 Anna: The main reason to use [hub] as a::: technology and uhm because what we have done
2 now is- is creating another third party to [hub] and that's (1.0) eh like eh the main
3 reason to use [hub] is to remove that third party and eh now you add it and then uhm
4 so (1.0) eh that's why you wouldn't use [hub].
5 Ben: Doing the anonymization that's eh-?
6 Anna: Sorry?
7 Ben: To keep it anonymous? Anonymization-
8 Max: Yes.
9 Anna: Yes, so I would choose another system if you want really to stay anonymous.
10 Tom: But eh so the fact that you don't have a vendor log-in eh so now if you want a
11 component you have to choose between your known suppliers.
12 Max: Yes.
13 Tom: Like five or so, so you go to this website, this website, this website 'Oh they have this
14 part, no they don't' and go to the next one. So, with your question, you need to ask the
15 individual suppliers. If you have a network, you post the demand=
16 Max: =Yes, it's a quite important thing actually because you can uhm buy goods from the
17 whole market and you have only one payment company for instance. That makes it for-
18 for large companies like [Proto] much easier because eh we are very much restricted in-
19 in having new vendors in our- in our database. Otherwise, it's growing and growing,
20 but if you use this you have one virtual vendor, there you do the payment, but you have
21 all suppliers from all over the world, so you have access to a lot of information and a lot
21 of components, or a lot of materials, and you only have one payment address.
22 Anna: Yeah, yes, indeed.
23 Max: That- that can be (.) that can be very beneficial.
24 Anna: Yes. But, I think, you also have to pay attention to the safety of the [hub], because I
25 think there are a lot of e:::h so it's not certain that it can- that it is not hackable.
26 Max: Okay.
27 Tom: Yeah, but for our specific goal, it is not that important (.) because you request the material
28 and after the request is filled you don't really care what happens to your transaction.
29 Anna: Yeah, okay.
30 Max: Should be mentioned maybe, it's good to- to- to have something about the success
31 factors, when you want to use it, what the big advantage is of this. And there are a lot of
32 benefits of course, and a lot of drawbacks.
33 *((silence of 2 seconds))*
34 Tom: If every benefit is actually (.) performed better in a central database or distributed
35 database with an open-source community, then yeah, that's also a nice conclusion of
36 course.

Vignette 5: Authoring strategy evaluations

Anna voices first evaluations of the hub. She starts speaking with the team voice ("what we have done," line 1) but then switches to addressing the others as "you" (lines 3, 4, and 9) and to speaking of herself as "I" (line 9) as if wanting to detach herself from the team's strategic choice to include an intermediate party for anonymization. This decision had been made as a compromise between Tom and Max's opposing preferences for either an open or closed system. Remember that the initial decision to work on a hub had also mainly been coauthored by Max and Tom (and their organizations; see Vignette 1). Anna had always been more hesitant toward this strategy as we observed in initial meetings but also learned when

interviewing her. However, her hesitations were overruled by Max and Tom, who managed to put themselves in more powerful authoritative positions. While Max and Tom's organizational concerns have become closely knotted to the team's activities, Anna and Ben's organization was less present in their collaborative strategy. As just one of many possible consequences, Anna seems to be in a position to easily *expropriate* the team voice and distance herself from its partly disappointing outcome—an outcome that the others, more than her, are responsible for.

Tom provides an alternative rationale for why the hub was nonetheless a good idea. He brings forward a typical problem that organizations have when ordering (lines 10–11, 13–15), which helps him highlight the hub's benefits. As in the collaboration's beginning phases, he invokes organizational voices to back up his argument. Max takes side with Tom (line 12) and adds additional details for why their strategy has been a smart choice (lines 16–21). Following Tom's lead, he also invokes his organization's voice, positioning it as representing large companies in general (lines 17–19). Both their organizations and large companies in general are hence *proposed* by Tom and Max to help them defend their strategic choices as "very beneficial" (line 23). This contrasts Anna's more negative evaluation and could be interpreted as Tom and Max's attempt to draw Anna back in.

While Anna appears to agree with some of the benefits (line 22), she sticks to her critical reflection and names another aspect to prove her point. Once more speaking with her individual voice ("I"), she talks about the need "to pay attention to the safety of the [hub]" (line 24). That Anna is bringing up this particular aspect is noteworthy: So far, it has always been Max who made present security concerns (see, for example, Vignette 2); now, it is Anna who invokes this aspect as substantiating her negative evaluation of the team's strategic choices. In contrast, Tom appears to be trying to downplay the security issue. Speaking with their collective team voice ("for our specific goal," line 27), he explains how this concern is "not that important" (line 27). While Max's first reaction to Anna is very short ("okay," line 26), a few moments later, he appears to start aligning with Anna when he acknowledges not only the hub's "benefits" (32) but also its many "draw-backs" (line 32). Interestingly, then also Tom seems to reconsider his evaluation (lines 34–36).

Overall, voices are becoming more plural again. Because Anna switches from appropriating to expropriating and authors an individual reflection, her voice is initially distanced from the team and its strategy. However, through her powerful proposition of security concerns, first Max and then also Tom appear to start aligning with her more critical evaluation. This is an interesting shift in how members' different voices are assembled and configured. Anna's expropriation of the team voice and her invocation of security concerns appear to start a process of re-aligning the group's shared voice so that eventually all members stand behind the partly negative assessment of their coauthored strategy. This is also reflected in the team's

final report that, for example, says: "The [hub] has many interesting features, however, these are not specifically needed [...] there are simpler and better options."

4.5. Discussions and Contributions

The empirical episodes have provided insights into the rich interactional details of coauthoring collaborative strategy. We have shown how the convergence of different voices into a (more or less) shared strategy is constituted in communication and accomplished through ongoing situated practice. Next, we seek to more profoundly discuss and theorize our findings. We first further zoom into the communicative practices through which collaborators can enact authority and strategic agency, to shape but also reorient what their collective does, says, and thinks. Afterward, we sketch a conceptualization of strategy as a *relational assemblage* (Kuhn, 2021; Nail, 2017) to abstract the workings and implications of multivoicedness for strategy-coauthoring.

Strategy-Making as a Communicative Authoritative Practice of Invoking Voices

Kuhn argues that authority is about "authoring the configuration participating in the assemblage" (2021, p. 116). Having authority over what a (multivoiced) group works on then means being able to define which voices are part of its strategy and which ones not. Our ventriloquial analysis has provided rich insight into these strategy authoring dynamics (Vaara, 2010) and confirms communication's great consequentiality for strategizing (Bencherki et al., 2021; Cooren et al., 2015). To some extent, one could describe strategy-making as the practice of speaking for a collective and enlarging one's say by invoking additional voices, as these voices are more than trivial linguistic elements. They can have powerful authoritative effects for how strategizing unfolds in situated interaction, akin to how a few well-chosen words can twist a strategic conversation (Kwon et al., 2014; Samra-Fredericks, 2003). To another and more surprising extent, however, strategy-making also seems to be about detaching from a collective and speaking as an individual. This latter practice seems to offer room for critique, resistance, and possible re-orientation.

First, our findings show how professionals can substantiate their strategy-making and strengthen their authority by making present—*proposing*—additional voices that back up their suggestions. Max and Tom expressed their experience, invoked the voice of a supplier, or invoked their organizations to multiply the agents behind their proposals; comparable to how "Larry [...] leveraged his position as Engineering Director and expertise in aerospace engineering" in Kwon and colleagues' study (2014, p. 286). In both our and their work, it was not only the professionals pushing for their strategy but also the voices that they surrounded themselves with (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Bourgoin et al., 2020). Intriguingly then, our work shows that not all voices are equally loud: Some voices appear to be more impactful

than others, which also changes over time. Even a voice that is presented as silenced (e.g., Anna's invocation of the voice of security in Vignette 5) can be highly performative.

We, therefore, second Vaara and Whittington's (2012) call for more decentered and complete accounts of who or what can act as a strategy agent, but also want to extend it: Can we get a fuller grasp on who or what participates in strategy-making that also elucidates the nuanced performative effects of each of these agents? Why are some agents, or voices, louder than others? How is it that some voices fall more and more silent in the strategy-coauthoring process while others amplify?

Second, our findings show how professionals can enact authority over a group's strategy by exercising firm control over the group's collective "we." In the team we studied, the same two members that successfully invoked voices as authoritative allies initially also constituted this "we" and therefore *appropriated* the right to speak in the team's name. This meant that they could push for including own or organizational interests (voices) in the team's strategy from a privileged position. Their appropriation also meant that they could (de)legitimize others who tried to speak for the team, either giving them the voice to define what to do or refusing their participation altogether (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Tavella, 2021). Much more than an opportunity provided by the collaboration (Koschmann & Isbell, 2009), our findings show that a collective's voice and the possibility to contribute to its strategy appear to be provided by those interactants that constitute and thereby appropriate and usurp it (Bourdieu, 1991). Just as voices can be asymmetrically proposed, so can a group's voice be asymmetrically appropriated by only some members. Hardy and colleagues' (2005) distinction between cooperative talk (talking in terms of we and us) and assertive talk (prioritizing own interests) or Lewis and colleagues' (2010) separation of we-orientation and me-orientation can hence easily blur in practice: What is presented as cooperative and collective can, in fact, be greatly assertive and individualistic.

Finally, our findings point to a third practice of enacting authority and strategic agency: Professionals can produce powerful positions by *expropriating* a collective's voice and breaking their association with their group and its momentary strategy. Their expropriation can function as a protection mechanism from undesirable plans or outcomes, but it can also underline professionals' disagreement and resistance toward a suggested route. As we will explain in more detail in the subsequent part of our discussion, expropriation is therefore not solely a way of distancing from a group's strategy; it can also be a powerful move to re-orient the latter. We think that a more thorough investigation of expropriation practices and their consequentiality for strategy-making is an exciting and currently underresearched path to pursue.

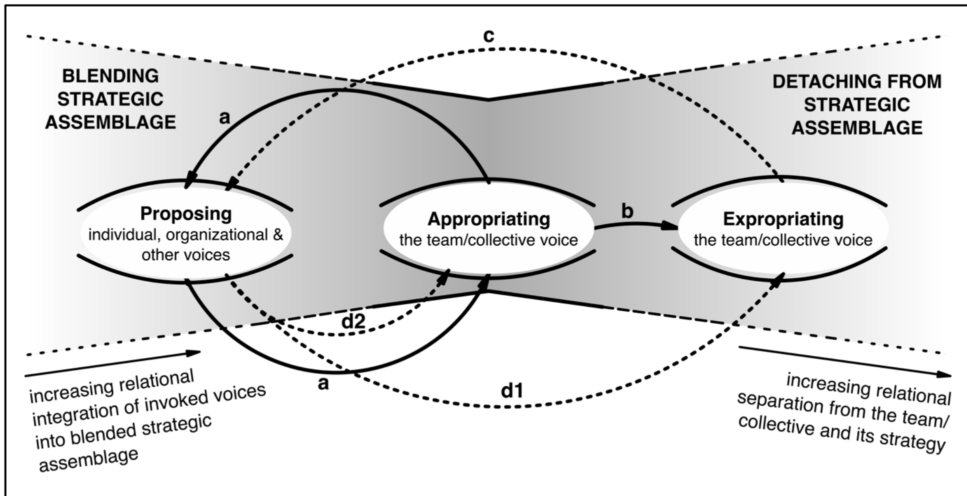
While we know about the general power of quitting (Huxham & Vangen, 2004), we yet have little insight into the nuanced and situated unfolding of such distancing work. How exactly is expropriation accomplished, when is it particularly impactful, and why? How precisely is strategic resistance and change enabled through expropriation? And how is it that, sometimes, a silenced voice rings loudest of all? Conceptualizing strategy as a *relational assemblage* of voices can be helpful to address such and similar questions.

Strategy as a Relational Assemblage of Voices

Our ventriloquial approach has elucidated strategy-making's communicational polyphony (Vaara & Langley, 2021; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) in an interorganizational setting: What the team eventually worked on was constituted by a variety of voices beyond the present team members. Members' organizations but also their expertise or an imagined supplier showed to be important agents of the strategizing process. This once more attests communication's consequentiality for strategizing and draws attention to the importance and performativity of seemingly subtle communicative details for what becomes a group's strategy.

Figure 2 presents the process model that we built to depict how different voices can become *relationally integrated* into a strategy (indicated by the narrowing funnel shape) through situ- ated communicative practice. Specifically, we propose to call this integrating or blending strategy a *strategic assemblage*. We theorize that as professionals switch between the coauthoring practices *proposing* and *appropriating* (a-arrows), the different voices they invoke are assembled into a temporary arrangement that constructs specific relations between them (Nail, 2017). Our conceptual proposal is that a collective's strategy materializes from precisely these communicative connections or relations (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987; Kuhn, 2021; see also Bencherki et al., 2021) and hence can always be traced back to a "*chain* of agencies" (Castor & Cooren, 2006, p. 572, italics added). Thinking in terms of strategic assemblage then means thinking about strategy-making as a pluralistic and polyphonic process of piecing together different voices, enacted in communication through combining the coauthoring practices proposing and appropriating.

Figure 2: Process model of strategy-coauthoring in multivoiced contexts, and beyond



The relations between the voices that the strategic assemblage constructs are a matter of degree (Cooren, 2020). They can be more or less robust, at different moments in time. Our findings point at a progressive pattern, where the relational integration that occurred in one stage is not lost in the next: What characterized members' organizations eventually also became what characterized the team and its strategy. Our theoretical inference from this is that voices' relations and their integration into a group's strategic assemblage can become stronger the more interactants switch between proposing and appropriating, and hence between the voices they invoke.

While others have described an unstable back-and-forth of integration and differentiation processes in interorganizational collectives (e.g., Hardy et al., 2005), our work provides a more nuanced account where professionals' iteration between proposing organizational, individual, or other voices and appropriating the collective voice can eventually drive a catalytic, centripetal process (Koschmann et al., 2012). Professionals' oscillation between multiple voices then is precisely what channels their group's plurality toward a pieced-together strategic assemblage, even if at times this means that the assemblage is skewed toward only part of the group. This illustrates how a group's collaborative strategy emerges and solidifies in members' situated interactions and converges with Bencherki and colleagues' (2021) ideas on strategy's progressive materialization. Crucially, however, our insights highlight how a presentified strategic concern can be substantiated by and attributed to many different voices. Paying close attention to these different voices can help elucidate strategy-making's polyphonic inner-workings (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) and problematize by whom or what strategy is enacted. This type of work is important as it can reveal the

complexities of language-in-use and their performative implications on strategy; aspects that so far often go unnoticed (Vaara & Langley, 2021).

The right side of our process model (Figure 2) depicts how voices become *relationally sepa- rated* from a group's strategy (indicated by the widening funnel shape). We theorize that as professionals move from *appropriating* to *expropriating* (arrow b), they detach themselves (and possibly the voices they had proposed before) from the temporary arrangement that lays out what the group does. Consequently, these voices are cut out of the chain of agencies (Castor & Cooren, 2006) constituting a group's strategic assemblage: At least momentarily, they do not get expressed in the group's aims and activities. Thinking in terms of strategic assemblage hence also means thinking about strategy-making as a process of moving apart, enacted through switches from appropriating to expropriating.

Expropriating the collective voice can be accompanied by *proposing* individual, organizational, or other voices (arrow c). Comparable to the progressive integration pattern that we named before, professionals' iteration between expropriating and proposing (arrow d1) can drive a catalytic centrifugal process (Koschmann et al., 2012) and eventually reinforce the relational separation effect.

However, professionals can also propose additional voices to sketch an alternative strategy for their group when they (or others) connect their proposed voices back to the collective voice (arrow d2). This starts a new cycle of piecing together an arrangement that lays out what to work on. This is where expropriation becomes a powerful move to re-orient a group's strategy. Anna's expropriation of the team voice and her proposition of Max's security concern is a highly illustrative example that shows how voices that momentarily get written out of the collaborative strategy can have a great effect on what this strategy subsequently becomes or, as in our case, how it is evaluated. One could say that expropriated voices are at once absent and present: They are excluded from a group's collective voice, but their absence has a performative presence that can possibly lead to collective re-orientation.

We believe that it is important to not only consider which voices are written *into* a strategy but to also consider those that are written *out*. Convergence and divergence—or centripetal and centrifugal forces—are always both at play in strategy-making (Tavella, 2021; Vaara & Langley, 2021). So far, however, research tends to prioritize alignment over exclusion and therefore leaves unattended or invisible the silenced and marginalized voices of strategy-making. Consequently, we can often explain which stakes are part of strategy and why, whereas we can say much less about those matters that have been excluded (Gray, 1994). Thinking about strategy-making as a *relational assemblage* and thus as a process of piecing together *and* moving apart can be helpful to capture more complete and transparent understandings of who gets to coauthor strategy and who is excluded from doing so, at least momentarily. Conceptualizing strategy as a relational assemblage means rejecting "unity in

favor of multiplicity" and rejecting "essence in favor of events" (Nail, 2017, p. 22), which in turn means that analytical efforts need to unfold the processual development of strategy as a performative effect of how different perspectives and agencies are assembled—*or not*—in communication and interaction.

As the different routes indicate, our model does not necessarily imply a linear process. Professionals *can* move from proposing to appropriating to expropriating linearly over time, but they can just as well switch between practices or move from one to the other at multiple moments. Moreover, the practices do not by definition imply successful strategy-coauthoring: A proposed voice, for example, can be contested by another proposed voice or can be silenced by someone powerfully appropriating the team voice. We observed a certain order and a broad range of voices in the interorganizational team that we have studied, but this order and the specific voices that are invoked could look a lot different in other settings. For example, which voices are proposed as authoritative allies, and what are their nuanced effects on strategy when organizational membership itself is fluid, temporary, or even contested (Bechky, 2006; Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015)? Diverse voices might also compete for strategy authorship in less pluralistic settings, such as intraorganizational groups. We believe that our process model can help to elucidate the polyphonic nature of strategy-coauthoring also in such settings. From afar, these contexts might appear more single-voiced, but a ventriloquial lens and fine-grained analysis of how our three coauthoring practices are at play might reveal a much more intricate and complex picture. There is one important boundary condition for the applicability of our model and conceptual proposals, however: The ability to shape strategy must be given and spread across professionals. When clear hierarchy lines define upfront who gets a say, our process model might look much different.

Concluding Thoughts and Practical Implications

Strategy-making in interorganizational collaboration (and possibly beyond) appears to be characterized by the co-existence of manifold voices. These voices are important agents of the strategizing process. They enable professionals to produce authoritative power and shape and sustain strategy by forming relational assemblages (or not). Some concerns, ideas, and so on are heard and become part of what a collective does, while others are silenced and excluded.

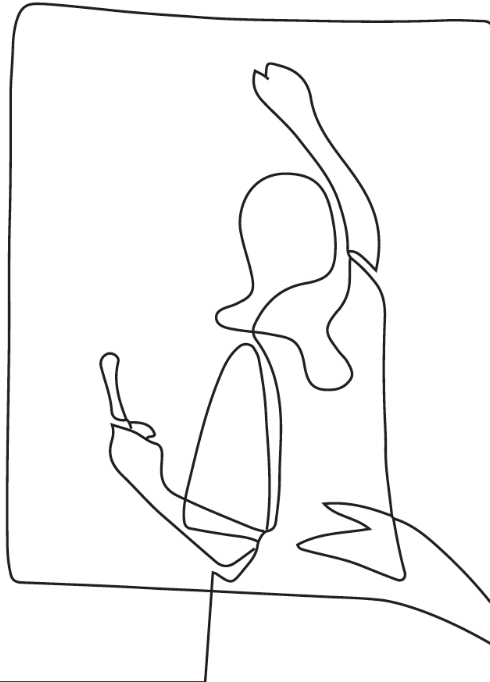
Of course, the argument that strategy is a communicative accomplishment is not new (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011; Vaara, 2010). However, our study shows how a constitutive take and specifically a ventriloquial approach can help us further unpack how strategy is authored and altered in decentered and illuminative detail. In particular, embracing the idea of strategy as a relational assemblage can possibly offer a helpful conceptual imagery to understand strategy as an inherently polyphonic, processual accomplishment that includes both loud and silenced voices.

When strategists are at work, we see a lot of talk (Samra-Fredericks, 2003). The three coauthoring practices that this study identifies can provide a helpful toolset for practitioners to better understand strategy debates' interactional dynamics. Paying attention to which practice is dominant and who appropriates and expropriates the collective voice can illuminate where a group is standing, whether it is moving together or apart, and why certain members might be more active than others. Closely listening to which voices are proposed (including sentiments and considerations, such as Max's security concern) and paying attention to what exactly these voices say can clarify what really matters and explain why a group maybe struggles with coauthoring a shared strategy. As we have explained and illustrated in rich detail, strategy-making is about invoking and relating voices. It is then also about cultivating a keen awareness of them. We think that strategists—especially those working in pluralistic contexts—need to train both ends of this skill, for strategy to indeed be coauthored as truly collaborative.

Chapter V.

