

Space and process  
The organizational importance of what we leave behind

A dissertation presented by  
Fabio James Petani

Supervised by  
Prof. Jeanne Mengis

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## **BOARD**

Supervisor:

Prof. Jeanne Mengis (Università della Svizzera italiana)

Reviewers:

Prof. Laurent Thévenot (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris)

Prof. Chris Steyaert (University of St.Gallen)

Officially submitted to the Ph.D. committee of the Faculty of Communication Sciences,  
Università della Svizzera italiana in July 2016.

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## I. ABSTRACT

Organizational research recently advocated an attention to space (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004), examining how space both produces and is produced by complex relationships of materiality, identity and power (Dale & Burrell, 2008). This literature widely turned to the founding book *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre (1991/1974) to show how organizational practices resist (Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011), or are enchanted by (Hancock & Spicer, 2011) particular corporate architectures. Research on the role of spatial legacies (De Vaujany & Vaast, 2013), showed how corporate spaces of the past are differently remembered over time to signify the solidity of evolving intentions (Decker, 2014). These studies well capture how practices transform previously planned and already existing spaces, charging them with different meanings *after* construction. Less we know about how space is produced *before* and *during* the phases of organizational planning and construction. Tracing sacrificed planned spaces and missed compromises, I inquire into *what is left behind* in the discursive and material testing processes that excluded alternative possibilities.

A first part of this dissertation focuses on the role of history and remembering in space planning practices. I empirically analyse the narratives surrounding the planning of an important culture centre. The introduction of the concept of lost space specifies how urban planning organizes sociomaterial and spatiotemporal narratives of loss to articulate the need to regain certain spaces (and not others) and design a continuity with a selected past that should not be left behind. Lost space allows planners to narratively “remember the future”. This section contributes a processual interpretation of the interplay between Lefebvre’s (1991/1974) three moments of conceived, perceived and lived space, through a processual focus on *conceiving* (i.e. planning). By reviewing Lefebvre’s work on everyday temporality (2004/1992, 2014a) and history (1970, 1975), I balance an organizational analysis of space with a sensitivity towards time and remembering.

A second part of this dissertation engages in a theoretical discussion and empirical illustration of the representational problem of space and time, which pervades organizational literature and practices. I review longstanding debates on the spatialization of time (Bergson, 2001/1889) and on the principle of simple location, calling for a more space-balanced approach to phenomena in process organization studies. The attention process studies devote to temporality (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014; Langley & Tsoukas, 2010, 2016) risks not accounting adequately for space. I suggest space as a processual dimension inseparable from time, and while calling for spatiotemporal representations of space’s plural simultaneity of durations (Massey, 2005), I warn on the need to address the performativity of conflicting organizational representations of space. Space-time integrated representations can account for the complex web of multiple *lived* organizational dimensions, and process organizational analysis is well positioned to analyze the performativity of all spatial representations. This section addresses different assumptions of time and space by illustrating, through empirical examples, how opposed (dynamic or static) representations of space performed change in construction management practices.

The third paper of this dissertation addresses the topic of how values pragmatically justify spaces under construction. Coordination practices and conventions in construction management involve the skillful trade-off process of testing and compromising, with a retrospective reasoning on the sacrifices incurred to grasp how costs could have been (and could still be) avoided. By analysing the composition of values through a new methodology that traces in various data sources the abstract *and* pragmatic construct of *what could have been*, the study contributes a processual interpretation of the economies of worth (EW) framework (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). Challenging the equilibrium assumptions of sacrifice underlying the value-based action framings of the EW, the core organizational and managerial *sacrifice of compromising* extends the model’s horizon of critique and uncertainty. I review the growing organizational literature on EW compromises. The analyzed interplay of tests and compromises in everyday building site controversies shows how coordination conventions act together and relationally over time, across different situations, shaping the actors’ critical awareness of the possibilities unduly left behind.