The Path and Parts One Picture Paints

A Multimodal Take on How Objects Accomplish Boundary Work



The Path and Parts One Picture Paints:
A Multimodal Take on How Objects Accomplish Boundary Work

Ample research has explored how professionals (re)enact the boundaries they encounter at work with the help of objects, such as drawings, flowcharts, or strategy tools. But what exactly happens when single words or simple gestures become boundary objects? This chapter reports the multimodal materializations and boundary work practices of a visual artifact (a roadmap), drawing on video-recorded meetings of an interorganizational team and adopting a constitutive and material understanding of communication. On the one hand, the visual clarified organizational distinctions and sketched a joint *path* for the group. On the other hand, it facilitated keeping intact organizational *parts* and forged a knowledge boundary between members when team composition changed. Materializations of the visual were initially dominated by explicit showings but, as relations to the visual grew, widened to verbal and embodied alterations in members' talk and gestures. New members could not relate to these more implicit materializations and the visual lost its team-wide matter. This study's multimodal take problematizes the long-established distinction between boundary objects and professionals, illustrating how they can weave into one another through different modes. Its findings and ideas lay an essential foundation for more nuanced thinking about materiality and agency in how boundaries are (re)drawn.

Keywords
Boundary objects, boundary work, communicative constitution of organization (CCO), interorganizational collaboration, materiality, multimodality, ventriloquism

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5.1. Introduction

Boundaries are lines that organize, channel, and mediate work (Langley et al., 2019; Quick & Feldman, 2014). They demarcate who or what is inside and outside of a team, a project, a profession, an organization, etc., signal distinctions between skills, abilities, and expertise, or mark differences in ways of working, thinking, and communicating (Abbott, 1995; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Traditionally, putting in place boundaries in organizations resembled the work of cartographers. To give just one example, managers would define solid boundaries around a team (telling members precisely what (not) to work on) and clear command lines within that team. Once these boundaries and lines were drawn up, they would remain in effect for extended periods, only reinforcing their robustness. Much like the boundaries on geographical maps, lines were clear-cut, unambiguous, and mostly enduring.

However, increasing connectivity, accelerating competition, and expediting functional complexity have made boundaries much more permeable. Organization scholars have shown that the boundaries within and around organizations are not all solid and stable but can be dismantled and (re)configured (Oldenhof et al., 2016). Moreover, they have suggested that innovative strength and competitive advantage are often found in breaking up silos and crossing distinctions (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Such developments explain the rising number of cross-functional projects, multidisciplinary groups, and interorganizational teams (Majchrazk et al., 2012, 2015). Interorganizational teams, in particular, are characterized by multiple coexisting boundaries (Ungureanu et al., 2021): Not only do different professions come together, but so do different organizational aims, ways of doing things, etc. Boundaries are not just found *around* the collective; members likewise encounter demarcations *within* their team. This simple fact makes interorganizational collectives highly revelatory contexts for studying boundaries.

In line with Langley and colleagues' call to move boundary research "from cartography to process" (2019, p. 704), we conceptualize boundaries as fluid, dynamic, and interactive accomplishments (Quick & Feldman, 2014) and are interested in how they are constituted and reconstructed as professionals proceed with their work. In particular, we seek to provide a more dynamic reading of boundary objects' multimodal materializations and implications on boundary work. While previous research has convincingly demonstrated the importance of artifacts in boundary work (e.g., Barrett & Oborn, 2010; Carlile, 2002; Swan et al., 2007), most studies have kept a clear distinction between professionals on the one hand and the objects they used on the other (see also Langley et al., 2019): Objects' workings and effects have been examined when artifacts could be clearly identified and existed separately of the professionals that employed them, such as software specifications, project management tools, flowcharts, or drawings. But what happens when this distinction blurs, and a single word or a simple gesture becomes a boundary object? How is boundary work impacted when an artifact materializes only in professionals' talk or bodily movements? This chapter

problematizes the long-established distinction between professionals and boundary objects by looking at how one weaves into the other through multiple modalities. We pose the question: How is boundary work accomplished when boundary objects materialize through multimodal modes? This is an important question as answering it can advance novel, dynamic, and more nuanced insight into boundary objects' situated boundary work practices.

We take observations and video-recordings of nine interorganizational team meetings (all from the same team) as a revelatory case to answer this question. Members handled many objects in their discussions, but one specific visual artifact (a roadmap) stood out for its frequent usage, its multimodal elasticity, and the importance that members attached to it. We hence structure our analyses and build our contributions around this specific artifact.

Conceptually, we borrow from the 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' perspective (CCO). This perspective promotes a dynamic conceptualization of organization as forming *in* communication and interaction (Cooren et al., 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2019). It takes seriously the consequentiality of communication for how organizing is accomplished, which fits closely to the emergent and interactional image of boundaries that we take in this chapter: When organizations and organizing processes take shape and are talked into being in situated communicative practice, boundaries too can be (re)enacted by the ways that professionals talk about and interact across and around them. CCO-thinking further suggests broad and decentered definitions of communication and agency (i.e., the ability to act or do something) that include other-than-human actors, such as drawings, flowcharts, or specification documents (which have been identified as important boundary objects in earlier work; see Barrett & Oborn, 2010; Carlile, 2002; Swan et al., 2007). Moreover, the perspective considers materiality as a communicative rather than physical resource (Cooren et al., 2012; Cooren, 2018, 2020), which means that it acknowledges that an object can exist in physical form *and* through expression and presence in (non)verbal talk. In this 'communicative materiality,' as we will show, members and objects can come to act as one another's channels, media, or vectors (Brummans et al., 2021; Cooren et al., 2021), which blurs their modal distinguishability but more nuancedly explains their combined performative effects on boundaries.

Ultimately, this chapter shows how questions about boundary objects are also questions about dynamic, multimodal relations for *how exactly* professionals relate to the objects they use defines whether a boundary is created, disrupted, or maintained between or around them. This chapter takes this multimodal character of boundary objects seriously, not reducing them to their explicit material or visual presences but equally considering their verbal and embodied materialization in professionals' talk and bodies. By so doing, this chapter advances the literature on boundary objects and boundary work in rich ways. Most importantly, our multimodal take lays a foundation for more nuanced thinking about materiality and agency in how boundaries are constituted and (re)negotiated.

Our insights further bear critical practical implications for collaboration processes in interorganizational collectives and beyond, as they explain a single artifact's significance for the organization and accomplishment of work and its inherent multimodal fragility.

We start with revisiting the notions of boundaries, boundary work, and boundary objects and subsequently elaborate further on the ideas we borrow from communicative constitutive theorizing. We then introduce our research case (the interorganizational team) and outline our analytical steps. The findings are construed along the very *path* and *parts* that emerged from how members multimodally related to the visual artifact and made this artifact relate to their team. We conclude with a discussion on the implications of our work.

5.2. Theoretical Background

Boundaries, Boundary Work, and Boundary Objects

Boundaries are frequently conceptualized as lines that organize, channel, and mediate work (Langley et al., 2019; Quick & Feldman, 2014). They demarcate who or what is inside and outside of a team, a project, a profession, an organization, etc., signal distinctions between skills, abilities, and expertise, or mark differences in ways of working, thinking, and communicating (Abbott, 1995; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). While early work has framed boundaries as existing in fixed or essentialist ways, the understanding of boundaries that now dominates scholarly discourse is more fluid, emergent, and processual (e.g., Comeau-Vallée & Langley, 2019). Per this conceptualization, boundaries are constructed, modified, and dismantled in social interaction as individuals or collectives proceed with their work. Boundaries, then, are not predefined lines as we find them on cartographic maps but ephemeral accomplishments that need to be actively worked at and for (Langley et al., 2019).

Studies on *boundary work* examine the sayings and doings through which individuals and collectives create, (re)shape, and disrupt the demarcations that distinguish them from others (e.g., Oldenhof et al., 2016). The term was initially coined by Gieryn (1983) to describe how scientists distinguished science from non-science. However, boundary work is just as prevalent in other contexts. For example, Bos-de Vos and colleagues (2019) have scrutinized how architects negotiate role boundaries in interorganizational construction projects, Smith (2016) has studied how knowledge boundaries are handled in R&D collaboration, Cartel and colleagues (2019) have focused on how boundaries are drawn around innovation groups, and Comeau-Vallée and Langley (2019) have examined how professional boundaries are (de)constructed within groups between multidisciplinary professionals.

We believe that boundaries and boundary work are particularly prominent in settings that bring together professionals from multiple backgrounds. One such setting are interorganizational teams, for members needing to negotiate organizational and professional boundaries *within* their team in parallel to constructing a boundary *around* their group

(Ungureanu et al., 2021). We, therefore, take an interorganizational team that we followed as part of a larger research project as a revelatory case for this study.

Previous research has demonstrated that professionals often do not accomplish boundary work alone. Objects can play an essential role in how boundaries are (re)enacted, such as project management software (Barrett & Oborn, 2010), frequencies and robot arms (Hsiao et al., 2012), strategy tools (Spee & Jarzabkowksi, 2009), or flowcharts (Swan et al., 2007). Star and Griesemer (1989) introduced the term *boundary object* to label these artifacts. These objects provide vehicles to represent knowledge in forms that are understandable across differences, thereby opening spaces for shared sensemaking and productive collaboration. We focus on one particular boundary object, a roadmap (Illustration 1). This visual has been created by an outside consultancy company and brought to the team we studied by one member. The artifact stood out early in our observations for its frequent usage, multimodal elasticity, and the importance that members attached to it. It presented a theoretical puzzle and an exciting empirical opportunity that we decided to pursue further.

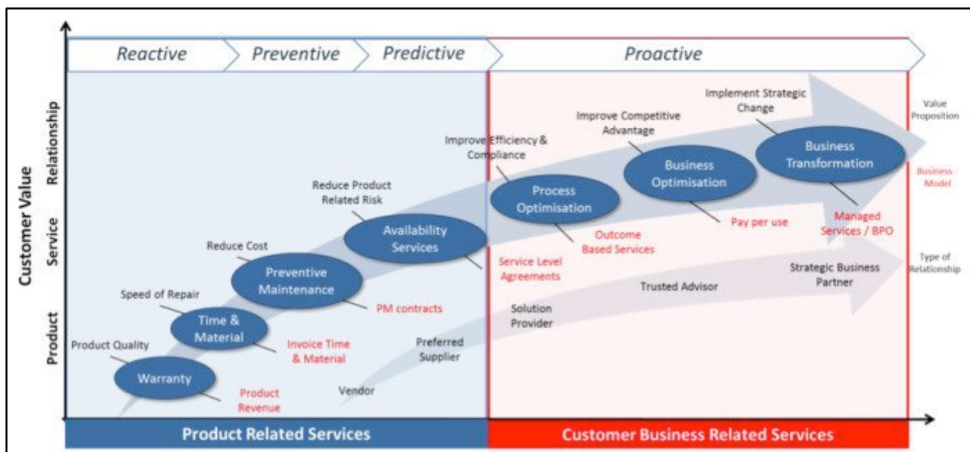


Illustration 1: Original visual artifact; Copyrights Noventum Service Management (permission granted)

By and large, research on visuals in organizations indicates that these artifacts can be highly effective boundary objects. For example, as one of the first studies to examine visuals in workplace settings, Henderson (1991) showed how engineering drawings play a crucial role in enabling communication between occupational groups. Bechky's (2003a, 2003b) work on engineering drawings revealed similar insights. Others studied how Gantt charts or timelines facilitated knowledge-sharing and alignment across organizational groups (Carlile, 2002; Yakura, 2002), how architectural sketches made boundaries more and less visible and

informed plans and activities (Comi & Whyte, 2018; Ewenstein & Whyte, 2009), or how PowerPoint slides helped reconcile divergent interpretations (Knight et al., 2018).

These studies provide rich insight into the situated boundary workings of visual artifacts. That being said, most have kept a clear distinction between professionals on the one hand and objects on the other, have relied on observational data, and have brought up verbal and embodied practices around the visuals they focused on only on the sidelines (e.g., Yakura (2002), when describing the narrative metaphors that timelines evoked). But what happens when this distinction starts to blur? What happens when a boundary object's visual presence is replaced by just a single word or a simple gesture? Can boundaries then still be effectively enacted and (re)negotiated? That is where we aim to contribute: Drawing on video-recorded interorganizational team meetings (and hence rich audiovisual data), we seek increased synchronicity between visual, verbal, and embodied modes and materializations and strive to advance a more nuanced, dynamic, and subtle understanding of how boundary objects accomplish boundary work.

Ideas from the Communicative Constitution of Organization: Ventriloquism and Communicative Materiality

We draw from the Communicative Constitution of Organization scholarship (CCO) to help us realize our multimodal investigation of how boundary objects accomplish boundary work. In essence, this perspective promotes a dynamic conceptualization of organization as forming in everyday communication and interaction (Cooren et al., 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2019). It takes seriously the consequentiality of communication for how organizing is accomplished, which fits closely to the emergent and interactional image of boundaries we take in this chapter.

Recent developments of the CCO perspective have advanced an increasingly decentered and material image of communication where, *through communication*, agents and objects beyond present humans are expressed and thereby partake in conversations (Cooren et al., 2012; Cooren, 2013, 2018, 2020). For example, sitting in a meeting with members of other organizations, a professional (let us call her Eve) might reference her company's code of conduct and speak in the name of their sustainability statements to clarify that she and her company will quit a collaborative project if these standards are not adhered to. Importantly, not only Eve is doing the talking here but also the standards she invokes—even if these standards are not present as physical objects per se. The idea of *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2010a) is particularly useful for identifying and better understanding these invocations, materializations, and presentifications. It invites us to pay close attention to the multiple figures (human and other-than-human) expressed in interactions and consider them as agentic participants of the situation (Cooren, 2015). Much like a ventriloquial artist speaking and acting in the name of her dummy, professionals can speak and act in the name of other

agents or objects, such as when Eve speaks on behalf of codes of conduct and value statements.

The idea of ventriloquism advances a subtle understanding of materiality where communication is not detached from matter but precisely what defines it (Cooren, 2018, 2020; Nathues et al., 2021). As interactants ventriloquize additional actants through their talk, they make present what they believe is *of matter* for the situation, which means that these actants have a material existence. When we think in ventriloquial terms, materiality is thus not a question of physicality but of expression, participation, and relevance. A boundary object can shape boundary (re)enactment by being there physically and visually, but also by being present—materializing—through just a single word or a simple gesture. Analytically, this requires attending to what materializes in interaction, that is, to give preference to materialization processes over materiality substances.

The perspective we sketch here negates the classical divide between materiality, sociality, and communication (Cooren et al., 2012; Cooren, 2018, 2020; Kuhn et al., 2017, 2019). That is precisely why it stands at the intersection of multiple modalities and helps problematize the distinction between boundary objects on the one hand and the professionals who use them on the other. Separating modes, in many ways, is an analytical and interpretative simplification (see also Zilber, 2018) for how each mode can make present—materialize—the very same thing.

5.3. Case and Analysis

Context, Case, and Data Collection

This study's research context is a Dutch interorganizational collaboration initiative, which the first author joined as an academic researcher. The initiative was set up to strengthen organizations' product lifecycle management and received financial support from a regional development fund. In total, the initiative brought together 23 organizations, consisting of high-tech companies and service providers that differed on characteristics such as maturity, structures, or markets. Organizations formed interorganizational teams to work on common challenges and facilitate cross-boundary learning. For example, teams worked on blockchain technology, cooperation agreements, or business model transformations. This study is built on observations of one of the initiative's teams working on servitization.

The team was at all times composed of five to six members. Yet, there was considerable fluctuation (Figure 1, pseudonymized): Members changed companies, left companies and were replaced, or new members joined. The instability led to two successive meeting gaps of five respectively six months, occurring first after the team ran for nine months. When members resumed after the first gap, one company withdrew, and a new organization joined, further shaking up the composition. We stopped following the team after the tenth meeting

as the visual artifact that our study focused on was no longer present. We theorize on the meanings of this change in our findings and discussion sections.

	2018							2019		2020
Meeting	*Apr 1*	*May 2*	*Jun 3*	*Jul 4*	*Sep 5*	*Nov 6*	*Dec 7*	*May 8*	*Nov 9*	*Jan 10*
Proto										
James										
Olly										
Paul*										
Topo										
Tim										
Flex										
Robert										
Paul*										
Daniel										
Alex										
Luke										
Loop										
Nate										
Sam										

Figure 1: Team composition over time
Black = present, grey = company not part of the project
*Paul switched companies

Table 1 summarizes the data we base this study on. For the video-recordings, we used a 360-degree-camera to have the entire room on the picture. We produced field notes to document the team's activities, how we experienced the atmosphere in the room, and our initial hunches and impressions regarding the objects that members used. We also secured access to the team's database to obtain team documents.

Table 1: Overview of studied data

	Video footage	Field notes	Accessed documents
Meeting 1	n/a	n/a	Meeting slides, project plan
Meeting 2	n/a	5 pages	Meeting slides
Meeting 3	125 minutes	3 pages	Meeting slides, white paper
Meeting 4	95 minutes	3 pages	Meeting slides
Meeting 5	195 minutes	6 pages	Meeting slides
Meeting 6	160 minutes	4 pages	n/a
Meeting 7	160 minutes	4 pages	Meeting slides
Meeting 8	190 minutes	4 pages	Updates project plan
Meeting 9	155 minutes	4 pages	Meeting slides
Meeting 10	175 minutes	5 pages	n/a
	approx. 21 hrs.	*38 pages*	

We began this project with a broad interest in the objects that members used for boundary work. We spotted multiple objects in our observations and early analyses (e.g., *examples*

bridging and reinforcing organizational boundaries, *comparisons and analogies* providing common ground, or *project plans* demarcating the collaboration's subject boundaries).

However, we were struck by one visual's sheer prominence, members' attachment to it, and its multimodal elasticity. Consequently, we decided to narrow our study's focus on this artifact and its multimodal boundary workings. We chose to be transparent about this shift as we believe that transparent accounts of reasoning are essential to the rigor of qualitative interpretative scholarship (Harley & Cornelissen, 2020).

Analytical Steps

Consulting the literature, we designed an analytical process that matched our interest in boundary objects' multimodal materializations and workings, anchored in our video data of how members were using a particular visual artifact. Specifically, we combined (or *bricolage-d*; Pratt et al., 2022) our interest in this visual, boundaries, and boundary work with Gylfe et al.'s methodological steps on embodied cognition (2016) and Clarke et al.'s steps on gestures (2021) and adopted a decentered and material understanding of communication as *ventriloquism* (Nathues et al., 2021). Our analysis proceeded in two main steps, which we explain in more detail in the following.

Tracing the Visual's Multimodal Materializations and Identifying Boundaries

We began by watching all videos, tracing the moments in which the visual (or a version of it) was shown or (made) present in another way (i.e., through talk or embodiment). Through repeated watching, pausing, and play-back, our video data enabled us to "look more closely" (LeBaron et al., 2018, p. 240), pay attention to both talk and visual dimensions, and consider members' bodies as inseparable from their activities.

We then transcribed the select moments (including visible and embodied details). Iterating between transcripts and videos, we more systematically identified the visual's multiple appearances, specifically its visual, verbal, and embodied materializations and invocations. For example, we noted when the original visual was displayed and pointed attention to but also specified its adapted versions (e.g., with added boxes and arrows). We also inventoried when members picked up parts of the graphic (e.g., its forms or vocabulary) in their own visual creations. For specifying how the visual materialized through talk, we drew inspiration from Nathues and colleagues' ventriloquial analytical framework (2021). We counted instances where members referred to the visual as "arrow," "the visual that James has shown," or "in that graphic, you know, somewhere left bottom" as explicit verbal invocations. When members used the visual's words or contents in their explanations (e.g., "then you are sitting in vendor relations," or "going further right"), we considered these as implicit verbal materializations. Members often invoked a particular gesture (resembling the visual's

upwards curve) when discussing the artifact (Clarke et al., 2021). We categorized instantiations of this gesture as embodied invocations (Gylfe et al., 2016). Note that the visual could materialize through different modes at the same time, for instance, when members described the graphic *and* gesticulated its curve ("so here you foresee the possibility to grow from left bottom to the next phase *((gesticulating curve))*?").

We inductively identified the type of boundary that members were (re)constructing from the interactions we studied. We identified three types of boundaries. The first was the team's *subject boundary*, which members built *around their team* based on what they were working on. Second, we grouped the multiple demarcations between members' different organizations (in products, structures, etc.) as *organizational boundaries within the team*. Third, we identified a *knowledge boundary that emerged between old and new team members*.

Path, Parts, and Phases

In the next step, we chronologically sorted (Langley, 1999) all transcribed excerpts by boundary type. We specified the visual's multimodal materialization(s) for each excerpt and plotted them onto the timelines we were developing. Timeline by timeline (one for each boundary type), we further specified the relations formed between the respective boundary, the team, and the visual (in its multiple materializations) to understand better how the graphic was accomplishing boundary work.

Our analyses of the team's subject boundary showed that this boundary strengthened as the project proceeded. At the same time, stronger relations between the visual artifact and the team's work formed, as indicated by more members picking it up and by increasingly implicit materializations. We abstracted three phases of this processual development, each indicative of a different degree of embeddedness of the visual artifact within the team and of a different boundary work practice (Table 2, next page).

Organizational boundaries within the team were initially defended but increasingly permeated as the project progressed. In parallel, stronger relations between the visual and the team's work formed, indicated by more members using the artifact, adaptions of the original visual, and implicit materializations. However, when new members joined, the anew permeation of organizational boundaries failed as old members continued invoking the visual through only verbal and embodied modes. Organizational boundaries thickened again, and the team became separated by a knowledge boundary between old and new members. Here too, we abstracted three phases, each indicative of a different degree of embeddedness of the visual artifact within the team and of a different boundary work practice (Table 3, page128).