**Keywords:** space, time, process, representation, coordination, economies of worth, compromise



To Manuela and Emiliana Gillian





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## II. PRELUDE

This thesis is about what gets left behind. The word “behind” works both as a spatial and as a temporal connector (e.g. “behind a wall” and “with the wall demolition behind us...”). It can also formulate a negative evaluation about a situation (e.g. “we are falling behind in the competitive world”). By what gets left behind I mean *both what was once present materially but now lies in the past, and what could have taken place, but never materialized or happened*. Although the topic of this thesis might appear to involve space above and before all else, the papers collected herein, taken all together, articulate a methodological strategy for capturing empirically a selection of the alternative possibilities of what happens, in order to advance a processual analysis of organizational practices observed over time in a case of urban planning and construction management. I suggest that what is left behind can help communication-sensitive conceptualizations of space as process. Some examples help to illustrate the two categories of ‘what is left behind’ defined above in italics. For the first instance, think of a published book, whose copies are stocked in good order until they get pulped, so recalled from circulation and materially eliminated. The possibility of selling instead of pulping the copies is subject to a simple cost/benefit test or evaluation: the cost of pulping is at a given moment in time found more convenient than the cost of stocking and distributing the copies, in relation to the better sale prospects of other books replacing the pulped one in the publisher’s distribution chain that has to make space for new products. This category of ‘left behind’, enlarged to the urban scale, is comparable to the opportunity cost considered when deciding whether to restore an existing building or to demolish and replace it with a new construction. It begins to be clear that what we historically leave behind (or preserve) says a lot about what we value. For the second category of left behind, which bears directly on the final product of this dissertation, think of the parts of a text you wrote for a paper that a reviewer, for better or worse, convinced (or rather urged) you to cut out. At some stage they were there, then they got consumed and rejected (cancelled, absented, disposed of, sacrificed, discarded, excluded... You get the idea). At the end of the revision process, they will not appear in the final draft. They clearly represent the traceable alternatives of what the paper could have been, or out of what alternatives it processually emerged. Some of the excluded text may well remain forever inconsequential; but some of the ideas contained therein, dear to you, the author, may instead form the basis for a future paper that regains your lost intellectual effort. While rewriting this introductory text for the third time, I remember parts of previous versions that are no longer present and I am tempted to recycle them. This reinforces in me the conviction about the organizational importance of selectively accounting for what is left behind, as a particular kind of cost or sacrifice made in many production processes, and surviving the moment of its exclusion. This second category of left behind, at the level of urban planning and management, covers the many plans that never took off – a notable example of which

is the Aramis transport project in Latour's homonymous non-fiction novel (1996)<sup>1</sup> – or the parts of approved plans that got ruled out during their material implementation.

The organizational process through which something is left behind often results from a complex dynamic of compromising, justifying, criticizing and demonstrating how the particular situation at hand is managed according to criteria of general validity, or responding to a higher-order common good that prevails over the particular interests of the situation. These general evaluation criteria conflict across actors and over time. In our briefly mentioned examples, the power asymmetries involved are quite evident: authors generally have to subdue to their publishers' will to pulp the unsold copies of their books, and the authors of papers have little choice but to comply with the advice received from reviewers and editors, if they want to see their(?) thoughts in print... This thesis addresses the topic of leaving behind in the managerial and organizational processes related to the planning and construction of a great public cultural center.

Why should we care about 'what is left behind' in studying organizations?

Many organizational processes determine performatively if something is in (new products and buildings, or the preservation of old ones), or out (never produced and built products and facilities, and recalled or demolished ones). These organizational dynamics, quite literally, shape the world we live in, and we should care for how organizations assess the paths available to them. I raise here for inquiry the less accounted for role played by some of the 'left behinds' in these organizational production and disposal processes. I claim this role can help organizational analysis to describe, explain and understand how events historically unfold out of many possibilities, providing rich ethnographic insights on how uncertainty is discursively and pragmatically managed over time by retaining or reinterpreting a strategic selection of 'left behinds'.

However much one wishes to see the world in a state of continuous flux (and this thesis embraces to a great extent such a radical process worldview), some moments appear more decisive than others, or at least are experienced as such by the actors involved, who orient themselves to these instructive events. If in doubt about this, ask the authors of pulped books or rejected papers, and the architects who designed buildings that were never built or were later demolished ...

My research effort concerned itself with such instances of exclusion, focusing on what they meant over time in space planning and representation of change, and dwelling on what mechanisms of compromise, justification and critique were materially and discursively involved over time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Aramis, or the Love of Technology* is a novel published by Bruno Latour (1996/1993). Under the form of a mystery novel, it describes the failed transport project of the experimental "personal rapid transit" system, which was developed in Paris between 1969 and 1987 under the acronym of Aramis (*Agence en Rames Automatisées de Modules Indépendants dans les Stations* – English translation: Automated trains of independent modules in stations). In this Bildungsroman/detective story, the socio-technological initiation of an engineer is illustrated and the murder of the Aramis system ruled out, demonstrating how the project's failure depended on the actors' inability to sustain it across changing situations.

To be in or out visually suggests an evaluative judgment with a clear metaphorical understanding of space as a container. The double *fil rouge* of my research is space and process: space partly represented an empirical means to capture the organizational process of leaving behind in urban planning and construction management; partly, it constituted a “theoretical left behind” in its own right, since I found space undertheorized in much organizational research, and most notably in time-driven process organization theories. I will make the case that remembering some historical spaces and times often implies the strategic, purposeful exclusion and forgetting of alternative stories. I will argue that the organizational process of representing and conceiving space and changing existing plans involves alternative possibilities, in which the integration and appreciation versus the exclusion of simultaneous temporalities provides a differential of performativity, achieving some things, *but not others*. An ethnographic attention for the real time and historical unfolding of space planning and construction directed me towards the alternative organizational possibilities encountered and rejected along the way. Single situations, in which space could have taken different directions (but did not), suggested that achieved and unachieved designs stratify over time with many hidden organizational costs, which seemed “sunk” also in materially absent spaces, an accounting of which appeared timely and fruitful. I considered exclusion an interesting dynamic to reconstruct over time how actors ‘did’ space, and how space ‘did’ actors as well, in an entangled sociomaterial production and reproduction of organizational testing conventions that clashed for many reasons (e.g. conflicting objectives, various ways of representing space and time, coordination problems due to a misalignment of values, etc.). The different priorities in evaluating space and time when planning and constructing a public cultural centre appear self-evident to anyone, who simply approaches this collective activity by trying to appreciate the agendas of many stakeholders (e.g. the city as the public client, the constructor as private general contractor). How these actors converged and coordinated around an evolving target, as emerging needs urged many adjustments, radical changes and important sacrifices to the original plans, appeared to me as an interesting process of exclusion, whereby not all the candidate possibilities for certain spatial plans could be retained, and therefore many potential spaces were “burned” or consumed during space production. Viewing space in a process of becoming implied accounting for its contested dynamics. I tried to study space, as Barad says, not “as a static relationality but as a doing – the enactment of boundaries – that always entails *constitutive exclusions*” (Barad, 2003: 803, emphasis added). Scott Fitzgerald (1965/1936) once suggested that the test of intelligence is the ability to keep in mind two opposing ideas simultaneously, while retaining the capacity to function. I set myself the challenge of considering space as a compromise between a static, taken for granted, discrete, a-temporal, representational and divisible material quantity, and a qualitative, unremittingly becoming social dimension, designing many trajectories and stories over a multiplicity of