Table 2: The path, or how the visual shaped the development of the team's subject boundary

Phase	There are meetings 3-4.	Meetings 4-5	Meetings 6-7
The visual's multimodal materializations and relations to the team	***A potential road sign*** The visual is brought to the team by one team member, James, as a potential representation of members' joint work. Other members are slowly picking it up. The visual relies on explicit showings (incl. pointing to it and referencing some of its visual features). Only James invokes the visual through gesturing.	***An actual navigation map*** All members have picked up the visual to guide their activities. The original visual is shown, but also one adapted version is presented. It further materializes through stand-alone verbal references of all members, and members beyond James invoke it through gestures.	***To spot and walk new paths*** Members are very fluent in 'speaking the graphic.' They work on and show adapted and new versions, critically studying the visual and drawing new insights from it. All members further invoke the visual through stand-alone verbal references and gesturing.
Boundary work practices	James starts ***creating*** a subject boundary around the team, using the visual to shape what members collaborate on.	Members collectively ***strengthen*** the subject boundary around their team, using the visual to decipher what they are working on and to guide the decisions they make and the activities they perform on the way.	Members collectively ***advance*** the subject boundary around their team, expanding their usage of the visual towards new paths.

Table 3: The parts, or how the visual shaped the development of organizational and knowledge boundaries within the team

Phase	Meetings 2-3	Meetings 4-7	Meetings 8-10
The visual's multimodal materializations and relations to the team	***A potential translator and actual safeguard*** James presents and uses the visual as a potential translator of org. differences. Other members slowly pick it up but use it to emphasize org. distinctions. The visual relies on explicit showings (incl. pointing to it and referencing some of its visual features). Only James invokes the visual through gesturing.	***An actual translator*** All members have picked up the visual and now predominantly use it to break apart org. boundaries. Over time, fewer boundaries need to be dismantled. The original visual but also adapted versions are shown. The visual further materializes through stand-alone verbal references and gestures of all members.	***A failed translator and new roadblock*** New members join and org. boundaries need to be permeated once more. However, old members show the visual only once and, for the rest, rely on verbal invocations and gesturing. The visual then starts withering from the team interactions.
Boundary work practices	James suggests ***permeating*** org. boundaries, using the visual for mediation. Other team members use it for ***defending*** their org. distinctions.	Members ***permeate*** the org. boundaries they encounter in their group with the help of the visual.	Old members ***fail to permeate*** org. boundaries towards the newcomers because of the knowledge boundary between members who can 'speak the graphic' and those who cannot.

We structure our findings along Tables 2 and 3, thus along the *path* and *parts* that the visual artifact painted through its multimodal materializations and relations with the team. Our findings are composed of video stills and visuals, real-data excerpts, and accompanying elaborations. To protect anonymity, we transformed video stills into sketch designs and masked faces (LeBaron et al., 2018). We added symbols to highlight aspects and visualize movement (Gylfe et al., 2016).

We also presented our findings to team members. Members confirmed our analytical insights, specifically regarding the visual's initial prominence and later evaporation. To use his precise words, one member described the team's later phases as "the visual lost its power," "disconnects and gaps emerged," and "the team spirit faded away." Our member checks revealed that members struggled to finish their project after we had stopped our observations. The new and old members neither connected on the visual nor on any other object or topic, which is why they "didn't become a team again." However, we also learned that old members continued believing in the visual's value and were still using it in their organizations.

5.4. The Path: Creating, Strengthening, and Advancing the Team's Subject Boundary

The visual artifact that we studied (Illustration 1) helped members sketch a common *path* for their work, creating, strengthening, and advancing the boundary around their group that deciphered what they were working on. It started as a potential road sign, then developed into an actual navigation map, and eventually enabled members to spot and walk new paths. Initially, the artifact was used by mainly one team member, and it needed an explicit visual presence. Over time, all members used the object, and it materialized increasingly through their talk or bodily movements.

Meetings 2 and 3: A Potential Road Sign

Initially, the visual's potentiality as a representation of the team's activities is considerably pushed by one member: James repeatedly insists on showing the visual or makes it an explicit part of discussions by using it in his explanations or inquiring his colleagues about it. According to James, the visual portrays what members should work on and represents challenges their organizations share—one could say that he uses the artifact to *create* a subject boundary around the team. In Vignette 1, members discuss a presentation they prepared to communicate their work to other initiative participants. One slide shows the visual.

1	Paul:	And then I have the slide with the image of James *((pointing to James))* because you can
2		eh- eh you can use it to explain that it is really a journey that you need to walk through
3		and uhm let's say, all the places where you could- eh could be standing. Kind of the eh
4		global overview of it all *((pointing to slide with graphic, gesticulating a circle))*
5	James:	Yes, what is <u>so great</u> about this graphic is indeed the stepwise thing *((pointing to graphic))*
6		but it's also a question of three piles: value proposition, business model, and type of
7		relation *((still pointing))* and, for me, eh *((pointing to himself))* those aspects are inextricably
8		linked to each other. So, if you want to go further right *((gesticulating an upwards curve))*,
9		then you need to have those three aspects well up and running. And otherwise, it
10		doesn't make sense to uhm- *((gesticulating upwards curve again))* so <u>that's where</u> the
11		challenge lies, to get these aspects up and running at the same time.
12	Paul:	Yes.
13	Robert:	Yes.

Vignette 1: Members discussing a slide, the visual is shown

Paul starts by explaining why he put the visual on the slide. He explicitly links the visual to James (line 1). Moreover, we can observe how Paul speaks with a somewhat general and distanced "you" (lines 1–3) when talking about the team's possible "journey" (line 2), instead of with a more collective team voice ('we').

One could interpret these details as an indication of the visual's potentiality in becoming a vital constituent of the team's work (and hence, their subject boundary), but that, for the

moment, is still outweighed by the actuality of the close relation between the visual and James, as its leading advocate.

James then gives a more accurate description of why the graphic is valuable, highlighting what he considers its most important aspects (lines 5–11). To some extent, James is speaking in the name and interest of the visual (clarifying its meaning and thereby stressing its significance for the project work). To another extent, one could argue that James is making the graphic speak to the advantage of his convictions: With the help of the visual, he can sketch a path forward he thinks is relevant, but that also the visual argues (or is made to argue) for. James channels attention to the graphic by pointing to it (lines 5–7). When expressing his reading of the graphic ("for me," line 7), he points back towards himself. In addition, he twice uses a representational gesture when talking about the visual that mimics its upward curve (lines 8–10; Illustration 2). These details illustrate the tight relation between James and the artifact; they literally mediate or weave into one another in their combined attempts to *create* a subject boundary around the team.

Illustration 2: James enacting a representative gesture of the visual

Meetings 4 and 5: An Actual Navigation Map

As the project proceeds, all members use the visual artifact. It provides them a shared language, offers a structure to fall back upon, and increasingly guides their activities. As the team's relations to the visual grow, the artifact distances from James, the subject boundary around the group *strengthens*, and the visual's potentiality as a representation of the team's activities actualizes. Vignette 2 provides an illustrative example. It is now Robert who draws attention to the graphic.

1	Robert:	If you now consider this image *((pointing to the visual))*, there are three piles. And one
2		of them is- (.) is business model.
3	James:	Yes.
4	Robert:	I think that you (.) potentially you also simply make money with this, but we only
5		have few enablers for that, here *((pointing to the other two piles, 'type of relation' and 'value*
6		*proposition'))*
7	James:	Yes, yes. That's also what I think is the strength of this visual. It's about type of
8		relation, business model, and value proposition. And- (.) and actually, they are
9		completely interlinked.
10	Robert:	Yes, yes.
11	James:	And if you want to go further right *((gesticulating an upwards curve, pointing to the graphic))*,
12		then you must make a step in each of these aspects.
13	Robert:	Yes [...] and then you can check where your model sits in there, where does it go
14		wrong *((pointing to graphic))*, why you're not able to offer the value.

Vignette 2: Members discussing difficulties of servitization, the visual is shown

It appears that Robert is using the graphic to understand better why servitization proves challenging to implement. Looking for cues and answers, he draws attention to the three piles (line 1)—the very aspect of the graphic that James, as initially the graphic's leading advocate, has emphasized the most. As James has extensively explained in previous meetings but also repeats here again, servitization can only work if efforts are put into "each of these aspects" (line 12) as "they are completely interlinked" (lines 8–9). In many ways, what the visual expresses here is what James makes it express; James essentially turns the graphic into a medium conveying his reading. At the same time, James appears to be driven by this very reading (and hence, the visual artifact) as his many repetitions within and across meetings indicate. One could thus flip the initial interpretation and say that what James expresses is what the visual makes him express. Figuratively and literally (note how the visual also makes James' body move, line 11), James and the visual continue mediating into one another in their work at the team's subject boundary.

However, what is more important in Vignette 2, is how Robert's thinking seems to be driven by the graphic. Specifically, Robert appears to be locating the difficulty of implementing servitization in the piles' interdependence (lines 4–10)—as the graphic expresses, progress can only be booked if steps in all three piles are taken. What becomes the problem here is in many ways a matter of the relations that have been established between the visual and the team: It is the graphic (and James' previous invocations and presentations of if) that makes Robert define this aspect as the difficulty they need to solve in their project. At the same time, the visual also concretizes paths to possible solutions (lines 13–14), helping the team to understand better where things "go wrong" (line 13). It appears that the conjunctive relations between the visual and what the team is working on have spread beyond James, for the visual now also driving others' practices and thought processes, much like a navigation map.

Meetings 6 and 7: Spotting and Walking New Paths

As the project proceeds, relations towards the visual continue strengthening and members become so fluent in 'speaking the graphic' that they understand each other's most implicit verbal and embodied cues. Members' collective capacity around the visual now helps them spot and walk new routes, which *advances* their subject boundary. We can observe more profound dialogues around the visual, including expanding its usage and critically asking questions. For reasons of scope, we only illustrate the latter dynamic here (Vignette 3).

1	Paul:	Now, James, does that mean that at a certain moment, you're going to take over
2		your customer's processes?
3	James:	Uhm well not taking over everything, but you do become part of it.
4	Paul:	Part of (.) uhm so that also means that your customer depends on [Proto] (.) uhm
5		and (.) uhm is that not something that is really difficult for you, in your market?
6	James:	Yes, true. That's why we need to segment our customers [...] our customers, I could
7		easily just plot them onto the arrow, onto that background. And then one segment
8		sits here *((moving his right hand next to his forehead, as if he were pointing to the visual's upper*
9		*right corner))*, another segment sits here *((lowering his hand to his chin))*, and another still
10		here *((further lowering his hand to his left collarbone))*. And with some, we might actually
11		never get much further.
12	Paul:	But if you would need to put it in percentages, up until where can your customers
13		come, at all? *((gesticulating representative curve with both hands; Illustration 8))* Is it not the
14		case that like 50 percent will never leave the blue area? Or maybe even 75 percent?
16		So that you maybe have 25 percent of all possible customers that you could maybe
16		fill the red area with?

Vignette 3: A more critical discussion between Paul and James, the visual is not shown

Right before Vignette 3, James has explained his plans for implementing servitization in his organization, Proto. Paul probes for further detail, particularly inquiring about customers' processes (lines 1–2). He does not appear convinced by James' initial response (line 3) as he keeps on questioning, now focusing on the feasibility of James' plans (lines 4–5). James acknowledges Paul's doubts and provides a more elaborate answer. Specifically, he explains how customers will need to be segmented for his plans to work (line 6). Presumably to prove the feasibility of this segmentation, James then invokes the visual artifact that has been guiding the team's activities through a simple, verbal reference ("the arrow," line 7) and starts locating customers "onto that background" (line 7). The visual is not shown but made present through these verbal cues as well as James' movement: When talking about where customers would sit on the graphic, he moves his hands (lines 8–11), tracing the visual curve from top right to left bottom as if it were displayed right in front of him and the others.

Paul invokes the artifact through similar embodiment (line 13, Illustration 3) in his reaction to James. However, despite James' more profound explanations, Paul still does not seem convinced (lines 12–16). He appears to be doubting that James' servitization plans can ever be implemented for a high number of their customers, invoking the visual's "blue area" (line

14) and "red area" (line 16) for support. Remember that the graphic is not shown—it is invoked solely through talk and embodiment. That shows how the colors have meaning even when they are not visible and how its extension into members' bodies seems very natural. We take these details as cues for the artifact's deep embeddedness within the team.

Illustration 3: Paul gesticulating the upwards curve, with both hands

Interestingly, with this deep embeddedness—members *literally* appropriate the graphic by weaving it into their bodies—members also start moving beyond the artifact and *advance* their subject boundary, wondering what more they need to consider.

5.5. The Parts: Defending, Negotiating, and Failing to Negotiate Organizational Boundaries

Members also use the visual artifact to defend or permeate the organizational boundaries they encounter within their team: It helps them keep intact but, more importantly, break apart the (organizational) *parts* that their group brings together—at least until new members join, who cannot make sense of the visual's implicit materializations in old members' talk and gestures.

Meetings 2 And 3: A Potential Translator and Actual Safeguard

Initially, the visual has a dual function regarding organizational boundaries. On the one hand, it is suggested as a potential translator; on the other, it is used to safeguard distinctions.

The visual artifact is presented as a potential translator to *permeate* organizational boundaries by James, to little surprise. Vignette 4 provides an illustrative example. Paul has just explained one of his organization's products when James asks: "But if you would have to place the product on the arrow ((*gesticulating an upwards curve, the visual is shown*)), where- where would it be located?" However, Paul and his company colleagues Robert and Daniel do not answer James' question but explain additional product details. James listens carefully and then himself locates the product on the graphic.

1	James:	Yes, okay, but then you are sitting in vendor relation *((pointing to the area on the graphic))*-
2	Robert:	Yes- yes- yes.
3	James:	Vendor relation, and then also uhm let's say still in warranty, product revenue, that area-
4	Robert:	Yes, warranty=
5	James:	=And maybe speed of repair, assistance eh in that area, that's where you are sitting then?
6	Robert:	Yes, speed of repair, I think that's being discussed right now.
7	Daniel:	That's indeed what it is mostly about right now. Response times, yes.

Vignette 4: James locating Flex's product on the visual, the visual is shown

James redirects the group's conversation to the visual even after his first failed attempt. This shows his strong attachment to the graphic and highlights his important channeling role: Initially, the visual relates to the team only through James conveying its insights through what he says and does. Precisely, James here locates Flex's product in the graphic's part titled "vendor relation" (line 1); shortly after, he also invokes additional parts (lines 3, 5). It is difficult to decipher who exactly is speaking here as James' simple utterance includes multiple relations. The graphic says that Flex is sitting in vendor relations (and the other parts), but that is also what James makes it say. To some extent, the graphic can also be considered as channeling Flex, for Flex sitting in that area is informed by what Paul, Daniel, and Robert (as representatives of Flex) have said. The moment that they agree with James' and the graphic's positioning of Flex is essential as that is where a connection forms between Flex and the work of the team and the organizational boundary begins dissolving. Also, note the change in James' way of talking: His first localization of Flex in the graphic (line 1) reads rather directive, like a fact, while later, he adopts a more suggestive tone (line 5). This change in tone could be interpreted as an attempt to draw in Flex and its representatives, much like an invitation to engage with one another and break down organizational boundaries on the interactional floor the graphic provides and that is, right now, visually shown.

Other organizational boundaries were not permeated but maintained and *defended*. Especially one organization is depicted as unique, and a boundary between this and the other organizations is drawn and upheld with the help of the visual (Vignette 5).

1	Tim:	But is it eh- is it a good idea to say here eh where we think where we as participants,
2		as companies, are located with our case studies or eh use cases or whatever we want to
3		call it? So, where we stand in this eh- this overview? *((pointing to graphic))*
4	Robert:	For me, that's not yet all clear. Except for that we found that [Proto] and [Flex] are
5		sitting in that blue area *((leaning in, pointing to blue area on graphic))*, at least at the moment
6		still, and that you, if you would need to find a position, that that is already in the red
7		area *((pointing to red area on graphic))*.
8	Tim:	Yes, correct.
9	Robert:	Because your service actually is your product.
10	Tim:	Yes.
11	Robert:	I would say let's keep that in the background for now, show it in our end results=
12	Daniel:	=But you can also add it here, because it is an important point, I think.
13	Tim:	We can in any case say that we already found that the companies are not all on the
14		same level.

Vignette 5: Members discussing organizational boundaries, the visual is shown

The team is discussing another presentation. Tim suggests communicating in which phases their organizations are in, using the visual (lines 1–3). When Robert then locates the companies on the graphic, he emphasizes the boundary between Proto and Flex on the one hand and Topo on the other (lines 4–7), which Tim affirms (line 8). Indeed, it seems as if Tim is purposefully using the graphic to stress organizations' distinctions ("not all on the same level," lines 13–14); specifically that his company is the only one located in the red (more advanced) area. Here again, not only Robert and Tim are deciding upon companies' locations and demarcations; it is also the graphic that is doing the boundary work.

The visual is explicitly shown. Moreover, members point to it (lines 3–7; Illustration 4) and engage with its features, specifically its colors ("blue area," "red area," lines 5–7). Note how the visual demarcates a boundary by putting these colors side-by-side. Members make this very part of the graphic speak, emphasizing the line separating them.

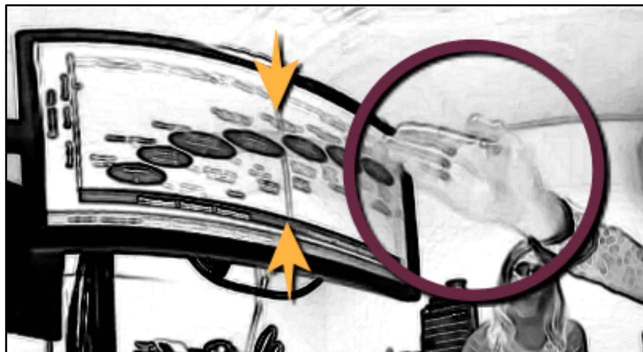


Illustration 4: Robert pointing to the visual

Meetings 4 to 7: An Actual Translator

As the project proceeds, the visual is increasingly used to *permeate* organizational boundaries. Some team members not only adopt but also adapt the artifact. For instance, Paul adds a layer to explain better his organization's product (Illustration 5 and Vignette 6).

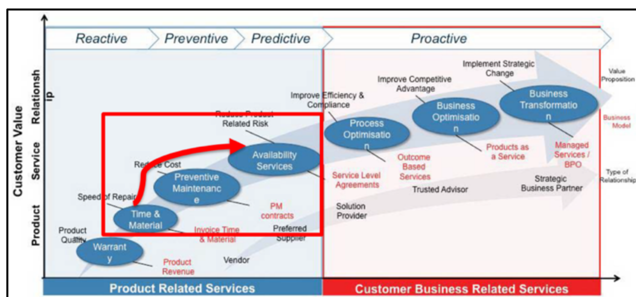


Illustration 5: The visual with Paul's adaptions (added box and arrow)

1 Paul: And based on the discussions we had with Ed, for [Product Flex], well ehm (.) our idea
2 certainly was that uhm- (.) that it probably sits somewhere left bottom e:::h so it's
3 mostly about time and usability- eh availability. Those are the most important points,
4 I think. And the preventive maintenance, what's kind of like in-between, that would
5 probably just be dropped.
6 Daniel: Uhm (.) regarding preventive maintenance, uhm it's a bit weird because regulations
7 differ per country. So basically, we don't have any preventive maintenance, except for
8 calibrating your systems, and there are some parts that need to be exchanged anyway,
9 preventively.

Vignette 6: Paul and Daniel explaining one of their organization's products, an adapted version of the visual is shown

We can observe how Paul uses the graphic to permeate the boundary that team members not working for Flex have towards his organization, specifically one of its products. Through his additions to the visual (the box and arrow) and his explanations (lines 1–5), he appears to want to create a shared understanding of where Flex's product aims to go. Used this way, the graphic essentially becomes a medium through which Flex, or more specifically Flex's product, communicates. It is also a medium for Ed and "the discussions [they] had" (line 1). Through the graphic and the specific way Paul makes it speak here, Flex, Flex's product, Ed, and their discussion are related to the team's work and context, which further permeates the organizational boundary between Flex and the project group.

Daniel's utterances (lines 6–9) are important for how they signal the graphic's tremendous implications on what the team works on and discusses. Although preventive maintenance is something they "basically [...] don't have" (line 7) at Flex, Daniel talks about it. Presumably, it is the very fact that the graphic includes this aspect that makes Daniel say something about

it—if it were not for the graphic, this issue would probably have not been addressed. We see here a very plastic example of the graphic's agency, or the strong relations team members have by now built between their work and the artifact. Later in the meeting, the visual is again used to permeate organizational boundaries; however, it is now present solely through verbal ("very much at the start, so reactive") and embodied invocations (Illustration 6). For reasons of scope, we cannot include the interaction vignette here. Nonetheless, Robert's embodiment of the visual is another important indication of the strengthening relations between the visual and all team members.