simultaneous durations (Massey, 2005). My empirical findings, in dialogue with the theories I drew upon to question space and the organizational literature dealing with it, led me to the idea that space is an interesting socio-material plurality of durations, which both undeniably exercises powerful functions of containing and control, but also questions, criticizes and transforms space's contents, boundaries, and meanings.

In my case study, the construction of an important public cultural center, I intend to present spaces as “dynamic (re)configurings of the world, specific agential practices/intra-actions/performances through which specific exclusionary boundaries are enacted” (Barad, 2003: 816). The planning and construction of a complex building, designed for activities with many complex technical requirements (e.g. a museum with its strict temperature and humidity standards; a theatre/concert hall, with its essential acoustic characteristics), interestingly unfolded with many of the original plans being dropped along the way.

What urged me to go in search for some of these ‘left behinds’ was the realization that some of these spaces did not die for good. They were remembered, they came back from the past as organizational ghosts or lessons learnt from unsolved conflicts that still produced peculiar “mnemonic transaction costs” in the negotiation of other spaces. Under certain conditions, these spaces were intentionally organized and managed to justify compensating schemes that could make up for the sunk loss. In relation to the urban planning process, analyzing these patterns is relevant to better understand how cities organize their investments and development, what administrative tools they use to implement their plans and what strategic alternatives are dropped along the way. This dissertation engages with the organizational dynamics briefly sketched above. The role of communication appears clearly as an underlying thread to engage with a number of many different theoretical puzzles. I should clarify that the organizational communication I studied, in its many talked, written and visual representations, allowed me to get a very specific understanding of how actors left behind many of the options available to them. This included communication observed at the phase of planning space, and at the phase of constructing an already planned space, which did not stabilize in definitive ways even after it materialized in brick and mortar. Communication constitutes organization (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009) also by leaving behind, by omitting or recuperating plans and stories over time. As part of a methodological strategy, I became attentive to what actors said “could have happened differently”, and also, perhaps more counter-intuitively, to what the actors “could have said differently”. Organizational communication interestingly works by aligning, assessing and reshaping alternative stories and histories of the past. It seemed natural for organizational analysis of these communication dynamics to proceed via a symmetric exercise of alternative explanations. This was possible because of the ethnographical orientation of this work. By spending many hours with a lot of actors of urban planning and construction management,



I was exposed, over the course of two and half years, to an organizational world progressively less alien and obscure, where also silences became eloquent and significant. I observed everyday practices and official decision moments. I read the documents actors suggested. I took notes of what informants told me, and of how they communicated amongst themselves. I looked closely at what working and official documents practitioners used to coordinate and evaluate the space they were building. All this close involvement, learning the organizational and professional lingo, allowed me to get a good understanding not only of the way, in which events unfolded, but also of the contested turns that events were prevented from taking. To the extreme of getting a sense of how actors discussed about decisive moments, but also about how they could have discussed them, but purposefully chose not to.

Communication and space are in this thesis both objects of study and means to understand organizational phenomena, with a particular sensitivity to understand how space develops over time. A process-based stance means understanding what certain phenomena are, by explaining how they become. To this end, I claim that focusing on the exclusion of alternative possibilities is a fruitful path for organizational analysis. What is left behind should not pre-emptively be misunderstood as a theoretical entity signaling a negative organizational dynamic, or a sacrifice necessarily representing the waste of better possibilities, and therefore a target for critique. A deterministic, judgmental attitude is definitely not the intention of this work. On the contrary, I wondered why alternative possibilities and organizational representations and narratives of space were left behind, interested in the critical and self-critical awareness that actors showed about how space (and the organizational history of its production) could have unfolded differently. Of course, organizational actors were called to purposefully renounce to certain options in favor of others, and their organizational practices unavoidably enacted the exclusion of possibilities over which they later pondered, individually or collectively, reflecting on what had gone wrong, why, and voicing such thoughts in organizational communication. This was not a void intellectual exercise, showing remorse in speculating about how things could have gone differently. Such communication practices had the pragmatic aim of sharing, or putting in common, processual aspects of organizing that could fix similar occurrences (or non-occurrences) in the future. This dissertation addresses such communicative sensemaking process as a key constitutive aspect of organizational and managerial practices. To reject, to prevent from happening, to rule out a distinct possibility, at the origin of which are years of work of other people, is a delicate value judgment. It needs strong justification, and often requires to compromise, to give and take, to reject, yet preserve coordination sustainability, managing long term effects of rejection beyond the single situation being tested.

### III. INTRODUCTION

Karl Weick famously stated (1979: 133): “How can I know what I think till I see what I say?”<sup>2</sup> This famous question has often been used by process organization scholars to indicate the temporal dynamic of retrospective sensemaking. Organization scholars, and particularly organizational communication scholars (McPhee & Zaug, 2009: 23), found great inspiration in a view on organizing that resulted from processes of enactment, selection and retention in communication patterns. However, if sensemaking as enactment speaks music to a process ear (Weick, 1977, 1995), retention has been less exploited, perhaps because the term echoes a substance ontology, of *things* retained.

I suggest that the opposite of retention, that is rejection, may help process organizational scholars in their theorizing about organizing. Retention and rejection are not clear-cut, binary and mutually exclusive processes. They unfold over time, through partial exclusions and re-introductions of what is temporarily being selected and retained as valuable, or rejected as worthless, with elements passing from one category to the next, and several grades of worthiness. However, decisive judgments enact some agential cuts (Barad, 2003) that are not simply interchangeable with one another, but bear a certain irreversibility. That is to say, they do not cancel each other out. The acceptance of a paper for publication in a journal does not cancel out a previous rejection, but the two moments are interestingly related. They both constitute its production process and help to explain its becoming. It is the communication processes between authors and reviewers, or the back-stories of papers, that help to explain how the production and evolution of thoughts and knowledge proceeds via a certain ecology, or by the elimination of reflections deemed not core. Moreover, an object, idea or actor can be evaluated worthy or worthless at different points in time and these moments stratify historically: what is left behind, and how it is kept so, or recuperated, say a great deal about the nature of organizing and managing. The process represents a form of uncertainty reduction based on retaining only some of many available possibilities, on the basis of values and codified conventions employed to pass judgment over often critical situations.

The following question captures the essence of my doctoral efforts and the key methodological orientation for the empirical analysis offered in my ethnographical case study:

“How can I know what I retain and value until I see what I leave behind?”

To capture what is organizationally left behind, by which I mean rejected in a number of ways that this thesis will clarify in great detail, is important to explore what is selected as valuable (and

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<sup>2</sup> The expression, cited by Weick (1979), comes from Wallas (1926: 126).

retained as such, however temporarily). I specifically directed the above mentioned question to a process-based, organizational understanding of how multiple actors planned and constructed space in the case of a public architectural project for a new, multipurpose culture centre (a facility with spaces such as an art museum, theatre/concert hall, a coffee shop, a bookshop, etc.).

The aim of understanding the retention/rejection dialectic in the organizational production of space combines two underlying topics: space and process.

Space and process are the two recurring threads that weave together the more specific interests of this work. These include: the communication processes of remembering historical places and spaces of different times in urban planning; the process of representing spatial changes with or without accounting for the multiple durations of space in construction management; finally, the tracing over time of the processual coordination sacrifices inherent in investing in alternative forms of test and compromise.

Organizational coordination in this dissertation will be considered as a public, moral and political interplay of multiple conflicting values and evaluation conventions. The study of spatial presences and absences, evolving over time in the processes observed in urban planning and construction management develop a processual view of action coordination as depending on the moral judgment on action, foregrounding coordination as a matter of aligning values more than activities.

Looking at the retention/rejection tension is organizationally relevant because this is not a pacific process: what is left behind inevitably maps the prevailing values and their champions (the winners), measured against, or at the expense of competing stances (the losers). What is left behind fuels the critique of the actors, who feel diminished or frustrated by the process of being left behind.

It is important to reiterate that retaining and rejecting are not always binary, mutually exclusive processes: things and people can also be retained *and* rejected *to a certain degree*. An exemplary situation where this seems to be the case is compromise: opposed parties agree to forego certain particular benefits in view of the higher goal of avoiding conflict and lose-lose confrontations.

In this cumulative dissertation, rejection, retention and compromise permeate the complex organizational venture of planning and constructing a great publicly funded center for the arts in a medium sized Swiss city. The organizational communication through which certain spaces were evaluated and represented, arguing for their retention, rejection or change during urban planning or construction management practices, revealed an interesting latent presence of absence (Callon & Law, 2004). It has been argued that all architecture is marked by melancholy (Benjamin, 2000): “[E]ach building is what it is, but simultaneously is ‘that which it is not’. The latter absence creates a feeling in all those at the site of ‘a loss’, a negation of what might have been” (Dale & Burrell,

2008: 291, emphasis added). I am now able to better reflect on this counterintuitive tension between absence and presence, rejection and inclusion, underlying the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974). These puzzling dynamics however first appeared to me as empirical mysteries, in need of theoretical construction and development (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007).