Illustration 6: Robert enacting a representative gesture to invoke the visual

Overall, in meetings four to seven, the visual artifact has significant implications for the team's joint work. Specifically, through the object's visual, verbal, and embodied materializations, members communicate, collaborate, and give voice to their organizations, thereby *permeating* organizational boundaries. However, the team is then shaken up: Two members from a new organization join, while Robert, Olly, and Tim leave.

Meetings 8 to 10: A Failing Translator and New Roadblock

Because of the fluctuation, organizational boundaries need to be *permeated anew*. However, old members invoke the graphic mostly through verbal and embodied references; the visual is shown only once (very shortly). For example, in his explanations of Flex's current efforts, Paul says: "So now we actually set up the first service package, so that's a bit of the servitization transition, in that graphic (.) you know, somewhere left bottom. And then especially focusing on repair times." The graphic is not shown, and new members appear to find it difficult to understand Paul's implicit references. Therefore, organizational boundaries remain intact, *a new knowledge boundary emerges* between the old and new team members, and the visual figuratively becomes a roadblock.

In Vignette 7, Luke, a new member, brings up a new case to possibly work on. Luke works for the same company as Paul did (before switching to Proto), but in a different section and on another product. He has just described this product in more detail when Paul directs the conversation to the visual artifact. However, Paul makes present the graphic only through gesturing and a small detail in his talk ("arrow," line 1).

1	Paul:	Are you able to place it on the arrow? *((gesticulating an upwards curve))*
2	Luke:	So (.) uhm (.) regarding what types of service you want to offer uhm?
3	Paul:	But then uhm so you want to know what exactly you will offer for each e:::h so
4		left bottom is repairs and eh right top is a full helpdesk, for example.
5	James:	From what I understand is that with this product you will very much be stuck in
6		the first part. Not really growing further right […] that's still left, very much left,
7		so the product itself.

Vignette 7: Members discussing a new product to work on, the visual is not shown

Luke shows difficulties in responding to Paul's question (line 2), also indicated by his hesitant tone. Presumably, he cannot relate to Paul's implicit invocations of the graphic. Paul then specifies his question. Because we have sat with the team for many meetings, we can 'see' the visual artifact in his talk, such as when he talks about "left bottom is repairs" or "right top is a full helpdesk" (lines 3–4). As a new member, these implicit cues arguably must be more difficult to catch and correctly interpret for Luke. It is then James who locates Flex's product on the graphic, explicitly placing it in the "first part" (line 6) and "very much left" (lines 6–7).

James and Paul continue where they left off in their handling of the visual, relying on implicit materializations. Consequently, attempts to permeate organizational boundaries fail. A new knowledge boundary emerges between two parts of the team: One group that can understand the situated, implicit presence of the visual artifact, and another group that cannot make sense of James and Paul's references. The visual disappears from the team's activities in the subsequent meetings, and its powerful relational and multimodal prominence evaporates. Single words or a simple gesture appear to no longer be sufficiently powerful to be successful boundary objects.

5.6. Discussion and Contributions

How is boundary work accomplished when boundary objects materialize through multimodal modes? This chapter has addressed this question by tracing the multimodal materializations of a visual artifact and its boundary work practices across meetings of an interorganizational team and drawing on 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' thinking. In the following, we discuss the implications of our work.

Multimodal Insights on How Boundary Objects Accomplish Boundary Work

Boundaries are not predefined lines as they exist on paper, but ephemeral accomplishments that need to be actively worked for and at (Abbott, 1995). Our analyses provide novel and fine-grained insight into how boundary objects can multimodally impact this very process. Therewith, our study responds to calls to capture more subtle, situated, and dynamic nuances of boundary work (Langley et al., 2019).

To the general extent that artifacts reshape boundaries by relating parties to one another, our insights resemble and confirm previous work on boundary objects (e.g., Barret & Oborn, 2010; Carlile, 2002; Swan et al., 2007). Intriguingly, however, our multimodal take problematizes the principal distinction between boundary objects on the one hand and professionals on the other. Our findings show how, over time, artifacts and interactants can weave into one another through multimodal modes (Zilber, 2018). While this blurs their distinguishability, it clarifies and better explains their combined performative effects on boundaries. Importantly, our insights indicate that different degrees of this (in)distinguishability have different implications for boundaries and boundary work.

In our empirical case, the visual artifact initially needed an explicit visual presence and repeated invocation by James to form the subject boundary around the team and help discuss organizational boundaries. Over time, however, members developed strong relations between the visual and their work and relied on (only) verbal cues and embodied gestures to make present the graphic—the visual literally existed in their talk and bodies. With that, the team's subject boundary thickened and then advanced towards new applications, parallel to organizational boundaries further diluting. However, when new members joined, these strong relations and the indistinguishability between old members and the visual confounded efforts of permeating organizational boundaries and caused a new knowledge boundary to emerge between the old and new parts of the team. Organizational boundaries thickened again while the subject boundary waned. New members could simply not make sense of the artifact's implicit materializations in talk and bodily movement. For them, a single word or simple gesture were too implicit to make these signs of any matter. In much contrast, for the old team members, these implicit materializations signaled the visual's strong mattering—the more implicit its materializations became, the more important the artifact was for their project.

We believe this shows that questions about how objects accomplish boundary work are also questions about multimodal relations, for *how exactly* professionals relate to the objects they use defines whether a boundary is created, disrupted, or maintained between or around them. When strong relations are cultivated, objects' presences can take on more implicit modes. To some extent, this demonstrates a boundary object's deep embeddedness in a collective and its immense importance and powerfulness. To another extent, however, these strong relations and implicit materializations are also precisely what makes a boundary object less powerful and more fragile when newcomers who do not yet have strong relations with an object join an existing collective.

Hence, our insights stress how precarious the workings of boundary objects are, certainly if we consider them multimodally. In one moment, the visual artifact we have studied appeared to be a very robust team constituent, compass, and translator, configuring strong conjunctive relations between the team members, their organizations, and the topic they were working

on. Almost paradoxically, it appeared most robust and performative when it materialized most implicitly (literally moving members' thoughts, words, and bodies). However, in the very next moment, the visual's strong relations to only a part of the team completely shifted the boundary dynamics within the group when new members could not make sense of its materialization in talk or gestures. It configured disjunctive relations between the old and the new team parts, only to evaporate shortly afterward. The more implicit materializations of the visual artifact that increasingly appeared as relations to the visual grew thus both enabled and constrained its boundary workings (Swan et al., 2007). In other words, the order that the artifact produced led to disorder when the team constellation changed (Vásquez et al., 2016).

Our case highlights the fine line or fickle tipping point between the configuration of conjunctive or disjunctive relations, the practice of competitive or collaborative boundary work (Comeau-Vallée & Langley, 2019), and an object being 'boundary-spanning' or 'boundary-creating' (Swan et al., 2007) caused by its multimodal materializations and uneven relations to the team. More longitudinal studies are needed to elucidate further boundary objects' multimodal workings and processual boundary work dynamics. This study had an explorative ambition; can future work take a more systematic approach to explore possible patterns between objects' evolving multimodal materializations and their boundary implications? How do multimodal and relational enactments between professionals, objects, and boundaries play and unfold in different settings, for instance, in more stable and routine collectives? How can members strengthen the robustness of the relations they cultivate with boundary objects without them leading to new boundaries later on? The ideas that we will outline in the next section might be helpful extensions for such and similar endeavors.

Boundary Objects, Vectors, and Authoritative Texts

The visual artifact that we studied clearly functioned as a boundary object: It translated across differences and enabled members to talk in the same language, despite their differences. At the same time, our findings point towards two additional theoretical concepts, which we seek to flesh out more comprehensively.

First, we think a complementary label for boundary objects might be *boundary vector* (Brummans et al., 2021). Such a label would highlight and thus better capture artifacts' spectral abilities to carry, channel, and convey other agents' viewpoints, interests, opinions, etc. In our data, boundaries were often (re)configured through precisely these carrying effects as the visual connected what it carried to the team's work, in either conjunctive or disjunctive ways. For instance, when Paul expressed organizational details *through* the artifact (e.g., by specifying a product's servitization stage as in Vignette 6), the boundary towards Paul's company permeated as the artifact connected Paul's organization with the project. Intriguingly, in her early work on visuals as boundary objects, Henderson (1991, p. 460; italics added) writes: "A physical picture, like writing, becomes the *carrier* for a concept, allowing it

to traverse time and space independent of its author." A vectorial conceptualization of boundary objects expands what an artifact can carry beyond the concept it seeks to represent. Through how we make an artifact speak, it can likewise convey other actants' viewpoints, interests, etc., thereby forming the relations that (re)constitute boundaries. Viewing boundary objects as vectors, channels, or carriers then is useful for enabling even more relational investigations of how these objects work. Which voices does an object convey? In what way? How does that shape the boundary work that is taking place? Can patterns be identified between modes, conveyed voices, and boundary work practices?

Second, the visual artifact that we studied reminds us of the notion of authoritative text (Koschmann et al., 2012; Kuhn, 2008), for how it facilitated collectivizing and authored the team's activities once it was sufficiently distanced from James. The artifact also helped members defend organizational distinctions and later separated the group into two parts, showing how it enacted both centrifugal and centripetal forces (Koschmann et al., 2012). Intriguingly, Henderson did not just categorize visuals as carriers but also compared them to "maps" (1991, p. 462). If we further draw out this comparison, then boundary objects cannot only help navigate complex or ambiguous settings; they can also sketch paths forward. That is precisely what we observed in our case. This indicates that a boundary object can acquire epistemic qualities (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2009) and function as an authoritative text, all at the same time. Future work might want to systematically explore the alternation or simultaneity of an object's multiple functions: Under which conditions does a boundary object become epistemic or authoritative? Can we detect patterns between an artifact's embeddedness within a collective, its types of multimodal materializations, and its primary function? Studying the "relative permanence" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 1234) of boundary objects as authoritative texts together with their exact materializations might be another worthwhile endeavor: How precisely can boundary objects persist as authoritative texts beyond a conversation's immediate setting and beyond only select individuals? Figuratively speaking, which aspects are added to or subtracted from the authoritative text as work progresses, and how does that support or hamper an object's power and permanence? We believe that answering such and similar questions can further clarify some of boundary objects' multimodal and dynamic boundary work practices.

Concluding Thoughts on Multimodality and Communicative Materiality

This study also contributes to organizational scholarship more generally by constituting an example of multimodal methodological symmetry: We have treated the visual, verbal, and embodied modes as equals (Boxenbaum et al., 2018; Zilber, 2018), enabled by rich audiovisual data and a decentered, material, and relational grounding in communication (Cooren, 2018, 2020; Kuhn et al., 2017, 2019). In hindsight, had we considered the visual to be present solely when it was shown, we would have missed many of its essential boundary

workings (e.g., when the knowledge boundary between old and new members emerged because of the visual's exclusively verbal and embodied materializations). Our findings thus draw attention to a substantial blind spot: When research focuses on single modalities or equates material agency with physicality, it risks missing out on decisive details and telling just half the story.

We think that the decentered and material conceptualization of communication we have adopted can provide a fruitful theoretical entrance to interrogate organizational and organizing phenomena multimodally. Understanding human interactants as channels or media through which other agents (also other-than-human ones) can join conversations can negate the classical divide between materiality, sociality, and communication as it enables tracing how something that is visually present materializes into what we say and into how we (un)consciously move our bodies or any other way around. When combined with methodological guidance on embodiment (e.g., Clarke et al., 2021; Gylfe et al., 2016) and applied to audiovisual data, such as take on communication can hence be a valuable anchor point for a more complete consideration of multimodality in organization studies and can help us to perpetuate further the conceptual disconnect between social and material dimensions of our theorizing. Organizational practices are by definition multimodal, but they are not yet often analyzed as such. We hope that this chapter can be a road sign for such endeavors, but more so that it inspires spotting some new paths and pushing our very own knowledge boundaries.

Practical Implications

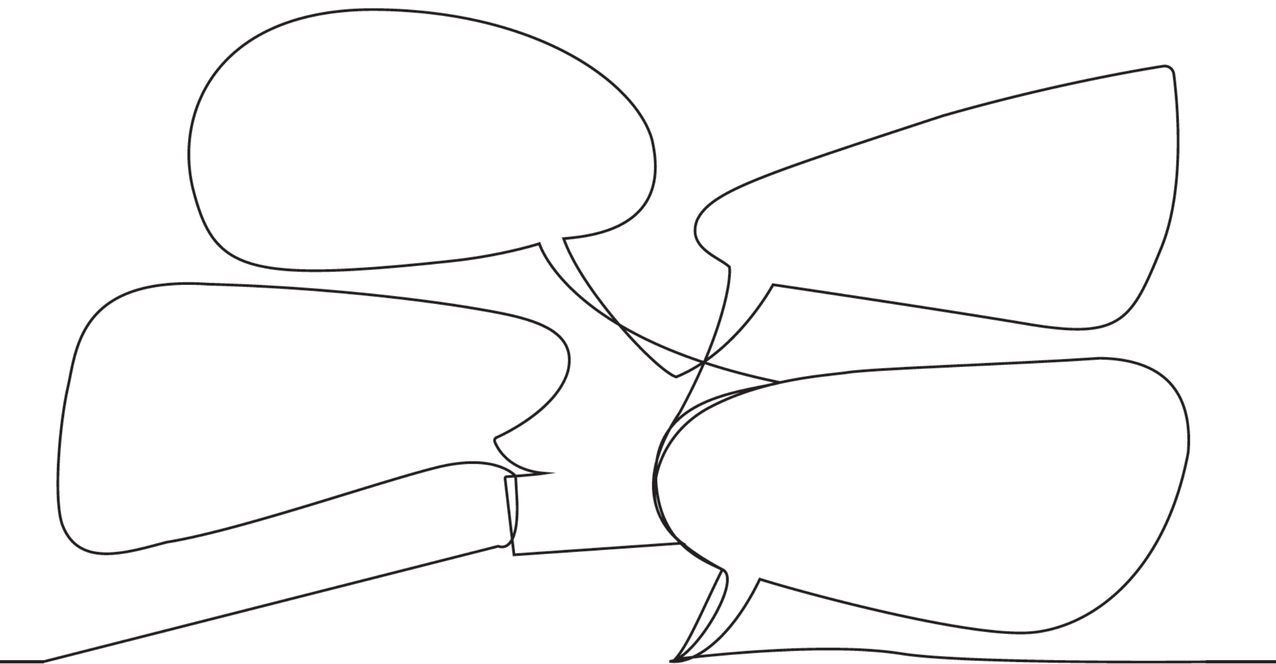
Although our analyses are limited to a specific setting, the higher-order implications we have discussed here offer important take-aways for collaboration processes in boundary-ripe contexts and beyond. Any collective, when coming together, needs to answer several questions: Who are we, as individual participants and as one group? What are we doing, and where are we going? How will we accomplish these objectives? Our study has shown how an artifact can become an essential feature of a team (as part of what members say, do, and see) and how it can answer these questions by serving as a lucid orientation point.

It might be valuable for managers and team members to bring such artifacts to the team context or consider how existing artifacts of the collaboration can be used for increased alignment and better communication across possible boundaries. At the same time, our findings also remind managers and team members to be sensitive to and aware of artifacts' possible multimodal and relational implications, especially when outsiders or newcomers join a collective. Paradoxically, it appears that objects can become embedded and embodied to such a tremendous but implicit extent that they can evaporate in the very next moment. Managers and team members thus need to enact objects' meanings and functionalities

repeatedly, from one situation to the next, if they are to support their boundary work in conjunctive ways ongoingly.

Chapter VI.

Contributions, Reflections, & Conversations



Chapter VI. Contributions, Reflections, and Conversations[7]

This dissertation has offered subjective insider accounts, momentary snapshots, processual sketches, and bottom-up theory-building of how differences are in dialogue—of how different voices converse—in the work and organizing processes of interorganizational collaboration. To begin with, ***Chapter II*** has mapped an overview of the multiple *differences* that can make a difference as collaborators come together, based on in-depth interpretative interviews. Subsequently, ***Chapter III*** has developed an analytical framework to identify and trace the *voices* that partake in actual interactions. ***Chapters IV and V*** have applied this analytical framework to analyze video-recorded team meetings and generate new insights about two central processes of interorganizational collaboration: How strategy is coauthored amid multivoicedness and how *boundaries* are built or permeated by a visual artifact's multimodal materializations. In this final chapter, ***Chapter VI***, I synthesize and reflect on this dissertation's findings, contributions, and premises.

When I first drafted the introduction of this work (***Chapter I***), I was uncertain about where to start. Was my dissertation essentially about the 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' (CCO) perspective, ventriloquism, and voices, and was interorganizational collaboration simply a compelling empirical case to advance these theories and notions? Or was this dissertation at its core about better comprehending the complexities of interorganizational collaboration processes in their situated unfolding, and were CCO, ventriloquism, and voices just my theoretical lenses and analytical tools? I eventually opened my introduction with the empirical phenomenon that I studied. Nonetheless, I still consider this dissertation to be both. It can be read in two ways: As a conversation with and contribution to the field of interorganizational collaboration and as a conversation with and contribution to the CCO literature and research community. Hence, I invite readers to both these 'readings' in this final chapter.

We begin with this dissertation's findings on interorganizational collaboration (Section 6.1.). Afterward, we move on to this work's implications for CCO scholarship, focusing on the ventriloquial analytical framework (Section 6.2.). In Section 6.3., I offer reflections on my research and the particular approach I have adopted. Section 6.4. summarizes some of the practical implications that can be derived from this work. Last but not least, Section 6.5. sketches a provisional agenda for future research.

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[7] I would like to thank Milena Leybold for her valuable feedback on an earlier draft of this chapter.

6.1. On Interorganizational Collaboration

We start with this dissertation's 'first way of reading' and its contributions to the literature on interorganizational collaboration. The two overarching questions introduced in ***Chapter I*** serve as a general structure.

Question 1: What Differences Make a Difference—Whose Voices Do We Hear—in Interorganizational Collaboration?

Earlier work has compared interorganizational collectives to multivoiced arenas (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1999; Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Lewis et al., 2010). This dissertation has materialized this analogy through concrete findings from empirical research: It has laid bare the vast range of differences or different voices that can be heard in the processes and practices of interorganizational collaboration. These differences or voices cover individual and more contextual aspects and relate to human and other-than-human actants. They show through how individuals talk, act, and move and through various objects such as documents or visual artifacts.

Therewith, this dissertation extends scholarly knowledge of the differences that make a difference in interorganizational teamwork and provides a fuller picture of all the things and beings that matter and act in these collectives—of all the voices heard in them. Findings sketch a more crowded image of the figurative interorganizational arena (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1999); an inference picked up on this piece's cover and illustrated throughout its chapters. While previous work has predominantly focused on listing the more obvious parts of an interorganizational collaboration (the individual and organizational members, perhaps their respective expertise and fields, and the objectives and activities of the collaborative project; Majchrzak et al., 2015), this work demonstrates how many other subtle, diverse, and situated things, beings, and voices can powerfully impact how collaboration unfolds. We hear more actants talking in interorganizational collectives than just the team members or their organizations. A 'plenum' (Cooren, 2006) or ensemble of diverse actants configures what an interorganizational collaboration becomes.

Drawing on in-depth interpretative interviews, ***Chapter II*** has adopted a sensemaking approach (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) to the study of perceived differences (Shemla et al., 2016) in interorganizational collectives. It has analyzed which *differences* team members themselves perceived as meaningful and how they interpreted them as either helping or hindering their work. Its findings have shown that collaborators noted a large variety of differences already early on in their collaboration. Salient individual differences included job-related and non-job-related aspects typically falling under the broader group of invisible attributes (Harrison et al., 2002). For example, team members mentioned distinctions in professional backgrounds, general behavior, or attitudes. In contrast, surface-level

characteristics such as age or gender were named infrequently and generally described as not being of much matter for the collaboration. Moreover, Chapter II's findings have stressed the importance of organizational differences, that is, aspects related to the contexts in which collaborators are situated (Akkerman et al., 2006; Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2017), such as organizational products and markets or organizational cultures. Previous work has not often included these contextual aspects in its studies on workgroup diversity, which is especially puzzling when considering interorganizational collaboration.

While it is well acknowledged that organizations commonly have different structures and languages or diverging priorities and preconditions (Huxham & Vangen, 2000, 2005; Majchrzak et al., 2015; Sydow & Braun, 2018), these dimensions have not yet been explicitly considered in studies of interorganizational team dissimilarity. Hence, the findings of Chapter II have drawn a more complete picture of the vast range of differences that potentially matter for interorganizational collaboration.

Many of these differences could also be spotted and traced as interorganizational teams performed their work. When moving from studying interviews (and hence reflective accounts) to studying video-recorded team meetings (and thus situated interactions), the data showed how members spoke from the positions of their experience and on behalf of their organizations, to name two examples from Chapter IV's analyses.

Specifically, ***Chapter IV*** has adopted a ventriloquial analytical lens (developed in Chapter III) to unpack the different *voices* expressed in an interorganizational team's strategy formulation process. Furthermore, it examined how these voices helped members accomplish the authority needed for shaping their team's strategy. Both processes are essential aspects of interorganizational collaboration (Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Koschmann & Burk, 2016): As collaborators engage in their joint work, they need to define what precisely they work on and who has the largest say on that. Chapter IV's findings have demonstrated that individual, organizational, team, and other voices participate in these processes. These voices were expressed through the ways that team members talked and acted. For instance, team members commonly switched from speaking in the name of their professional interests or their experience to speaking in the team's name to speaking in their organizations' names, possibly even showing organizational documents through which their organizations' voices and objectives materialized.