My focus on the processual unit of analysis of the ‘left behind’ emerged from the toils and joys of ethnography, and from the dialogue between collected data and the theories I turned to for data analysis and interpretation. In what follows, I offer a glimpse on the former via a brief revealing anecdote, and then move to the latter in a structured overview of the theoretical lenses adopted in the three papers of this dissertation, organized along their complementary contributions.

My ethnographic “ah-ha moment” came during a participant observation at the city’s general archive: one day, together with the architect, who worked for the council as project manager for the new cultural center, I was archiving all the plans that had lost the international design contest, and all the unsuccessful tenders answering the call for general contractors. Confronted with a surreal, Borgesian scenario of all the organizational untaken paths, I could see and touch with hand the paperwork trace of an impressive volume of work, which was largely unaccounted for. A Beatles-inspired stanza asked: All the lonely plans/Where do they all come from?/All the lonely plans/ Where do they all belong? The unachieved plans reminded me of Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, particularly of the “grey stone metropolis of Fedora”, at whose center “stands a metal building with a crystal globe in every room. Looking into each globe, you see a blue city, the model of a different Fedora. These are the forms the city could have taken if, for one reason or another, it had not become what we see today” (Calvino, 1974/1972: 32). The archive resembled in many ways the Fedora’s metal building. All the different plans I was archiving could have translated into a different city. The project manager recalled the criteria used to exclude candidates and, it turned out, one excluded applicant had filed an appeal, resisting exclusion and importantly impacting on the project with many months of delay and costs of many kinds. All together, this suggested to me a selective inquiry into the ‘left behinds’ that made a difference. From that moment onwards, the empirical focus on contractual amendments, including rejected contractual amendments, extended to all the traceable ‘surviving left behinds’, like unrealized change proposals that kept being referred to in organizational discourse, alternative organizational designs and contractual forms, rejected policies, strategies, spatial configurations, remembered historical spaces etc. This focus drove my data collection, and my analysis inquired into the role that some of these left behind forms and spaces played in explaining the emerged ones, and the organization of their emergence.

The themes and theories of this dissertation allow different insights into many aspects of what I labeled ‘left behind’, understood as the outcome of rejection, and the by-product of retention, as

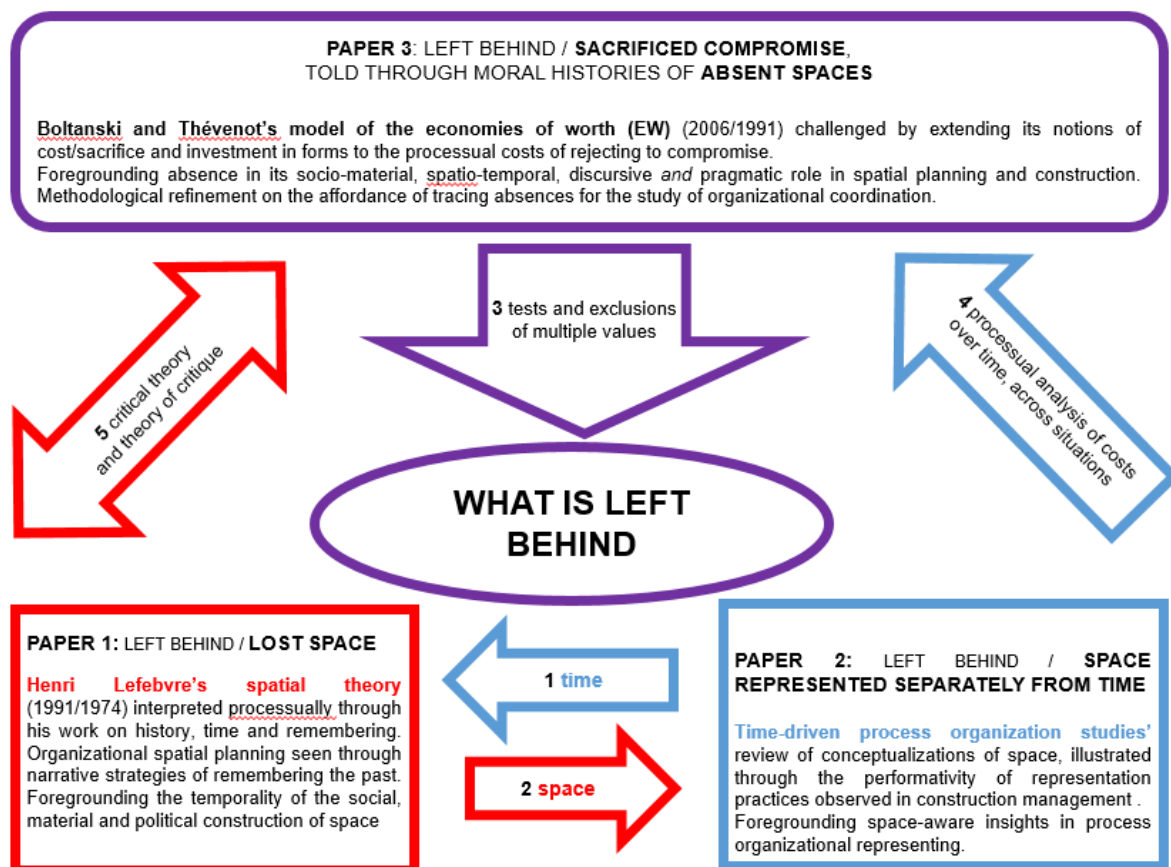
retaining often implies setting aside alternative candidates for retention. In studying the organizational planning and construction of a public architectural project for the arts, the papers collected herein approach three theoretically relevant themes in organization studies:

- 1) Organizational space (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Dale & Burrell, 2008), as a historically produced (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), evolving phenomenon of socio-materiality (Dale, 2005). A review of the organizational literature inspired by Henri Lefebvre, and an integration of Lefebvre's work on time and history (Lefebvre, 1970, 1975, 2004/1992, 2014a) develops a processual understanding of his spatial theory and of space in general, in conjunction with temporality, illustrated by the remembering of space in spatial planning (see PAPER 1);
- 2) Process in temporality-driven organization studies (Chia, 2002; Helin, Hernes, Hjorth, & Holt, 2014; Hernes, 2014; Langley, 1999; Langley & Tsoukas, 2010, 2016; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), challenges a temporal understanding of space (Hernes, 2004; Hernes, Bakken & Olsen, 2006), addressing problems of representation in management studies (Tsoukas, 1998). Building on spatiotemporal integrated approaches (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Lorino, Tricard, & Clot, 2011), alternative process-friendly conceptualizations of space review classic insights from authors on temporality (Bergson), pragmatist philosophers (James, Whitehead) and spatial theorists (Lefebvre, Massey). Empirical illustrations of the performativity of different practical representations of space and time as observed in planning and construction management (see PAPER 2);
- 3) The economies of worth (EW) pragmatic sociology (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), is approached to understand the moral justification and critique involved in testing and maintaining legitimacy of certain values (Jagd, 2011; Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011) as a key process of organizational coordination (Follett, 1926, 1927, 1932; Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012; Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). The justification of spatial change and rejection shows how action coordination in organizations is often a political matter of coordinating the moral judgment on action, which needs to meet conventional requirements of legitimacy in contexts subject to public scrutiny. Sacrifices criticized as outcomes avoidable through alternative forms of test and compromise are explored over time, within and across specific coordination situations of conflict that involve a misalignment of values. From a review of the organizational research on compromises as theorized by the EW, the less developed notions of sacrifice and investment in form (Thévenot, 1984) frame 'left behind compromises' and absent spaces as constituting an interesting intersituational (i.e. processual) sacrifice (see PAPER 3).

The theories listed above do not exhaust the literature engaged with for my interest in rejection/retention and space. My thoughts about production, consumption and disposal owe much to the literature on the sociology of consumption (Hetherington, 2004; Thompsen, 1979), and to some particular translations of it in organization studies (Engeström & Blackler, 2005). The three approaches above however provide the key frameworks I used to elaborate on space and process.

The theme of space historically ignited many stimulating reflections in the social sciences, so I integrated my readings of Henri Lefebvre with insights from Foucault, De Certeau, Sloterdijk, Harvey, Latour, Soja, Massey, Ingold, Thrift, Cresswell, Lévy, Lussault and Gieryn, just to cite some of the most fascinating interdisciplinary diversions encountered during my journey.

Theories under points 1), 2) and 3) hardly constitute a standard toolkit for organizational scholars, so in introducing and positioning my contributions, a few words are required on the affordance and compatibility of the approaches, on their complementarity in relation to my topic, and on how I related together these disparate bodies of literature (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Graphical abstract of the theoretical dialogue developed by the papers of this thesis.**

As Figure 1 graphically summarizes, I present the first two papers as the foundations of the theoretical construction of ‘what is left behind’. This thesis extensively advocates a balanced spatiotemporal analysis of organizational phenomena, arguing that a theoretical interest in space runs the risk of ignoring time and process and viceversa. Many representational, theoretical and practical aspects of how space and time perform in organizations suggest that we can better grasp and conceptualize the two dimensions in light of their mutual relationship. I attempt to explain this relation via the exclusions that the organizational becoming of space and time produces: I label as left behind a subset of such exclusions. I carry out such an effort in the first two papers.

Paper 3 appears in Figure 1 on top of these foundations, as a roof to the theoretical construction of ‘what is left behind’ for two reasons. First, because the economies of worth (EW) provide a model of action coordination organized around six worlds of justification and critique that have alternative and mutually exclusive time and space conceptions. Second, the EW allow a refined analysis of how conflicting evaluation principles map conventionally to opposed worldviews, in which space, time, actors and objects are qualified differently in contested situations that hinder action coordination; exposure to critique and justification are based in the EW on shared notions of test, investment and sacrifice. The latter help to elaborate the notion of what is left behind in terms of exclusive tests, whereby prioritizing one EW and valued test over another (e.g. a price-driven market economy of worth over an efficiency-driven industrial economy of worth), excludes or leaves behind other available evaluation principles, and the possibility of integrating more than one value in forms of compromise. Tests produce therefore lessons about prevailing values, and often create sunk investments, a dynamic about which actors involved keep memory, brewing long term resistance strategies against values perceived to be unduly dominating across situations over other legitimate values for coordination.