Chapter V has provided a compelling example of how other-than-human actants can make their voices heard in the situated collaboration practices of interorganizational collectives. Analyzing the video-recorded meetings of another interorganizational team but again adopting a ventriloquial analytical lens, this chapter has demonstrated how a particular visual artifact (a roadmap) impacted the collaboration through the *boundaries* it expressed and either permeated or upheld between team members and their organizations (Langley et al., 2019).

Working as a boundary object (Star & Griesemer, 1989), the artifact joined the team's processes through its visual presence (it was shown), members' talk (in the form of explicit or implicit verbal cues), and members' bodily movement (in the form of a recurring gesture). Additional voices became expressed conjointly with the visual, such as when an organizational product was verbally, visually, or bodily (i.e., by pointing) placed onto it.

Across these chapters, this dissertation has thus illuminated and enlarged the range of differences that matter for interorganizational collaboration or the voices that can be heard in interorganizational collectives. Furthermore, it has illustrated how these differences or voices can come in diverse shapes and appearances: They can show or partake in teams' conversations through collaborators' utterances, their behaviors and embodiments, or other-than-human actants such as documents or visual artifacts.

All three chapters have presented relevant conclusions for interorganizational collaboration contexts or, more broadly, collectives that bring together heterogeneous perspectives. At the same time, the presence of the diverse differences and voices found within them cannot simply be generalized to other settings. Which exact differences or voices are significant might differ per site—organizational differences and voices, for example, might solely be prominent when organizations send their representatives to their interorganizational teams with clear corporate agendas in mind. Instead, what can be derived is a kind of 'inventoried generalizability': The *inventory of differences and voices* that this dissertation has offered can provide helpful orientation regarding what to look for. However, it should not be considered a guarantee of these differences or voices' presence in each and every collaborative situation. The differences and voices that this work has unpacked seem broad enough to be valuable anchors for thinking about collaboration in terms of dissimilarity and multivoicedness, without determining which exact ones matter.

Question 2: How Do These Voices Shape and Constitute How Interorganizational Work Unfolds and Organizing Is Accomplished?

This dissertation sought not only to scrutinize the range of differences or voices that participate in the processes and practices of interorganizational collectives but also to comprehend better their performative effects—what they did or the differences they actually made. Altogether, findings have demonstrated that the many voices that populate interorganizational collaboration's multivoiced arena also performatively shape and constitute what an interorganizational collective becomes in both favorable and adverse ways. This is an important insight as it shows that interorganizational collaboration can be (dis)organized in situated conversations and interactions through the many diverse voices that members express.

Interorganizational teams are formed to harvest members' and organizations' dissimilarity: They are assembled to make productive use of differences and benefit from broader pools of experiences and wider ranges of perspectives (Majchrzak et al., 2015; Sydow & Braun, 2018). Dissimilarity can undoubtedly lead to such "collaborative advantage" (Huxham & Vangen, 2004, p. 191). However, it can also trigger "collaborative inertia" (Huxham & Vangen, 2004, p. 191). Previous work has explained how often centripetal forces compete with centrifugal ones (Koschmann et al., 2012) or how members fluctuate between cooperative talk and assertive talk (Hardy et al., 2005) or between speaking with a united 'we'-voice or multiple separate ones (Lewis et al., 2010). This dissertation has analyzed and illustrated how these processes and practices transpire in the situated moments when team members sit together at the meeting table.

Overall, the voices we hear in interorganizational collaboration can shape teams' work and organizing processes in productive and coorienting ways when they converge into shared understandings or help push forward the collaboration. However, they can also shape teams' work and organizing processes in negative and alienating ways when they cause friction between members or skew collaborative activities towards only some members. Crucially, it is eventually through the connections or relations that form (or not) between these voices that collaboration processes and practices are constituted and (dis)organized. Hence, it is not solely a question of whether distinct voices are present at a given moment, but more so of how they interconnect over time. Ultimately, voices' performative effects on interorganizational collaboration appear to emanate from the relations or assemblages (Kuhn et al., 2017; Kuhn, 2021; Nail, 2017) that they form and keep on reforming.

Chapter IV has analyzed voices' effects on how an interorganizational team coauthored a collaborative strategy for their joint work. It has illustrated how this strategy formed through the multiplication, combination, and integration of different voices in situated interactions. By making present different voices, team members first enforced their authoritative positions (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Bourgoin et al., 2020) and then knotted together individual, organizational, or other interests with their group's objectives and activities. For example, organizational voices were fused into the team's strategy by switching between speaking with an organizational voice and the collective team voice. Chapter IV has also shown how voices can become detached from the collective. For instance, some members exercised firm control over who could speak for the team, which meant that they could exclude or silence voices and concerns from the strategy coauthoring process (Gray, 1994). Consequently, the team's emerging strategy became increasingly unbalanced and skewed towards only a part of the group. Chapter IV's findings have exposed voices' significant effects on what an interorganizational team works, engendered through subtle but consequential communicative practices. The team's strategy eventually formed as a dynamic relational assemblage (Kuhn, 2021; Nail, 2017) of either integrated or disconnected voices.

Chapter V has revealed the conjunctive and disjunctive forces that a visual artifact radiated in an interorganizational collective (Langley et al., 2019). On the one hand, the artifact aided members in clarifying organizational boundaries and in inspiring a joint path forward—it assembled collaborators' different voices onto a shared ground, which (at least initially) vastly helped their teamwork. However, on the other hand, the visual also aided members in keeping intact and defending their organizations' distinctions. In addition, when the team constellation changed, the visual triggered the emergence of a boundary between old and new members. The new members could not make sense of the artifact in the same ways as the old members, which led the team to fall apart.

Overall, findings have indicated that the strong relations that formed between the team members and the artifact were decisive for both the visual's conjunctive and disjunctive effects. The visual became connected to the members and their joint work to such an extent that members and the object became interwoven into one another (Zilber, 2018): While the artifact was initially present through its visual showings, later on, it existed primarily in members' talk and bodies (in the form of explicit or implicit verbal references or a recurring gesture). However, precisely these strong relations also led to separation and disorganization when new members joined the collective: These members could not make sense of the visual's materialization in old members' talk and body movements.

Together, Chapters IV and V have sketched an image of interorganizational collaboration as a "buzzing hive" (Kuhn et al., 2017, p. 32) of ever-changing connections between diverse voices and actants. At the same time, they have also explained the momentary stabilization of particular configurations, that is, how a specific version of an interorganizational collective was actualized through what a certain ensemble of actants (voices) was doing or performing at a given moment (see also Butler, 2015). Rather than considering interorganizational collectives as more or less steady structures of separate parts, Chapters IV and V scrutinized the dynamic relations that formed between the parts and explained collectives' emergences, transformations, and momentary stabilizations from there.

The two chapters' insights appear relevant also for similar collaborative contexts. For example, the idea of strategy as a relational assemblage (Kuhn, 2021; Nail, 2017) might be valuable for studies that similarly seek to scrutinize how a collaborative direction is formed when diverging concerns come together. However, the precise details of the processes that Chapters IV and V have found and described are not simply generalizable. Which exact voices become expressed and integrated or not into a team's collaborative strategy will, to a certain degree, depend on the situation; the same goes for an artifact's specific boundary workings and effects. Instead, what can be derived is a form of 'conceptual generalizability': The general ideas, insights, and concepts pointed to appear generic enough to constitute valuable anchor points and provide alternative conceptual imagery and vocabulary to study

and reflect on interorganizational collaboration in novel, more communicative, and relational ways.

First and foremost, this work has offered a team-member-driven perspective on the differences that matter in interorganizational collectives and provided detailed, textured, and dynamic descriptions of the multivoiced processes and practices of interorganizational collaboration. New knowledge has been generated from reimaging the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration as continuously (re)enacted in interaction through various voices, facilitated by building on CCO theory and mobilizing the notion of *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2010a). In the following section, we turn towards this 'second reading' of this dissertation and its contributions to CCO scholarship, particularly the idea of ventriloquism.

6.2. On the Communicative Constitution of Organization and Ventriloquism

The Communicative Constitution of Organization

The 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' (CCO) perspective challenges the conventional understanding of the relationship between communication and organization (Cooren et al., 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2019). In this conventional understanding, organizations tend to be treated as stable and fixed entities, and communication is assumed to take place within these entities primarily to transmit information (Axley, 1984; Putnam & Boys, 2006). In contrast, CCO scholarship considers *organizations as forming in communication* (Ashcraft et al., 2009). Communication not only serves to transmit information; much more fundamentally, it is regarded as what constitutes organizational phenomena and organizing processes in the first place.

In a way, CCO theory hence turns upside down the starting point of inquiries: Instead of beginning with existing organizations and subsequently examining how, for example, communication flows transpire within them, CCO studies start from communication to explain how organization and organizing take shape. This dissertation has strongly drawn from CCO thinking, thereby contributing to a growing stream of research exploring organizational phenomena as *communicative all the way*. Specifically, this research has worked with and advanced the notion of *ventriloquism*.

Ventriloquism and a Ventriloquial Analytical Framework

One important idea developed within CCO thinking is *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2010a). This dissertation has extensively built on and further extended this notion. Ventriloquism's core idea is that voices beyond our own can talk through how we talk—in much resemblance to how the voice of a puppet speaks through what a ventriloquist says and does in her artistic

performance. Adopting a ventriloquial lens can help identify these other voices and better comprehend their performative effects on organization and organizing (Cooren, 2015).

However, previous literature had offered little systematic guidance on leveraging the ventriloquial idea in analyses. This methodological blank space has been identified as a general limitation of CCO scholarship, which tends to rest upon rich ideas and concepts but is less specific in how these concepts are analytically applied (Baillargeon et al., 2021; Boivin et al., 2017; Kuhn, 2014). Therefore, one of the ambitions of this dissertation was to develop a framework for ventriloquial analyses (in ***Chapter III***). Naturally, a second ambition was to use this framework (in ***Chapters IV and V***) to comprehend better its workings and what it allowed seeing in data. This seemed particularly exciting in a context where multiple voices meet, such as interorganizational collaboration.

Chapter III's framework has aimed to contribute to CCO scholarship by explaining some of the underpinning assumptions, analytical steps, and methodological subtleties to consider when engaging in research from a CCO perspective, particularly a ventriloquial one. The framework provides a novel analytical tool that can facilitate the systematic inquiry of multivoicedness. Thereby, it can aid in decentering analyses beyond present humans and can contribute to more complete, relational, and dynamic understandings of the many voices that collectively and communicatively constitute organization and organizing (for applications beyond this dissertation, see, e.g., Clifton et al., 2021 or Sage et al., 2021).

Ventriloquism as a Promising Tool for Multivoiced, Relational Analyses

In much organizational scholarship, agency is linked to humans and associated with intentionality, choice, and selfhood (Martin et al., 2010). Furthermore, thinking of organizations in terms of entities trumps thinking of them more relationally. Among the issues addressed in this dissertation has been why this state of affairs can be problematic. First, it reduces the ability or power to act and influence situations, processes, meanings, etc. to humans, thereby downplaying the doings and performative implications of many other things and beings. Second, it simplifies organizations' ontological being and substance, portraying them as given and stable structures and deemphasizing their dynamic, collective, and ongoing accomplishments.

Ventriloquism and ***Chapter III's*** ventriloquial analytical framework adopt a much broader understanding of agency as the *ability to make a difference* and ascribe it to both human and other-than-human actants or voices. For example, by using the framework, ***Chapter V*** has illustrated the essential workings of a visual artifact for how team members made sense of each another and found a subject to coorient along. Moreover, agency is conceived as a relational enactment: There is no singular source of agency but only situated and shared enactments of its flow.

In that sense, organizations are portrayed as nexuses of relations and subject to continuous becoming (Kuhn et al., 2017)—precisely how the many voices knot together or move apart defines how organizing communicatively takes shape and transforms. When identifying the actants of situations, processes, meanings, etc., the ventriloquial analyst thus needs to make analytical cuts: Figuratively dissecting the 'flow' of agency without ever completely untying it as the agentic effect of one voice can only be understood in relation to the other voices and what the many voices collectively constitute (for similar reasoning, see Slife, 2004).

Recent advancements in CCO theorizing certainly go more and more in such a relational direction. There appears to be a stronger focus on how relations between actants form through communication and organizational phenomena and organizing processes emerge from precisely these relations (e.g., Brummans et al., 2021; Kuhn et al., 2017; Cooren, 2018, 2020).

Chapter IV has illustrated how the ventriloquial analytical framework can help unpack these relational processes. Specifically, it helped unfold the processual development of a team's collaborative strategy as a performative effect of how voices, actants, and agencies were assembled—or not—in team members' interactions.

A ventriloquial understanding of communication allows imagining a novel mode of explaining and, hence, a possibility for generating new insights. The ventriloquial analytical framework and the conceptual thoughts and ideas that this dissertation has developed can provide practical tools, helpful imagery, and a rich vocabulary to comprehend and analyze phenomena as inherently communicative, relational, and polyphonic accomplishments. Moreover, they can nurture a nuanced sensitivity to how organization and organizing are constantly becoming: As the voices and relations that constitute them change, they unfold differently. Rather than thinking in terms of boxes, entities, or finite mechanisms, adopting a ventriloquial understanding animates one to think about forming and wavering connections, growing and shrinking assemblages and configurations, or strengthening and weakening relations between diverse voices.

The following section continues this conversation by reflecting more generally on this research and the particular approach and assumptions that have oriented this dissertation.

6.3. Reflections on this Research and its Approach and Assumptions

For a well-founded understanding of how to read and interpret the ideas, thoughts, and concepts developed in this dissertation, it is helpful to reflect in more depth on my research process and the approach and assumptions that have guided my work. This is what this section will do.

A Relational Ontological Approach

I have adopted a *relational ontological approach* for this research (see, e.g., Cooren, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Slife, 2004). Above all, this has meant that I understood the phenomenon of interorganizational collaboration as ongoingly enacted through the relations established in situated interactions between a large variety of actants. Therefore, I prioritized getting close to the studied setting over keeping an objective distance, and I focused on generating detailed descriptions of the ongoing accomplishment of collaboration over producing highly generalized conclusions. I wanted my research to take readers to the beating heart of what it describes, be sensitive to the subtle details of what happens in interaction, and only then offer more theorized understandings (without providing finite or absolute truth claims).

Adopting a relational ontological approach allowed me to do exactly that. Moreover, the approach provided a promising lens to better comprehend the complexity of collaborative practice by anchoring this complexity in collaboration's many and ongoing relations: What transpired between team members *in relation to* each other, their organizations *in relation to* each other, the many different voices that team members expressed *in relation to* each other, all these voices *in relation to* the team (including the team's objectives, plans, etc.), team members themselves *in relation to* their group, team members *in relation to* the objects and tools used in meetings, objects and tools *in relation to* team members' bodies, etc. Scrutinizing these relations has proven useful to construct a novel reading of interorganizational collaboration, one that has accounted for the subtle but consequential implications of simple communicative practices, has looked beyond team members in explaining how collaboration unfolds in situated interaction, and has taken the idea of constant becoming seriously.

Boundary Conditions, or What this Research Is Not

However, as with every approach and research, there are also limitations. My assumptions, position, and setting enabled seeing some aspects but not others. Findings are tightly anchored in a specific context; they do not offer universal truth claims based on cross-case comparisons or similar means of generalizing. Therefore, they cannot be transferred to other settings one-on-one. Instead, the thoughts, ideas, and concepts that I have offered in this dissertation must be scrutinized, adapted, and extended in other work. As characterized earlier (in Section 6.1.), only an 'inventoried' and 'conceptual' generalizability can be derived. Findings have offered vivid and complex narratives that have the potential to reverberate across contexts; however, they need local adaptation and interpretation (Tracy, 2010).

One of the reasons that adaptation is needed is the specific setting I studied. For example, the fact that teams were part of a sizeable interorganizational collaboration initiative might have influenced how collaboration unfolded (e.g., when reporting milestones shaped teams' timelines). The processes described in this dissertation might hence transpire differently when teams are not affiliated with a larger collective or when activities are differently structured and formalized. Negotiating access also failed in several teams when one or more members were hesitant about my presence in their meetings. This refusal begs the why question, of course. I took on the role of a non-participant observer when joining teams' meetings; this might have conveyed an air of assessing and judging members' interactions despite my explanations to prove otherwise. Perhaps a more active participation would have forestalled some of my access difficulties and resulted in a richer dataset. Finally, the teams I followed worked on complex subjects or technologies. Being present in teams' meetings and reading into these subjects certainly helped me make sense of members' conversations; however, these efforts naturally did not allow me to become an expert. This meant that I had to analyze interactions about subjects and technologies that were oftentimes entirely new to me, with both upsides and downsides.

On the one hand, my observations were not tainted by any own preexisting knowledge or opinions, and I could easily connect to team members for whom the topics were also new. On the other hand, I often needed to check back with team members when they used particular terminology and deal with much subject-matter complexity in my analyses.

More Contemplations on the Research Process

Working on this dissertation has been a continuous exploration of my position and assumptions in doing research, of my reasoning, acting, feeling, and writing. Reflecting on this work's four main chapters (Chapters II to V), perhaps readers share the following observation: It seems my approach to engaging with the field and my empirical material became increasingly relational and less categorical as I kept moving, experiencing, thinking, and writing.

My field notes and analytical memos are full of personal comments, questions, feelings, hunches, links, thoughts, questions, and so on. Similarly, the interviews' audio recordings show how I tweaked and twisted my questions to adapt to the conversations' situated unfolding; and the notes that I took after these interviews do not just communicate the interviews' contents but also my subjective experiences of them (again, there are emotions, hunches, personal wonderings, etc.). When I started working with my data, I treated these thoughts, feelings, etc. as things that could distort the quality of my work—they were too personal, too subjective, too embodied, too closely tied to the specific situation I had observed (or the particular interview I had conducted). I felt as if I needed to distance myself from the phenomena and processes I was studying, looking at them from the outside rather than

positioning myself within them (see also Anteby, 2013). However, questions kept arising: Does it make sense to place me outside? How can I regard myself as a researcher outside a certain phenomenon when my ontological approach negates the existence of separate entities to begin with?

At first glance, ***Chapter II*** clearly thinks in groups, labels, and categories, listing which differences became salient to team members as they started their interorganizational projects. Moreover, it seems to position the researcher outside of team members' subjective experiences and narrations (asking questions and later on making sense of what was shared in the interviews from a distance). As part of my experimentation with what it means to do research, I created a tidied-up and simplified codebook of the difference categories that my co-authors and I had abstracted from a rich, complex, and messy analysis process. I then asked an outside person to code the empirical material with this codebook in two batches with a reflective discussion after each (I video-recorded both discussions for later retrieval).

These reflective discussions were highly insightful. In many ways, they illustrated how my empirical material (including the experiences I made while observing the field) was working on me, too—I was not just working on it unilaterally. In the conversations between the external coder and me, this crystallized in anecdotes, stories, and insights that I repeatedly invoked to more detailly convey what team members had told me over coffee breaks (when I observed meetings) or their ways of acting at these occasions. In that sense, the discussions offered a valuable space for exploring my interpretations and questioning my analytical conclusions. They constituted a form of quality control[8] and, simultaneously, drew attention to the entangled relation (Ringrose & Renold, 2014; Sergi & Hallin, 2011) between me (the researcher) and the field and material that I was studying (the researched) in my attempts of offering scientific work that brought readers close to the phenomenon.

Right from the start of my fieldwork, I was interested in organizations' presences and effects. This interest stemmed partly from the setting I was studying and partly from the research topics I was most drawn to. After the first few weeks, this interest had only intensified. One important reason was that I often felt 'haunted' (Matte & Bencherki, 2019) by the organizations I visited, particularly one that aired a very strict, controlling, and security-driven atmosphere. I was always cautious about my sayings and doings when I was in the field; however, as soon as I entered the organization in question, my cautiousness multiplied, I felt my body stiffening, and I started watching my every step even more meticulously (afraid of doing something wrong).

[8] Note that this quality control sometimes also resulted in changing codes when the conversations revealed over-interpretation on my side.

This feeling—one that I perceived not just with my researcher mind but also with my researcher body—intensified and further kindled my interest: When I was already feeling the organization weighing upon me and influencing how I acted, how would organizational members be animated by their companies? How would that, for example, impact interorganizational team members' attempts to define a collaborative strategy (***Chapter IV***) or permeate the organizational boundaries between them (***Chapter V***)? This feeling shaped my research, and yet it does not explicitly materialize in my descriptions. I was uncertain how to present it, for its embodiedness and feelings' general absence from research accounts.

It is almost needless to say that I am still on this journey of exploring my position, reasoning, feeling, writing, and so on to better comprehend my place, role, and movement as a researcher. I continue contemplating whether and how I can be more transparent and sincere (Tracy, 2010) about the affective dimensions of my research practices and about the entanglement of my researcher mind and body (perhaps the combined word of *mind-body* better captures the essence of this entanglement) and the fields that I study (see also Sergi & Hallin, 2011). On the one hand, I can see and comprehend the benefits of not entangling the researcher and the researched, for how it allows developing narratives that my voice is largely excluded from (it does not show explicitly, at least). Naturally, I want the descriptions I offer to be about the professionals and settings I study or the literature that these descriptions contribute to, not about me. Professionals and other researchers should be able to connect to the stories, find their voices back in the narratives, and take insights from them into their own contexts and applications. On the other hand, the descriptions that I offer have passed through me; they have developed based on what I observed, experienced, and felt in the field and in the subsequent process of analyzing the data. Perhaps there is new ground to break in acknowledging and more thoroughly scrutinizing the entanglement and relationality of the researcher and the researched.

Section 6.3.'s reflections have provided contemplative answers and opened up novel questions. As stated before, this work's findings do not provide final or generalized truth claims. Instead, they offer personal insider accounts, momentary snapshots, processual sketches, and bottom-up theory building of the difference-rich and multivoiced organizing processes and practices of interorganizational collaboration. The strength of this work lies in the new perspective that it provides on the variety and complexity of differences, voices, things, and beings that shape collaboration processes and in the novel conceptual imagery and terminology that it offers. That is also precisely how findings should be taken up by both researchers and practitioners.

6.4. Practical Implications for Interorganizational Collaboration

When coming together, the members of an interorganizational collective need to find answers to several questions: Who are we, as individual participants, as separate organizations, and as one group? How can we productively use our differences and still find some unity and similarity as a team? What are we doing, and where are we going? How will we accomplish these objectives? The explorative research of this dissertation has led to novel insights from which some important practical implications can be drawn. Although analyses were limited to one specific interorganizational collaboration initiative and its teams, findings can offer take-aways for collaboration processes in difference-filled or boundary-ripe contexts more broadly—most notably by fostering a nuanced awareness of the many differences that play and the many voices that can be heard as professionals proceed with their collaborative work.

Beyond the detailed practical implications that Chapters II to V have offered, this section highlights three essential insights right at the intersection of interorganizational collaboration and 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' (CCO) theorizing: *Hearing more voices*, *understanding and integrating them*, and *noting the other-than-human ones, too*.

Hearing More Voices...

As differences can only be worked with when first perceived (Shemla et al., 2016), cultivating a nuanced awareness of the many voices that can be heard in interorganizational collectives is essential: Noticing a dissimilarity is a precondition for subsequently making better use of it or spotting possible red flags and avoiding potentially harmful implications, such as when a team colleague speaks exclusively in the name of her organization. Indeed, an essential insight of ***Chapter II*** has been the great significance of organizational differences within interorganizational teams. Members are not solely individual professionals and team members; they are also representatives of their organizations (Rockmann et al., 2007). Therefore, they bring many of their organizational interests, characteristics, etc. to their interorganizational collectives. Especially when collaborators are too firmly anchored (Cartel et al., 2019) in their organizational representation roles, complications, misunderstandings, and conflicts quickly emerge.

Being sensitive to such representation dynamics can help team members better comprehend when their colleagues' concerns are motivated by only their organizations. In the next step, this sensitivity can also aid in actively encouraging team colleagues to distance from their organizations (Cartel et al., 2019) and consider situations or issues from, for example, a more individual or team-driven perspective.

Naturally, this also holds for oneself: Being reflective about the multiple figurative hats that one is wearing in an interorganizational collective (one is simultaneously a team member, an individual professional, and an organizational representative; Schruijer & Gray, 2010) can help approach subjects and problems from more than just one perspective.

Overall, our analyses have shown how collaborators tend to express diverse voices as they work together–in meetings, they are not just *actors* but also *passers* through which different voices become expressed (see also Haug & Cooren, 2020). Lending one's voice to one's organization is a prominent and illustrative example. Still, other voices can be made heard, too, such as the voice of a profession ("as an engineer, rigorous documentation of all steps is crucial for me"), experience ("trust me, in my long experience, it never works that way"), or even something as abstract as an idea or ideal ("we should work on something that truly makes a difference for our energy consumption").

In the end, all these different voices participate in conversations through what collaborators say and do. It certainly is more straightforward to suggest that only human participants express themselves. However, such a stance also means missing out on many other voices that respond to each other in teams' efforts of defining shared objectives, making joint decisions, etc. Building awareness for such additional, subtle voices allows collaborators to perceive discussions in their full complexity and go from there in their coorientation and integration endeavors.

…Understanding and Integrating Them…

Chapter IV has illustrated how collaborators express diverse voices in meetings in rich detail. Hereby, organizational voices and the team's collective voice stood out. Not surprisingly, members wanted their organizational concerns to become part of what their interorganizational team worked on (Hardy et al., 2005; Gray & Schruijer, 2010). Hence, in their attempts of defining their collaborative strategy, some members repeatedly switched between their organizational concerns and speaking with their shared team voice, figuratively entangling the two to make sure that corporate matters were becoming part of the team's plans. Through these communicative practices, the strategy eventually formed, also testifying to communication's consequentiality for what became the teams' strategy.

Real collaboration requires a balanced reflection of the multiple organizational and other aims and voices that come together. Ideally, the different concerns must be integrated in ways that all voices are heard. For that, to reiterate a point previously made, collaborators need to cultivate a keen awareness of the many voices expressed in their group.

The consequential role of communication for work and organizing is one of the fundamental premises of the 'Communicative Constitution of Organization' (CCO) perspective that this dissertation has taken. Communication is quickly typified as the problem source when teamwork fails in collaborative projects. However, why exactly communication is so essential and decisive is not explored further. Insights from CCO thinking—stressing the formative role of communication for how work and organizing are shaped—can perhaps help professionals appreciate and take seriously the complexity and consequentiality of their mundane talk (see also van Vuuren & Knoers, 2022). Importantly, this communication is not just limited to humans.

...and Noting the Other-Than-Human Ones, Too

Finally, collaborators should also consider the voices of objects and things. ***Chapter V*** has detailly illustrated how a simple artifact became a central feature of the team it studied, helping members to make sense of their distinctions, and serving as a lucid orientation point for where they collectively aimed to go. Indeed, it does not seem too difficult to imagine that objects can provide orientation for members. In many ways, that is why organizations create vision statements (to name just one popular example)–to create an object that conveys a collective orientation for a group.

The members of interorganizational teams could consider introducing new objects to their group or contemplate whether artifacts that are already in use can be leveraged more productively. For example, opinions around an object that someone has used could also be solicited from others, or all team members could be invited to locate their organization on a graphic that visualizes different development stages.

At the same time, Chapter V's findings also remind members to be sensitive to artifacts' possible multimodal implications, especially when newcomers join an existing group. Paradoxically, it appears that objects can become embedded in a team to such a great extent that they can evaporate at the very next moment. The visual artifact that Chapter V has studied became such an integral part of the collective that, after a while, simple verbal references to the graphic or a gesture that mimicked its upward curve sufficed for team members to understand that everyone spoke about the artifact—it no longer needed to be explicitly shown. However, the newcomers that joined the group could not make sense of these verbal or embodied cues, which led to friction and separation between the team's old and new parts. This shows that collaborators need to repeatedly enact objects' meanings and functionalities from one situation to the next if they are to support their collaboration (Leonardi et al., 2019).

Professionals are used to thinking of communication as processes and practices that happen in their teams or collaborative projects. The findings of this dissertation invite them to turn upside down this rationale and *consider their collaborations as happening—forming—in communication*. Acknowledging the decisive role of good and productive communication is not much of a stretch for most professionals; hopefully this work and its ideas and findings can help them better comprehend why communication is so significant to begin with.

6.5. Continuing the Conversations: Pathways for Future Research

In this final part of my dissertation, I outline pathways for future research. Following the general structure of this chapter, I first focus on interorganizational collaboration and then proceed to ventriloquism.

Communication-Inspired Pathways for Future Research on Interorganizational Collaboration

This dissertation has studied the multivoicedness of interorganizational collaboration, based on data collected in a singular setting, and hence limited to particular characterizations: The studied collaboration initiative brought together companies from mainly the high-tech sector, was partially funded by a regional development grant, was temporary-bound, and operated under the broad topic of extended product life cycle management (E-PLM). Furthermore, its teams were mainly working independently (there was little communication between groups) and only had to follow lenient guidelines regarding their work.

Different Settings. Future research might study collaboration processes and multivoicedness in other types of interorganizational collectives, exploring how findings and insights transfer or translate between different settings. For example, which differences matter, and which voices can be heard when collectives form as ongoing and open-ended communities rather than initiatives with ex-ante defined termination mechanisms? How do such collectives acquire organizationality (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015) as they mature, and how does this reflect in the voices heard? It seems reasonable to expect that organizational voices become less, whereas shared community voices become more over time. Given members' ongoing engagement in an open-ended community, it might also be expected that organizational and community voices blur into each other as time progresses.

Furthermore, it could be worthwhile to specifically study interorganizational collectives that work on disruptive challenges, such as digital transformation (Imran et al., 2021). Do organizational differences and voices matter to a prominent degree also when collectives deal with subjects that tend to stretch across organizational boundaries anyway? And how do collaboration processes look when members of the interorganizational collective do not have fixed organizational affiliations, that is, when organizational membership itself is fluid,

temporary, or non-existent (Bechky, 2006; Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015)? Do functional, professional, and personal differences then play a more prominent part? Which voices can be heard when a collaborative direction needs to be coauthored under such conditions? What are the concerns that matter and constitute the strategic relational assemblage then (see ***Chapter IV***)? What are other types of boundaries encountered when organizational ones are less relevant?

Especially when dealing with disruptive challenges such as digital transformation, interesting boundaries to examine could be those professionals have toward an unknown technology or a difficult-to-predict future. Exploring how temporal boundaries are (re)enacted in situated interactions could provide exciting insights into how the past is separated from the present and the future and how these different temporalities intersect or not in working on digital transformation (or similarly complex and disruptive) matters (Söderlund & Pemsel, 2021; Wenzel et al., 2020). Amongst others, the idea of boundary vector (see ***Chapter V***) could be leveraged to scrutinize how boundary objects mediate the past, present, and future into professionals' discussions and thereby contribute to their temporal boundary workings.

Different Processes. Future research might also look into other processes than the ones this dissertation has explored. For instance, leadership practices might be scrutinized by examining which voices the members of an interorganizational collective express to enact leadership (Carroll et al., 2008; Clifton et al., 2020). Especially when leadership is distributed or plural (as might be expected in interorganizational collectives; Kramer et al., 2019), better comprehending how multiple agencies constitute successful leadership or not can reveal much of the complex and relational aspects of leading. Professionals' identity work (Brown, 2021; Kourti, 2021) in interorganizational collectives is another promising phenomenon to explore. How do members create identification with their collective while simultaneously identifying with their organizations, professions, etc.? Objects have been shown to play essential parts in teams' boundary workings; could they perhaps have similar implications for identity workings and a team's shared identity (Koschmann, 2013)?

Moreover, future research might consider focusing on disorganization processes (Vásquez & Kuhn, 2020). When order and organization are accomplished, disorder and disorganization tend to occur, too (Vásquez et al., 2016). For example, when the team studied in ***Chapter IV*** coauthored its collaborative strategy, some voices and concerns were heard and integrated while others were silenced and excluded. Similarly, the boundary object examined in ***Chapter V*** had both conjunctive and disjunctive effects. While literature says something about the general power of quitting collaborations (e.g., Huxham & Vangen, 2004), more insight is needed into the nuanced and situated unfolding of such distancing, silencing, or disorganizing work—certainly when considering the many tensions that tend to characterize interorganizational collectives (Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Kourti, 2021; Lewis et al., 2010; Vangen, 2017).

Beyond Single Teams. This dissertation has studied the processes that unfold *within* interorganizational teams. Future research might also want to consider looking beyond teams. Amongst others, there is still much to learn about how the work that happens within an interorganizational group is brought back to members' organizations. Studies could follow how the voices expressed within a team enter an organization and how they continue traveling (and transforming) there. Similarly, it could be explored how the boundaries around interorganizational collectives are not just created but also permeated when multiple teams get into contact with each other. When interorganizational collaboration occurs within larger initiatives (as was the case in this research), the structural dimensions could also be analyzed for their multivoicedness. In particular, a ventriloquial investigation of how a larger initiative engages in configurational boundary work (i.e., putting in place structures, processes, and practices that support interorganizational collaboration at the team level; Langley et al., 2019) could be an exciting path to pursue. Altogether, by looking beyond the immediate team settings, multivoiced and multi-level studies could be performed, further complementing knowledge of the relational embeddedness of interorganizational teamwork.

Different Research Set-Ups. Finally, it is, of course, also possible to envision different types of research set-ups. On the one hand, researchers might want to get even closer to the field, being a participant rather than an observer. Participatory action research or co-creation designs might be promising approaches that can lead to new scholarly insight and increased practical relevance and impact (Coghlan, 2011; Schruijer, 2020; Sharma & Bansal, 2020; Shotter, 2006). On the other hand, researchers might seek to create a more objective distance to the field and compare across cases to derive more generalized insights and findings.

Pathways for Future Research on the Ventriloquial Analytical Framework

Chapter III of this dissertation has translated the notion of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2010a) into an analytical framework. This framework is useful for generating decentered, relational, and more complete accounts of all the things and beings—of all the voices—that act and make a difference in the studied situations (as illustrated in Chapters IV and V). The framework can, of course, be applied to processes beyond interorganizational collaboration (e.g., Clifton et al., 2021; Sage et al., 2021). However, instead of listing these other processes here as potential pathways for future research, I seek to focus on the framework's continued development.

Chapter III's framework has been a first attempt to provide explicit, systematic, and clear guidance on analyzing empirical material from a communicative constitutive—specifically a ventriloquial—perspective. It was created as an open, fluid, and flexible method with room for additions and refinements. Others should not approach it as a fixed template but as a structure and orientation that they can make their own creative use of (Lê & Schmidt, 2020), which includes expanding and improving it. In fact, we have already initiated this process

ourselves: In a chapter of the *Routledge Handbook of the Communicative Constitution of Organization* (Basque et al., 2022), we have added Castor's (2020) idea of meta-ventriloquism and specified in more detail the connections that form between speakers and invoked voices (Nathues & van Vuuren, 2022).

This dissertation has placed the idea of continuous becoming central when using the framework in Chapters IV and V. Doing so necessitates longitudinal work, which can lead to rich, processual insights but can also easily be overwhelming. Many voices are often already found when studying single conversations; hence, identifying and tracing voices over time needs to be made workable both for analytical and presentation purposes (as in space-limited journal articles). One pathway might be integrating the idea of assemblage (as presented in Chapter IV; see also Kuhn, 2021; Nail, 2017) more prominently into the ventriloquial analytical framework. In ***Chapter IV***, conceiving strategy as a relational assemblage of voices helped focus on a certain phenomenon while remaining open to its constant becomingness. The idea might also be helpful for endeavors studying other phenomena and processes over time. It might even be made a more explicit part of the framework's third phase, further emphasizing the relational character of ventriloquial analyses.

Chapter V has leveraged a bricolage approach (Pratt et al., 2022) to combine the ventriloquial analytical framework with methodological guidance on video and gesture analysis (Clarke et al., 2021; Gylfe et al., 2016; LeBaron et al., 2018). This enabled scrutinizing multimodal dimensions of communicating, organizing, and collaborating more explicitly. Based on Chapter V's findings, it seems that the ventriloquial framework has great potential for facilitating multimodal analyses and breaking up the persistent disconnect between sociality, materiality, and communication. However, whether such endeavors need additional analytical guidance (e.g., in the form of an adapted framework) is a question for future research to pursue.

Furthermore, future research might consider what other analytical moves the framework can be combined or 'bricolage-d' with and the limits for such combining efforts. For instance, additions to the ventriloquial analytical framework might be needed when different data types are studied, such as interaction data collected on social media channels (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, or Reddit). How would 'animations' show in such data where, amongst others, speech volumes do not exist? In video-recorded interaction, anger animating someone can, for example, be identified by this person's raised voice or the fact that she is hitting her fist onto the table. However, how is such anger spotted in textual data codified on social media? Could it show through capitalized words or signs and symbols such as exclamation marks?[9]

[9] I would like to thank Aleksander Groth for the inspiring conversations we had and will hopefully continue about these and similar questions.

Hopefully, future research that leverages the ventriloquial analytical framework to different data types can provide answers to such and similar questions. Perhaps it can also develop ideas that help better account for silences in ventriloquial analyses. Voices are a central aspect of Chapter III's analytical framework. Still, as Chapter IV has illustrated, also absences can have a performative presence on how phenomena are constituted and processes unfold. Therefore, how to scrutinize the voices and effects of silences is another exciting future pathway.

Finally, inspired by Section 6.3.'s reflections, how can the research process' reflective, affective, and embodied practices gain a more prominent place in applying the ventriloquial analytical framework? Collecting, analyzing, and theorizing data is a "rich, complex, and multi-level experience that mobilizes the whole person conducting this inquiry (Sergi & Hallin, 2011, p. 191). It is an intellectual and cognitive practice and an embodied one: Sometimes, hunches and intuitions make one go down a certain path or go back to a particular moment or event and rethink it (Klag & Langley, 2012; Rinehart, 2021). In a way, when analyzing empirical material, attention is *given to* data, but it is also being *drawn by* data, such as when a feeling, thought, or idea refuses to be ignored and continues tickling. How can the ventriloquial analytical framework make space for these reflective, affective, and embodied practices of working with data? Is there a way to be more open, in a more profound way, about the craft and the experience of doing research?

Final Contemplations

I will end this final chapter of my dissertation here and leave readers with these questions. Perhaps what we need to do is start considering research itself as an inherently relational and polyphonic process: We perform research *in relation to* previous work on a particular topic and its findings and procedures, *in relation to* societal developments, pressing issues, and funding schemes, *in relation to* the professionals we study, etc.

However, we also perform research *in relation to* the articles and books that we read out of curiosity, *in relation to* the colleagues and friends that we talk to, *in relation to* the experiences we have made in our lives, *in relation to* a serendipitous observation that made our mind move a certain way, *in relation to* how we feel when we think and write, and so on (see also Rinehart, 2021). What do we gain by disentangling all these relations when we perform, write up, and present our research, but also, what do we lose? Which voices do we amplify, and which ones do we silence when we do our research? Like the interorganizational team members that this work has studied, perhaps we also need to be more aware of the voices we ourselves ventriloquize and are animated by when performing our research.

I, for one, hope to continue a line of research that embraces the relationality of organizing and collaboration but also of research itself (as a relational process). There appears to be much to learn still about how the many voices that we express in our work knot together or move apart, where and why they intersect or not, and how their configurations shape and substantiate our approaches, assumptions, insights, conclusions, and so on. Acknowledging the relationality of the phenomena and processes we study *and* of how we go about our own work is a future pathway I surely hope to travel. Those are the differences that we can still put in more intimate dialogue, the voices that I hope we begin to start hearing more often in organizational research.

Postface and Acknowledgements

This dissertation has explored the multivoicedness of interorganizational collaboration. It has demonstrated that manifold differences matter for interorganizational teamwork and has elucidated how diverse voices shape where collectives are going and how members make sense of their distinctions. An organizational voice does not just exist hidden in the back of an interorganizational team member's mind or curls under her tongue; it actively participates in conversations by finding expression through others. The same goes for many other voices that shape how collaboration processes unfold. Interorganizational collectives have already, in earlier work, been described as multivoiced arenas (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1999; Gray & Schruijer, 2010)—this work has materialized this analogy in concrete findings from empirical research.

As I worked on this dissertation, I was surrounded by numerous voices, too. Along the way, many persons made a big difference in how my doctoral journey unfolded. Their voices have shaped (perhaps 'animated') the becoming of my own. I am glad and grateful that with the help of all of them, I have developed perspectives that allow me to see things differently and appreciate what I see along the way. I want to take this opportunity to thank them.

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Nederlandse Samenvatting

Hoofdstuk I: Inleiding

Ons organisatorische landschap wordt steeds meer gekenmerkt door samenwerkingsverbanden tussen organisaties. Diversiteit en verschillen zijn belangrijke drijfveren voor deze ontwikkeling. Een rijkere verscheidenheid van expertises, vaardigheden, middelen en perspectieven bevordert innovatie, leren en de algemene prestaties, is de aanname. Interorganisationele teams zijn rijk aan verschillen tussen deelnemers en hun organisaties: hierin komen veel verschillende stemmen tot uitdrukking.

Dit proefschrift heeft twee overkoepelende vragen onderzocht. Ten eerste: *welke verschillen maken een verschil - wiens stemmen horen we in interorganisationele samenwerking?* Ten *tweede: hoe geven deze stemmen vorm aan de manier waarop werk zich ontwikkelt en organisatie tot stand komt?*

Hoofdstuk I geeft een uitvoerige inleiding op het proefschrift. Ten eerste behandelt het de specifieke kenmerken, mogelijkheden en problemen van interorganisationele samenwerking. Voorbeelden van problemen zijn onduidelijke gezagsstructuren; een inherente en steeds wisselende spanning tussen het voordeel van samenwerking en weerstand tegen samenwerking; de vaak grote en ingrijpende verschillen tussen organisaties. Ook schetst het een drietal benaderingen van de variatie tussen organisaties en hun leden: als *differences* (verschillen), *voices* (stemmen) en *boundaries* (grenzen). Deze conceptualiseringen worden gebruikt in de empirische en methodologische hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift (de Hoofdstukken II tot V).