Figure 1 sketches also the dialogue between the three papers. Simple arrows (e.g. 1, 2, 3 and 4) signal the concepts that each paper develops in the organizational deployment of certain theoretical traditions towards the construct of the concept of what is left behind. For instance, arrow 1 signals that paper 1 foregrounds time within Lefebvre’s spatial theory, a sensitivity drawn from the typical orientation of a time-sensitive process organizational literature. Arrow 2 clarifies in turn how paper 1 can balance such sensitivity in paper 2 by raising space as a blind spot of process organizational analysis, soliciting to an awareness about the performative affordances of the separation of space and time in both theoretical and practical representations. Arrow 5 signals how markedly distinct sociological traditions (e.g. Lefebvre, Thévenot and Boltanski) can mutually reinforce one another, as the critical theory developed by Lefebvre’s unorthodox Marxism, suggestively reverberates in the post-bourdieusian theory of critique of Boltanski and Thévenot, both theorizing on the basic

processes through which social control and coordination are conventionally produced and reproduced.

At this point a clarification is due in order to grasp what leaving behind means. It may appear heterogeneous in the least, and incoherent at the most, to consider as left behind disparate objects and concepts such as lost space, sacrificed compromises and space-time separation in alternative organizational representations. As I hope to elucidate in a moment, the contributions of the papers here collected foreground different aspects of what is left behind, as answers to specific theoretical questions. Such questions tackle specific areas of ongoing organizational research and shed light on what I claim is the overall finding across my ethnography: that what is left behind, in the context of urban planning and construction management, appeared as a particularly important aspect of organizational communication. This does not seem an exclusive prerogative of urban planning and construction management. Academic creation of knowledge, for instance, precedes by the artful creation of “gaps”, a clear spatial metaphor for the framing of topics as empty containers to be filled, and represented as work left undone by extant literature, or even as a regaining and revalorization of forgotten ideas or levels of analysis. As when, for instance, macro themes like society (Friedland & Alford, 1991) or, to use a particularly pertinent example, space are brought “back in” (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004), where the act of ‘bringing back’ suggests they have been excluded or, in point of fact, left behind, overshadowed by other debates and unduly forgotten. This discursive strategy organizes theoretical contributions as a fulfilment of questions left unanswered, woven into present discussions from pending, unresolved issues in past debates. It allows scholars to justify their research as the realization of the unachieved potential of previous work, most often also calling for future research to investigate what present contributions leave behind: the conventional new “paths or avenues for future research” point almost to a *spatial planning metaphor* for academic knowledge creation.

Now, I contend that ‘what is left behind’ is a gap. So yes, I guess I claim that ‘what is left behind’ has been left behind in organizational analysis and theory development. As a consequence, I argue for the empirical and methodological affordance of reasoning around what is left behind. Yet what is left behind, much as it hopes to provoke thought in the widest possible directions, is not intended as a catch-all, umbrella concept. I here merely offer it as my specific way of reflecting about space, process and sacrifice, which, as mentioned above, has to do with considering complementary aspects of a retention/rejection dialectic over time. I present below the *specific aims* of the papers, summarizing them by *research questions* to introduce their intended contributions.



## *Paper 1*

The first paper aims at developing a processual understanding of Lefebvre's (1991/1974) spatial theory by focusing empirical attention on the temporal dynamics involved in space planning, and by theoretically integrating Lefebvre's writings on history, time and remembering in organizational research on space. It seemed coherent, in order to develop Lefebvre's spatial theory, to transfer it into (and enrich it with insights from) time-sensitive process organizational studies (see arrow 1 in Figure 1). The theory of the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974) proposes a triad of conceived, practiced and lived moments of space, which organizational literature has mostly applied to analyze finished spatial products (i.e. already built spaces), elaborating less on the processual relationality of the three moments of space before and during construction (i.e. urban planning and construction management). Accordingly, the first paper asks the following research questions:

*What is the organizational role of remembering and history in the planning of space?*

*How can a focus on remembering help us to develop a more processual understanding of the interplay between the moments of Lefebvre's spatial framework?*

An attention towards history and remembering helps to address space as a socially and materially constructed *communication* process, lived and organized *over time* by interesting narrative strategies of remembering that mobilize space's material and symbolic levers. Paper 1 inquires into how urban planning practices organizationally manipulate and manage the past of particular places and spaces to narratively construct non-linear plans to retain, repeating in the future, a careful selection of happy moments of its past. The intended contribution of this paper, in respect to the organizational literature mobilizing Lefebvre's spatial framework (1991/1974) of perceived, lived and conceived space, is to address specifically the organizational process of space *conceiving* (i.e. planning) proper, integrating the existing organizational research on how already planned spaces get transformed by work practices. Paper 1 introduces the notion of lost space as a means to illustrate how the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974) is constituted by the consumption and disposal of many other spaces of its plural and contested history. Some 'left behind' spaces are strategically mobilized even after their material disappearance (showing a non-linearity of space consumption, as lost spaces return discursively even after they have physically disappeared and have been materially disposed of). Lost space is a processual spatiotemporal notion that analyzes organizational planning as the anchoring to a materially and emotionally alive past, narrated as a benchmark 'left behind' to be regained in the future. Paper 1 aims at a balanced integration of the spatial and historical turns in organization theory. The tension between rejection and retention is addressed critically (reverberating with a pragmatic sociology of critique, see arrow 5 in Figure 1).