Ten tweede behandelt Hoofdstuk I de aannames voor het onderzoek (vanuit een relationele ontologiebenadering) die het uitgangspunt ervoor zijn geweest. Op basis van deze aannames is voorrang gegeven aan het onderzoek naar het ontstaan en de voortdurende transformatie van interorganisationele samenwerking via steeds wisselende relaties en performatieve processen, dit boven de manifestatie ervan als een vaste entiteit of gefixeerde structuur. Vanuit deze relationele ontologiebenadering konden de praktijken en processen van interorganisationele samenwerking onderzocht worden als zich voortdurend en opnieuw afspelend in de gesitueerde praktijk. Dit bracht ons dicht bij het kloppende hart van het fenomeen van interorganisationele samenwerking, om pas daarna hieruit meer theoretische inzichten te abstraheren.

Ten derde behandelt Hoofdstuk I de belangrijkste theoretische uitgangspunten van dit onderzoek, namelijk: *sensemaking*, *Communicative Constitution of Organization* (CCO) en *ventriloquism* (letterlijk: buikspreken). De theorie van *sensemaking* plaatst het ontstaan van organisatie en organiseren (en daarmee ook van interorganisationele samenwerking) in cognitief-discursieve en sociaal-psychologische processen. Hierdoor wordt collectieve betekenis gegeven aan gebeurtenissen. Dit maakt meer procesmatige, interpretatieve en praktijkgerichte

conceptualiseringen en inzichten mogelijk. CCO hanteert een vergelijkbaar fluïde en dynamische conceptualisering van organiseren, maar met meer nadruk op *communicating* dan op *sensemaking*. Hierbij hanteert CCO een brede definitie van communicatie die zowel menselijke als niet-menselijke actoren omvat. Deze grote verscheidenheid aan actoren geeft, door middel van communicatie, vorm aan organisatorische fenomenen en organisatieprocessen. Binnen CCO illustreert het begrip *ventriloquism* hoe deze grote verscheidenheid aan actoren bijdraagt aan communicatie en de totstandkoming van een organisatie en organiseren. In essentie wordt de praktijk van het laten horen van extra stemmen (*voices*) in gesprekken vergeleken met hoe buiksprekers de stemmen van hun buikspreekpoppen belichamen en tot uitdrukking brengen in hun zeggen en doen. Zo kunnen in gesprekken en acties organisaties ten tonele worden gebracht, kan een beroep worden gedaan op regels en voorschriften, kan aandacht worden gevestigd op objecten zoals grafieken of een whiteboard, kunnen attitudes het soort en de toon van reacties bepalen en kunnen zelfs abstracte vormen zoals emoties, ideeën of waarden tot uitdrukking worden gebracht. Daarmee kunnen verschillende stemmen herkend worden in alles wat gezegd en gedaan wordt. *Ventriloquism* erkent al deze *voices* als actieve deelnemers aan communicatie, die daarmee bijdragen aan hoe organisaties en organisatieprocessen vorm krijgen.

Tenslotte is in Hoofdstuk I een gedetailleerde beschrijving opgenomen van de onderzoekssetting van dit proefschrift. De grootste delen van dit proefschrift zijn empirisch gefundeerd op de bestudering van interorganisationele teams die samenwerkten als onderdeel van een groter Nederlands regionaal initiatief voor interorganisationele samenwerking. Het verzamelde empirische materiaal bestaat uit observaties en video-opnamen van teamvergaderingen, interviews, en teamdocumenten.

Hoofdstuk II: Gepercipieerde verschillen tussen leden in interorganisationele samenwerking

Op basis van de diepgaande interpretatieve interviews en met gebruik van ideeën uit de *sensemaking* theorie ontrafelt Hoofdstuk II de *differences* die het verschil maken voor interorganisationele samenwerking. Hierbij is ook betrokken hoe de teamleden zelf betekenis gaven aan deze verschillen. De volgende onderzoeksvraag wordt hier beantwoord: *welke verschillen zien interorganisationele teamleden als betekenisvol wanneer ze beginnen samen te werken en hoe interpreteren ze deze als bevorderend of belemmerend voor hun samenwerking?*

In het algemeen laten de bevindingen uit Hoofdstuk II zien dat teamleden al vroeg in hun samenwerking een grote verscheidenheid aan verschillen opmerkten. Tot de opvallende individuele verschillen behoorden werkgerelateerde en niet-werkgerelateerde aspecten die typisch vallen onder de bredere groep van 'onzichtbare' kenmerken (*invisible attributes*). Teamleden noemden bijvoorbeeld verschillen in professionele achtergrond, algemeen gedrag, of attitudes. Daarentegen werden oppervlakkige of 'direct zichtbare' kenmerken

(*visible attributes*) zoals leeftijd of geslacht slechts sporadisch genoemd en over het algemeen beschreven als van niet veel belang voor de samenwerking.

Ook benadrukken de bevindingen uit Hoofdstuk II het belang van organisatorische verschillen (zoals de aard van het product of de markt waarin een organisatie opereert of de organisatiecultuur), d.w.z. van aspecten die verband houden met de contexten waarin de samenwerkende deelnemers zich bevinden. Hoewel algemeen wordt erkend dat organisaties vaak verschillende structuren en talen hebben of uiteenlopende prioriteiten en randvoorwaarden, zijn deze dimensies eerder niet expliciet meegenomen in studies naar interorganisationele teamverschillen. De bevindingen van Hoofdstuk II schetsen daarom een completer beeld van het brede scala van verschillen die van belang kunnen zijn voor interorganisationele samenwerking. Bovendien bieden ze een meer genuanceerd begrip van waarom verschillen wel of niet gewaardeerd worden door interorganisationele teamleden.

Hoofdstuk III: Veel verschillende voices en hoe hun aanwezigheid in interacties te identificeren

Zoals de bestudering van de interviews in Hoofdstuk II heeft laten zien, zijn er veel verschillen van belang in interorganisationele samenwerking. Maar hoe kunnen verschillen worden getraceerd in de gesprekken in praktijksituaties? Als we verschillen conceptualiseren als *voices*, welke stemmen kunnen we dan horen in interorganisationele collectieven? Hoofdstuk III beschrijft de ontwikkeling van een analytisch framework dat helpt bij het identificeren en traceren van de *voices* die deelnemen aan interacties. Het heeft daarmee in de eerste plaats een methodologisch doel. Daarvoor is het CCO-concept van *ventriloquism* in een meer systematisch-analytisch framework uitgewerkt. De vraag die in dit hoofdstuk wordt beantwoord is: hoe kan de notie van *ventriloquism* worden ontwikkeld tot een methodologisch framework voor meer systematische analyses?

Het kernidee van het begrip *ventriloquism* (letterlijk: buikspreken) is dat stemmen buiten onszelf kunnen spreken door hoe wij spreken. Dit is sterk vergelijkbaar met hoe de stem van een buikspreekpop spreekt door wat een buikspreker zegt en doet in haar artistieke voorstelling. Net zoals een buikspreker de stem van haar pop kan laten klinken, kan een lid van een organisatie de stem van haar organisatie of beroep vertolken. Hoofdstuk III werkt dit idee uit tot een analytisch framework dat helpt bij het systematisch identificeren van de verschillende *voices* die we kunnen horen in (inter)organisatorische interacties. Eerst worden de theoretische grondslagen van *ventriloquism* uiteengezet en vervolgens wordt ingegaan op de praktische en technische aspecten ervan. Het analytische framework zelf is ontwikkeld door bestudering van eerder gepubliceerde artikelen over ventriloquism en door te reflecteren op eigen ervaringen met het werken met een data set van focusgroepen. Deze dataset is ook gebruikt om te illustreren hoe het framework gebruikt kan worden. Samengevat heeft Hoofdstuk III

een duidelijk framework en een rijke conceptuele terminologie opgeleverd om met ventriloquiale analyses te kunnen werken.

Hoofdstuk IV: Integreren of ontkoppelen, of hoe een collaboratieve strategie ontstaat uit vele voices

Hoofdstuk IV heeft de verschillende *voices* geanalyseerd die tot uitdrukking kwamen in het proces van strategieformulering van een interorganisationeel team. Daarvoor is het ventriloquiale analytische instrument uit Hoofdstuk III gebruikt. Verder is in dit hoofdstuk onderzocht hoe deze *voices* de leden hielpen om de autoriteit te krijgen die nodig was om de strategie vorm te geven. Beide processen zijn essentiële aspecten van interorganisationele samenwerking. Wie samenwerkt, moet bepalen waaraan precies wordt samengewerkt en wie daarop welke invloed mag hebben. De volgende onderzoeksvraag was daarbij leidend: wiens *voices* horen we in interorganisationele samenwerking en hoe nemen zij deel aan het gezamenlijk opstellen van de strategie voor samenwerking?

De bevindingen van Hoofdstuk IV laten zien hoe de strategie voor samenwerking van het bestudeerde team gevormd wordt door het toevoegen, combineren en integreren van verschillende *voices* in de interacties van de teamleden. Deze *voices* omvatten onder ander individuele, organisatorische en team-voices. Deze voices kwamen tot uiting in de manieren waarop teamleden spraken en handelden. Teamleden wisselden bijvoorbeeld vaak van het spreken uit naam van hun professionele belangen of hun ervaring naar het spreken in naam van het team of hun organisatie. Zij lieten zelfs organisatiedocumenten zien waarin de *voices* en doelstellingen van hun organisaties werden gematerialiseerd. Sommige van deze *voices* werden gehoord en geïntegreerd in datgene waaraan het team werkte, terwijl andere tot zwijgen werden gebracht en de strategie niet verder beïnvloedden. Uiteindelijk vormde de strategie van het team zich als een dynamische 'relationele assemblage' van geïntegreerde of juist losgekoppelde *voices.* Dit benadrukte hoe de strategie voortdurend in wording was. *Voices* werden continu toegevoegd, genegeerd of overstemd, wat implicaties had voor waaraan het team uiteindelijk werkte. De bevindingen van Hoofdstuk IV hebben zo de performatieve implicaties van eenvoudige communicatieve praktijken geïllustreerd - van hoe de samenwerkingsstrategie van een interorganisationeel team zich vormt en in de loop van de tijd wordt geherdefinieerd. Dit is een belangrijk inzicht, omdat dit in detail laat zien hoe professionals in hun gesitueerde gesprekken vorm kunnen geven aan waaraan hun collectief werkt. In interorganisationele teamvergaderingen wordt veel gesproken in. Dit hoofdstuk helpt om de performatieve implicaties van hoe deze gesprekken de doelen en strategieën vormgeven beter te begrijpen.

Hoofdstuk V: De stem en multimodale verschijningsvormen van een artefact en hoe deze boundaries (her)vormen

Hoofdstuk V laat met een overtuigend voorbeeld zien hoe niet-menselijke actoren hun stem kunnen laten horen in de samenwerkingspraktijk van interorganisationele collectieven. Met gebruik van opnieuw een ventriloquiale analyse van video-opnames van een ander interorganisationeel team laat dit hoofdstuk zien hoe een bepaald visueel artefact (een roadmap) samenwerkingsprocessen beïnvloedt door *boundaries* (grenzen) te creëren, te markeren of te doorbreken. Het artefact, dat functioneerde als een zogenoemd *boundary object*, was onderdeel van de processen van het team door zijn visuele aanwezigheid (het werd getoond), door de gesprekken van de leden (door expliciete of impliciete verbale aanwijzingen) en door de lichamelijke bewegingen van de leden (in de vorm van terugkerende gebaren). Het hielp de teamleden om de organisatiegrenzen die ze tussen hen aantroffen, te doorbreken (bijvoorbeeld door de producten van hun organisaties op de afbeelding te lokaliseren) en een *subject boundary* rond hun collectief op te bouwen (die daarmee markeerde waaraan leden werkten). De vraag die in dit hoofdstuk werd beantwoord is: Hoe wordt boundary work tot stand gebracht wanneer boundary objects zich in multimodale vormen materialiseren?

Terwijl het artefact eerst vooral aanwezig was via visuele presentaties, was het later vooral aanwezig in de gesprekken en de lichaamsbewegingen van de teamleden - het artefact en de teamleden raakten letterlijk met elkaar verweven. Juist deze vermenging van mens en artefact leidde tot verwarring toen nieuwe leden het team kwamen versterken. Deze teamleden konden geen betekenis toekennen aan de materialisatie van het artefact in de gesprekken en de lichaamsbewegingen van de oude leden. Hierdoor ontstond een *knowledge boundary* (kennisgrens) tussen oude en nieuwe leden. Het team viel daardoor uiteen.

Samengevat hebben de bevindingen van Hoofdstuk V de aandacht gevestigd op de performatieve werkingen van simpele objecten in interorganisationeel teamwerk - ze hebben laten zien dat objecten serieus genomen moeten worden vanwege hun grote vermogen om samenwerkingspraktijken zowel te helpen als te belemmeren. Belangrijk is dat deze bevindingen ook het begrip van de materialisatie van dergelijke objecten verdiept hebben, door te laten zien hoe artefacten niet alleen als afzonderlijke dingen bestaan, maar ook in de gesprekken en lichamen van professionals bestaan. Hopelijk kunnen de verworven inzichten leiden tot een groter besef van de belangrijke rol die objecten spelen in samenwerkings- en organisatieprocessen en van hun diverse en multimodale verschijningsvormen.

Hoofdstuk VI: Bijdragen, reflecties en gesprekken

In Hoofdstuk VI, het slothoofdstuk van dit proefschrift, wordt teruggekeken op de Hoofdstukken II tot en met V. Het schetst de overkoepelende conclusies en bijdragen van dit onderzoek, de voorlopige agenda's voor toekomstige studies, reflecteert op de aannames en benaderingen die dit onderzoek hebben vormgegeven en het benoemt een aantal belangrijke praktische implicaties.

Ten eerste zijn de bijdragen die dit werk heeft geleverd aan het onderzoek naar interorganisationele samenwerking uitgewerkt. Eerder werk vergeleek interorganisationele collectieven met meerstemmige arena's (*multivoiced arenas*); dit proefschrift heeft deze analogie verder uitgewerkt op basis van concrete bevindingen uit empirisch onderzoek. Het heeft de grote diversiteit aan *differences* van verschillende *voices* blootgelegd die te horen zijn in de processen en praktijken van interorganisationele samenwerking. Het heeft hun performatieve effecten verklaard in hoe samenwerking wordt georganiseerd en zich ontvouwt. Deze verschillen en *different voices* omvatten individuele en meer contextuele aspecten en hebben betrekking op menselijke en niet-menselijke actoren. Deze werden zichtbaar door de manier waarop individuen spraken, handelden en zich bewogen en door verschillende objecten zoals documenten of visuele artefacten. Samengevat heeft dit proefschrift een vollediger beeld gegeven van de vele zaken en entiteiten die van belang zijn voor, en een rol spelen in, interorganisationele collectieven - van alle *voices* die daarin te horen zijn. Eerder onderzoek richtte zich voornamelijk op het opsommen van de meer voor de hand liggende onderdelen van interorganisationele samenwerkingen (de individuele en organisatorische deelnemers, wellicht hun respectievelijke expertises en vakgebieden, en de doelstellingen en activiteiten van het samenwerkingsproject). Dit onderzoek heeft aangetoond hoe vele subtielere, diverse en gesitueerde objecten, entiteiten en *voices*, een sterke invloed hebben op de manier waarop samenwerking tot stand komt. We kunnen meer actoren horen spreken in interorganisationele collectieven dan alleen de teamleden of hun organisaties. Een hele vergadering, een heel ensemble, van diverse actoren bepaalt wat een interorganisationele samenwerking wordt.

Ten tweede is in Hoofdstuk VI nader ingegaan op het ventriloquiale analytische framework dat in hoofdstuk III is ontwikkeld. Specifiek zijn vragen over *agency* (letterlijk: daadkracht) en *relationality* (letterlijk: relationaliteit) besproken, evenals hoe het framework een veelbelovend instrument kan worden voor meerstemmige (*multivoiced*) en relationele analyses in de organisatiewetenschap. Daarmee is dit framework een van de eerste pogingen van het CCO-onderzoek om het eigen methodologische instrumentarium systematisch te ontwikkelen. Het heeft enkele van de onderliggende veronderstellingen, analytische stappen en methodologische subtiliteiten toegelicht en op schrift gesteld, waarmee rekening moet worden gehouden wanneer onderzoek wordt verricht vanuit een CCO-perspectief, in het bijzonder

met een ventriloquiale blik. Daarmee heeft het een belangrijke bijdrage geleverd aan het CCO-onderzoek.

Ten derde biedt dit hoofdstuk reflecties op de benaderingen en veronderstellingen die in dit proefschrift zijn gehanteerd, evenals op de beperkingen ervan. De bevindingen van dit onderzoek zijn stevig verankerd in specifieke situaties; ze bieden daarom geen universele waarheidsclaims (zoals soms wordt gedaan met cross-case vergelijkingen of vergelijkbare middelen om te veralgemeniseren). In plaats van dergelijke geabstraheerde inzichten, factoren of werkingsmechanismen, heeft dit onderzoek in de eerste plaats geprobeerd om rijke, gestructureerde en dynamische beschrijvingen en illustraties te geven van de meerstemmige organisatieprocessen en -praktijken van interorganisationele samenwerking. Nieuwe kennis is gegenereerd door het fenomeen van interorganisationele samenwerking te beschouwen als zich voortdurend ontvouwend in interactie tussen verschillende actoren.

Tenslotte zijn in Hoofdstuk VI enkele van de belangrijkste praktische implicaties samengevat die uit dit onderzoek konden worden afgeleid. Al zijn de analyses beperkt gebleven tot één specifiek interorganisationeel samenwerkingsinitiatief, er zijn belangrijke aanknopingspunten voor samenwerkingsprocessen in andere contexten waar grote diversiteit en verschillen aanwezig zijn. Dit geldt met name voor de nadruk die gelegd wordt op de noodzaak van een genuanceerd besef van de vele *differences* die een rol spelen en van de vele *voices* die kunnen worden gehoord als professionals in interorganisationele teams samenwerken.

Samengevat heeft dit proefschrift insider-verslagen, momentopnames, procesmatige schetsen en bottom-up theoretische inzichten opgeleverd over hoe *differences* in dialoog zijn in interorganisationele samenwerking en hoe verschillende *voices* converseren. Deze *differences* die van belang zijn en de *voices* die we horen in interorganisationele samenwerking, kunnen het werk en de organisatieprocessen van teams op productieve en co-oriënterende manieren vormgeven wanneer ze de samenwerking vooruithelpen of convergeren in gedeeld begrip. Ze kunnen echter ook op een nadelige en vervreemdende manier het werk en de organisatieprocessen van teams vormgeven, bijvoorbeeld wanneer ze wrijving veroorzaken tussen de leden of wanneer de samenwerkingsactiviteiten worden gedomineerd door slechts enkele leden. Cruciaal is dat samenwerkingsprocessen en -praktijken uiteindelijk tot stand komen en georganiseerd worden door de verbindingen of relaties die zich al dan niet vormen tussen de vele *voices*. Het gaat er dus niet alleen om of er op een bepaald moment verschillende *voices* aanwezig zijn, maar vooral hoe ze in de loop van de tijd met elkaar verbonden worden. Uiteindelijk blijken de performatieve effecten van *voices* op interorganisationele samenwerking voort te komen uit de relaties of samenstellingen die ze vormen en steeds opnieuw hervormen.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Kapitel I: Orientierungen

Unsere Organisationslandschaft ist zunehmend durch Kooperationen zwischen Organisationen gekennzeichnet. Ungleichartigkeit und Unterschiede sind die Haupttriebkräfte dieser Entwicklung: Es wird davon ausgegangen, dass ein größerer Pool an Fachwissen, Fähigkeiten, Ressourcen, Perspektiven usw. Innovation, Lernen und allgemeine Leistung fördert. Interorganisationale Teams sind reich an Unterschieden zwischen ihren Mitgliedern und Organisationen, was bedeutet, dass viele verschiedene Stimmen in ihnen zum Ausdruck kommen. In dieser Dissertation wurden zwei übergreifende Fragen gestellt: Erstens: Welche Unterschiede machen einen Unterschied - wessen Stimmen hören wir in der interorganisatorischen Zusammenarbeit? Zweitens: Wie formen und konstituieren diese Stimmen die Art und Weise, wie sich Arbeit entfaltet und Zusammenarbeit organisiert wird?

Kapitel I hat den Rahmen abgesteckt und breite "*Orientierungen*" gegeben. Zunächst wurden die besonderen Merkmale, Möglichkeiten und Komplikationen der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit erläutert, wie z. B. ungenaue Autoritätsstrukturen, ein inhärentes und schwankendes Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Kooperationsvorteilen und -schwierigkeiten sowie oft gravierende und folgenreiche Unterschiede zwischen Organisationen. Darüber hinaus wurden drei Konzeptualisierungen der Unterschiedlichkeit von Mitgliedern und Organisationen skizziert: als *Differences (*Verschiedenheiten*)*, *Voices* (Stimmen) und *Boundaries* (Grenzen). Diese Konzeptualisierungen wurden in den empirischen und methodologischen Kapiteln dieser Arbeit (Kapitel II bis V) aufgegriffen.

Zweitens wurden in Kapitel I die breiteren Forschungsannahmen (eines relationalen Ontologieansatzes) erläutert, die dieser Arbeit zugrunde lagen. Ausgehend von diesen Annahmen wurde der Entstehung und dem fortlaufenden Wandel der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit durch dynamische Verbindungen und performative Prozesse Vorrang vor ihrer Manifestation als feste Einheit oder solide Struktur eingeräumt. Die Annahme eines relationalen ontologischen Ansatzes ermöglichte es somit, die Praktiken und Prozesse der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit zu erforschen, wie diese sich in situierten Praktiken kontinuierlich entfalten. Dieser Ansatz brachte uns nah heran an das Phänomen, bevor weitere theoretische Erkenntnisse abstrahiert wurden.

Drittens wurden in Kapitel I die wichtigsten theoretischen Grundlagen dieser Dissertation erläutert, nämlich *Sensemaking*, *Communicative Constitution of Organization* (CCO) und *Ventriloquism* (wörtlich Bauchrednerei). Die *Sensemaking* Theorie verortet die Entstehung von Organisation und Organisationsprozessen (und damit auch von interorganisationaler Zusammenarbeit) in den kognitiv-diskursiven und sozialpsychologischen Prozessen, durch die Ereignissen kollektive Bedeutung verliehen wird, und eröffnet damit prozessuale, interpretative und

praxisbezogene Konzeptualisierungen und Erkenntnisse. CCO geht von einer ähnlich fließenden und dynamischen Konzeptualisierung aus; allerdings wird Organisation und Organisieren nicht als Sinnstiftung (*Sensemaking*), sondern im weiteren Sinne als Kommunikation (*Communication*) betrachtet. Mit einer weit gefassten Definition von Kommunikation, die sowohl menschliche als auch nicht-menschliche Akteure einschließt, argumentiert CCO, dass eine große Vielfalt von Akteuren durch Kommunikation Organisationsphänomene und Organisationsprozesse ausmacht. CCOs Begriff *Ventriloquism* veranschaulicht aufschlussreich, wie diese große Vielfalt von Akteuren an der Kommunikation und der Konstitution von Organisation und Organisieren teilnimmt. Im Wesentlichen vergleicht diese Analogie die Praxis, zusätzliche Stimmen (*Voices*) präsent zu machen, damit, wie Bauchredner die Stimmen ihrer Puppen verkörpern und ausdrücken. In Gesprächen und Handlungen können somit Firmen präsent gemacht werden, Regeln und Vorschriften können herangezogen werden, Objekte wie Grafiken oder ein Whiteboard können in den Vordergrund gerückt werden, Haltungen können die Art und den Ton von Reaktionen prägen, und sogar abstrakte Formen wie Gefühle, Ideen oder Werte können zum Ausdruck gebracht werden. In allem, was gesagt und getan wird, sind also verschiedene Stimmen (*voices*) zu erkennen. *Ventriloquism* erkennt all diese Dinge und Stimmen als aktive Teilnehmer der Kommunikation an, was gleichzeitig bedeutet, dass diese zur Konstitution von Organisationsphänomenen und Organisationsprozessen beitragen.

Abschließend wurde das empirische Forschungsumfeld dieser Dissertation ausführlich beschrieben. Der größte Teil dieser Dissertation basiert auf der Untersuchung von interorganisationalen Teams, die als Teil einer regionalen niederländischen Initiative zur interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit kollaborierten. Das gesammelte empirische Material besteht aus Beobachtungen und Videoaufzeichnungen von Teammeetings, Tiefeninterviews und Teamdokumenten.

Kapitel II: Wahrgenommene Unterschiede zwischen Mitgliedern in der interorganisatorischen Zusammenarbeit

Auf der Grundlage der interpretativen Tiefeninterviews und von Ideen aus der *Sensemaking* Theorie wurden in Kapitel II die *Differences* herausgearbeitet, die einen Unterschied in der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit ausmachen. Ebenfalls analysiert wurden die subjektiven und interpretativen Praktiken, durch welche diesen Unterschiedlichkeiten positive oder negative Bedeutung verliehen wurde. Es wurde die folgende Forschungsfrage behandelt: Welche Unterschiede nehmen die Mitglieder interorganisationaler Teams zu Beginn der Zusammenarbeit als bedeutsam wahr, und wie interpretieren sie diese als hilfreich oder hinderlich für ihre Zusammenarbeit?

Insgesamt haben die Ergebnisse von Kapitel II gezeigt, dass Teammitglieder bereits zu Beginn ihrer Zusammenarbeit eine Vielzahl von Unterschieden wahrnehmen. Zu den

bedeutenden individuellen Unterschieden gehörten berufsbezogene und nicht berufsbezogene Aspekte, die typischerweise unter die breitere Gruppe der "unsichtbaren" Attribute fallen (*invisible attributes*). So erwähnten Teammitglieder beispielsweise Unterschiedlichkeiten im beruflichen Hintergrund, im allgemeinen Verhalten oder in der Einstellung. Im Gegensatz dazu wurden oberflächliche oder "sofort sichtbare" Merkmale (*visible attributes*) wie Alter oder Geschlecht nur selten genannt und im Allgemeinen als für die Zusammenarbeit nicht von großer Bedeutung beschrieben. Darüber hinaus wurde in Kapitel II die Bedeutung von organisatorischen Unterschieden (z. B. organisatorische Produkte und Märkte oder Organisationskulturen) hervorgehoben, d. h. von Aspekten, die mit den Kontexten zusammenhängen, in denen Teammitglieder tätig sind. Es ist zwar bekannt, dass Organisationen in der Regel unterschiedliche Strukturen und Sprachen oder abweichende Prioritäten und Voraussetzungen haben, doch wurden diese Dimensionen in Studien über die Unterschiedlichkeiten in interorganisationalen Teams bisher nicht ausdrücklich berücksichtigt. Damit haben die Ergebnisse von Kapitel II ein vollständigeres Bild des breiten Spektrums von Unterschieden (*Differences*) gezeichnet, die für die interorganisationale Zusammenarbeit von Bedeutung sein können. Darüber hinaus haben sie ein nuancierteres Bild davon geliefert, wann und warum Unterschiede von den Mitgliedern interorganisationaler Teams wertgeschätzt werden oder nicht.

Kapitel III: Viele verschiedene Stimmen und wie man ihre Präsenz in Interaktionen erkennen kann

Wie die Interviewstudie in Kapitel II gezeigt hat, spielen vielfältige Unterschiede in der interorganisatorischen Zusammenarbeit eine Rolle. Aber wie können Unterschiede in situierten Gesprächen identifiziert werden? Wenn wir Unterschiede als *Voices* (Stimmen) konzeptualisieren, welche hören wir dann in interorganisationalen Kollektiven? In Kapitel III wurde ein analytisches Framework entwickelt, das dabei helfen soll, die vielfältigen *Voices* zu identifizieren, die an Interaktionen beteiligt sind. Es wurde damit in erster Linie ein methodisches Ziel verfolgt. Zu diesem Zweck wurde das Konzept von *Ventriloquism* (ein zentraler Gedanke der Perspektive ‚Communicative Constitution of Organization', wie bereits erläutert) in einen systematischeren analytischen Rahmen überführt. Die Frage, die in diesem Kapitel beantwortet wurde, lautete: Wie kann der Begriff und die Idee von *Ventriloquism* zu einem methodischen Rahmen für systematischere Analysen weiterentwickelt werden?

Der Kerngedanke des Begriffs *Ventriloquism* (wortwörtlich, Bauchrednerei) ist, dass Stimmen (*Voices*) jenseits unserer eigenen durch unser Sprechen sprechen können - ähnlich wie die Stimme einer Marionette durch das spricht, was eine Bauchrednerin in ihrer künstlerischen Darbietung sagt und tut. So wie eine Bauchrednerin die Stimme ihrer Puppe artikulieren kann, kann auch ein Organisationsmitglied die Stimme ihrer Organisation oder ihres Berufs

zum Ausdruck bringen. Kapitel III hat diese Idee zu einem analytischen Framework entwickelt, das dabei helfen soll, die verschiedenen *Voices*, die wir in (inter-)organisatorischen Interaktionen hören können, systematisch zu identifizieren. Dabei wurden zunächst die theoretischen Grundlagen von *Ventriloquism* erläutert; anschließend wurden die praktischen und technischen Aspekte herausgearbeitet. Das analytische Framework selbst wurde entwickelt, indem frühere ventriloquiale Analysen studiert wurden und über eigene Erfahrungen bei der Arbeit mit einem Fokusgruppendatensatz von visionären Gesprächen reflektiert wurde. Dieser Datensatz wurde auch zur Veranschaulichung der Anwendung des analytischen Frameworks verwendet. Insgesamt hat Kapitel III einen klaren Rahmen und eine reichhaltige begriffliche Terminologie für die Durchführung von ventriloquialen Analysen geboten.

Kapitel IV: Integrieren oder Lösen, oder wie eine kollaborative Strategie aus vielen Stimmen entsteht

In Kapitel IV wurde das in Kapitel III entwickelte analytische Framework verwendet, um die verschiedenen Stimmen (*voices*) zu identifizieren, die im Strategieformulierungsprozess eines interorganisationalen Teams zum Ausdruck kamen. Außerdem wurde untersucht, wie diese Stimmen den Mitgliedern halfen, die für die Gestaltung der Strategie erforderliche Autorität zu erlangen. Beide Prozesse sind wesentliche Aspekte der interorganisatorischen Zusammenarbeit: Wenn Mitglieder ihre gemeinsame Arbeit aufnehmen, müssen sie festlegen, woran genau sie arbeiten und wer dabei die größte Deutungshoheit hat. Die folgende Forschungsfrage wurde verfolgt: Wessen Stimmen hören wir in der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit, und wie beteiligen sie sich an der Mitgestaltung einer kollaborativen Strategie?

Im Wesentlichen haben die Ergebnisse von Kapitel IV veranschaulicht, wie die kollaborative Strategie des untersuchten Teams durch die Multiplikation, Kombination und Integration verschiedener *Voices* in den situierten Interaktionen der Teammitglieder gebildet wurde. Zu diesen *Voices* gehörten individuelle, organisatorische, Team- und andere Stimmen. Sie kamen durch die Art und Weise zum Ausdruck, wie die Teammitglieder sprachen und handelten. Zum Beispiel wechselten die Teammitglieder häufig vom Sprechen im Namen ihrer beruflichen Interessen oder ihrer Erfahrung zum Sprechen im Namen des Teams oder ihrer Organisationen, wobei sie möglicherweise sogar Dokumente zeigten, in denen die Stimmen und Ziele ihrer Organisationen zum Ausdruck kamen. Einige dieser *Voices* wurden gehört und in die Strategie und Arbeit des Teams integriert, während andere zum Schweigen gebracht und von der entstehenden Strategie abgekoppelt wurden.

Die Strategie des Teams bildete sich schließlich als eine dynamische "relationale Assemblage" integrierter oder abgelöster *Voices* heraus, was auch das ständige Werden der Strategie betonte: Kontinuierlich wurden *Voices* hinzugefügt oder abgezogen, was sich auf die Strategie

und Arbeit des Teams auswirkte. Die Ergebnisse von Kapitel IV haben damit die performativen Implikationen einfacher kommunikativer Praktiken für die Art und Weise veranschaulicht, wie sich die Kooperationsstrategie eines interorganisationalen Teams im Laufe der Zeit formt. Dies ist eine wichtige Erkenntnis, denn sie zeigt sehr detailliert, wie Teammitglieder in ihren situierten Gesprächen gestalten können, woran ihr Kollektiv arbeitet. In interorganisationalen Teammeetings wird viel geredet; dieses Kapitel hilft dabei, die performativen Implikationen dieses Redens für die Konstitution von Zielen und Strategien besser zu verstehen.

Kapitel V: Die Stimme und multimodalen Materialisierungen eines Artefakts, und wie diese Grenzen formen

Kapitel V hat ein überzeugendes Beispiel dafür geliefert, wie nicht-menschliche Akteure sich in den situierten Kooperationspraktiken von interorganisatorischen Kollektiven Gehör verschaffen. Anhand der Analyse von Videoaufzeichnungen von Sitzungen eines anderen interorganisationalen Teams und unter Verwendung des ventriloquialen analytischen Frameworks wurde in diesem Kapitel gezeigt, wie ein bestimmtes visuelles Artefakt (eine Roadmap) den Prozess der Zusammenarbeit beeinflusste durch die *Boundaries* (Grenzen), die es ausdrückte und entweder durchdrang oder aufrechterhielt. Das Artefakt fungierte als sogenanntes *Boundary Object*, das durch seine visuelle Präsenz (es wurde gezeigt), durch Referenzen in den Konversationen von Teammitgliedern (in Form von expliziten oder impliziten verbalen Hinweisen) und auch durch Körperbewegungen der Mitglieder (in Form einer wiederkehrenden Geste) in die Prozesse des Teams einbezogen wurde. Es half den Mitgliedern, ihre organisatorischen Abgrenzungen (*boundaries*) zu durchdringen (z. B. indem sie das Produkt ihrer Organisation auf der Grafik lokalisieren konnten) und eine thematische Abgrenzung um ihr Kollektiv herum aufzubauen (die darstellte, woran die Mitglieder gemeinsam arbeiteten).

Während das Artefakt anfangs vor allem durch visuelle Darstellungen präsent war, existierte es später hauptsächlich in den Konversationen und Körpern der Teammitglieder - das Artefakt und die Mitglieder wurden buchstäblich ineinander verwoben. Genau diese Ununterscheidbarkeit führte zu Komplikationen und Desorganisation, als neue Mitglieder dem Team beitraten: Diese konnten die Materialisierungen des Artefakts in den Gesprächen und Körperbewegungen der alten Mitglieder nicht nachvollziehen, weshalb eine *Knowledge Boundary* (Wissensabgrenzung) zwischen alten und neuen Mitgliedern entstand und das Team auseinanderfiel. Insgesamt haben die Ergebnisse von Kapitel V viel Aufmerksamkeit auf die performativen Wirkungen einfacher Objekte in der interorganisationalen Teamarbeit gelenkt - sie haben gezeigt, dass Objekte aufgrund ihrer enormen Fähigkeit, kollaborative Praktiken sowohl zu unterstützen als auch zu behindern, ernst genommen werden müssen. Wichtig ist, dass die Ergebnisse auch die Präsenzen solcher Objekte verkompliziert haben

und zeigten, dass sie nicht nur als separate Dinge existieren, sondern ebenfalls in der Sprache und in Körpern materialisieren können. Es bleibt zu hoffen, dass die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse eine größere Sensibilität für die wichtige Rolle von Objekten in Kooperations- und Organisationsprozessen sowie für ihre vielfältigen und multimodalen Erscheinungsformen fördern können.

Kapitel VI: Beiträge, Reflektionen und Gespräche

In Kapitel VI, dem Schlusskapitel dieser Dissertation, wurde auf die Kapitel II bis V zurückgeblickt. Es wurden die übergreifenden Schlussfolgerungen und Beiträge dieser Arbeit erörtert, vorläufige Agenden für künftige Forschungsbemühungen skizziert, die Forschungsansätze reflektiert und einige wichtige praktische Implikationen dargelegt.

Zunächst wurden die Beiträge dieser Arbeit zur Forschung über interorganisationale Zusammenarbeit erläutert. Frühere Arbeiten verglichen interorganisationale Kollektive mit vielstimmigen Arenen (*multivoiced arenas*); diese Dissertation hat diese Analogie durch konkrete Ergebnisse aus der empirischen Forschung konkretisiert. Sie hat die große Bandbreite an *Differences* oder unterschiedlichen *Voices*, die in den Prozessen und Praktiken der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit zu hören sind, offengelegt und ihre performativen Auswirkungen auf die Organisation und den Ablauf der Zusammenarbeit erläutert. Diese *Differences* oder *Voices* umfassten individuelle und eher kontextuelle Aspekte und bezogen sich auf menschliche und nicht-menschliche Akteure. Sie zeigten sich in der Art und Weise, wie Teammitglieder sprachen, handelten und sich bewegten, und in verschiedenen Objekten wie Dokumenten oder visuellen Artefakten. Insgesamt lieferte diese Dissertation ein umfassenderes Bild der vielen Dinge und Akteure, die in interorganisatorischen Kollektiven eine Rolle spielen und handeln – von all die *Voices*, die in ihnen zu hören sind. Bisherige Arbeiten konzentrierten sich vor allem auf die Auflistung der offensichtlichen Bestandteile interorganisationaler Zusammenarbeit (die einzelnen Mitglieder und deren Organisationen, eventuell ihre jeweiligen Fachkenntnisse und Fachgebiete sowie die Ziele und Aktivitäten des Kooperationsprojekts); diese Arbeit hat gezeigt, dass viele zusätzliche subtile, diverse und situierte Dinge, Akteure und *Voices* einen starken Einfluss darauf haben, wie sich interorganisationale Zusammenarbeit entwickelt. In interorganisatorischen Kollektiven hören wir mehr Akteure sprechen als nur die Teammitglieder oder ihre Organisationen. Ein Plenum oder Ensemble verschiedener Akteure konfiguriert, was aus einer interorganisatorischen Zusammenarbeit wird.

Zweitens wurde in Kapitel VI das in Kapitel III entwickelte analytische Framework zu *Ventriloquism* genauer betrachtet. Insbesondere wurden Fragen von *Agency* (wörtlich Handlungskraft) und *Relationality* (wörtlich Relationalität) erörtert, und das Framework als vielversprechendes Instrument für multivoiced (mehrstimmige) und relationale Analysen in der Organisationsforschung vorgeschlagen. Das analytische Framework stellt einen der

ersten Versuche der CCO Theorie dar, sich explizit mit methodologischen Fragen zu befassen. Es hat einige der zugrundeliegenden Annahmen, analytischen Schritte und methodischen Feinheiten expliziert und schriftlich festgehalten, die bei der Forschung aus einer CCO Perspektive, insbesondere mit einer ventriloquialen Linse, zu berücksichtigen sind. Damit hat es einen wichtigen Beitrag zur CCO Forschung geleistet.

Drittens wurden Reflektionen zu dem Ansatz und den Annahmen vorgenommen, die dieser Dissertation zugrunde lagen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Arbeit sind fest in spezifischen Situationen verankert; sie bieten daher keine universellen Wahrheitsansprüche, die auf fallübergreifenden Vergleichen oder ähnlichen Mitteln der Verallgemeinerung basieren. Anstatt jedoch solche abstrakten Erkenntnisse oder Wirkmechanismen zu liefern, verfolgte diese Arbeit in erster Linie das Ziel, reichhaltige und dynamische Beschreibungen und Illustrationen der vielstimmigen Organisationsprozesse und Praktiken von interorganisationaler Zusammenarbeit zu liefern. Durch die Betrachtung von interorganisationaler Zusammenarbeit als ein Phänomen, das in den Interaktionen von verschiedenen Akteuren ständig (neu) inszeniert wird, wurde neues Wissen generiert.

Schließlich wurden in Kapitel VI einige der wichtigsten praktischen Implikationen zusammengefasst, die sich aus dieser Arbeit haben ableiten lassen. Obwohl sich die Analysen auf ein spezifisches Setting beschränkten, konnten wichtige Erkenntnisse für Kooperationsprozesse in Kontexten mit vielen Unterschiedlichkeiten und viel Diversität im weiteren Sinne gewonnen werden - vor allem durch die Betonung der Notwendigkeit eines nuancierten Bewusstseins für die vielen *Differences*, die eine Rolle spielen, und die vielen *Voices*, die gehört werden können, wenn Fachleute über ihre Organisationsgrenzen hinweg kollaborieren.

Alles in allem hat diese Dissertation subjektive Insiderberichte, Momentaufnahmen, prozessuale Skizzen und theoretische Bottom-up-Einsichten darüber geliefert, wie *Differences* in interorganisationalen Kollektiven im Dialog sind - wie verschiedene *Voices* in der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit miteinander sprechen. Die *Differences*, auf die es ankommt, und die *Voices*, die wir in der interorganisationalen Zusammenarbeit hören, können die Arbeit und die Organisationsprozesse von Teams auf produktive und koorientierende Weise prägen, wenn sie die Zusammenarbeit vorantreiben oder zu gemeinsamen Erkenntnissen konvergieren. Sie können die Arbeit und die Organisationsprozesse von Teams aber auch auf negative und entfremdende Weise beeinflussen, wenn sie zu Reibungen zwischen den Mitgliedern führen oder die Aktivitäten der Zusammenarbeit auf nur einen Teil der Mitglieder beschränken. Entscheidend ist, dass die Prozesse und Praktiken der Zusammenarbeit letztendlich durch die Verbindungen, die zwischen den vielen *Voices* entstehen (oder auch nicht), bestimmt werden.

Vita

Ellen Nathues (1992) obtained a Bachelor's degree *Cum Laude* (BBA) in International Business and Management Studies in 2015 and a Master's degree *Cum Laude* (MSc) in Communication Studies in 2018. Between 2015 and 2018, she also worked as Marketing Manager EMEA for the European headquarters of a US-American corporation. She started her PhD at University of Twente in February 2018. As of May 2022, Ellen will join Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany) as a postdoctoral researcher, where she will continue her research. She will also continue her research at University of Twente as part of the NWO-funded project CLIC-IT.