## *Paper 2*

In paper 2, I tackle the representational problem that space posed in the social sciences, and still poses in process organizational literature and practical challenges. I empirically illustrate how representations of change in construction management betray non-processual assumptions, particularly relating to space, and do not relate changes, portrayed as single and discrete, to other connected spatio-temporalities. Multiple unaccounted spatio-temporal relations depend on and influence the organization of change in construction management. The problem is that representations of space do not account for and risk being unaware of such intricate relationality. As indicated by arrow 2 in Figure 1, paper 2 advocates the opportunity for process organization studies to develop and integrate a dynamic notion of space into its temporal analysis of organizational phenomena. Accordingly, the research questions I raise are:

*Is space time's blind spot?*

*How may process organization studies advance a time-sensitive, but space-aware theorizing of organizational representation?*

Representing spatial change as singular, discrete and separate from its temporal relations struggles, in the observed tools and practices, to capture and manage a multiple becoming. I contrast the contractual amendment and other static organizational conventions of space representation with alternative visualizations and interpretations of the same practical change of spatial design. The paper shows what it means in practice to reduce time to its topographic representation – what is known as the *spatialization of time* (Bergson, 1944/1907, 2001/1889), and illustrates the performative affordances and limitations of assumptions of *simple location* (Whitehead, 1926), or considering entities as occupying single positions in space over determinate durations of time versus processual views that appreciate the multiple spatiotemporal relations of the entities' becoming. Illustrating the hazards of mistaking organizational representations for reality (Tsoukas, 1998), I argue that a confusion between map and territory runs the risk of conceptualizing space itself as a mere representational fixed entity (Massey, 2005). I embrace a relational and processual view (Cooper, 2005, 2007) and advocate not a refutation of representational assumptions as observed in practice, but rather an awareness about different ontologies of space and the related practical advantages and drawbacks of organizational representations.

Just as time reduction to graphical space misses the lived dynamic of temporality (Bergson, 1944/1907, 2007/1946), in the same way space, also reduced to a certain *spatially a-temporal* representation, blinds process organizational analyses to the dynamic, lived plurality of spatiality (Lefebvre, 1991/1974; Massey, 2005). The paper reflexively argues that a focus on particular

process-friendly vocabularies of intensities, affect and potentiality (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012), may also limit processual explanations of what alternative representational and non-processual vocabularies achieve (Lee, 1998), or what is their performativity (Barad, 2007).

The aim of addressing the role of space and space-and-time representations in organizing change – in planning and construction management, and in process organization studies – does not in turn blindly criticize the separation of space from time in favor of integrated spatiotemporal conceptualizations, but inquires rather into what each representational mode ‘leaves behind’ performatively. Different assumptions on the relationship between time and space enable or hinder actors, affecting their organizational and representational practices. Analyzing the performativity of representing spatial changes as discrete spatial phenomena separated from time, and comparing a plurality of simultaneously occurring representations of the same change, the paper explores strategies to account for how the same spatial change was *lived* by different organizational actors. I build on rare, process-friendly organizational studies of space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013) and representation (Cooper, 2016/1992; Tsoukas, 1998), to advance a space-balanced stream in the time-driven agenda of process organization studies. I put process-friendly spatial authors like Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey in dialogue with traditionally mobilized process philosophers like Bergson and Whitehead to raise a specific awareness about the epistemological and practical lacunae that certain assumptions on space produce. The leaving behind of space in process organization studies, discussed as a theoretical blind spot parallel to the leaving behind of history, remembering and temporality in Lefebvre’s spatial theory (paper 1), is in paper 2 grounded in rich organizational data aimed at showing the practical implications of differential conceptualizations.

### *Paper 3*

Paper 3 further develops a concern for a processual, spatiotemporal lived plurality of organizational phenomena (as developed in papers 1 and 2), introducing the economies of worth (EW) of pragmatic sociology (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) as a relevant theory for organizational coordination. The EW account for how actors justify and criticize behavior subject to public scrutiny, for instance in organizational contexts, where actors need to maintain certain legitimacy requirements (Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011), to satisfy the coordination integrating conditions of accountability, predictability and common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). Organizational coordination has a moral and political dimension captured in the actors’ uncertainty about which values count the most and which others are instead contingent and can be sacrificed. The unit of analysis is the situation, understood as a critical instance, in which the conflicting values of six framing repertoires, or economies of worth (market, industry, civic, domestic, inspirational and fame-based justification worlds), clash in the attempt of re-establishing order, co-ordinating

disparate contentious evaluations. The resolution of such controversies can be attained through a test, in which a single economy prevails in imposing its order of worth over the values and tests of alternative EW competing in the situation. If actors cannot agree on a test in a single economy to overcome the controversy, then compromises are possible: hybrid arrangements between different orders of worth in this case provisionally refrain from tests and attempt to compose a makeshift agreement for the common good sake of resuming action.

At face value, the EW model appears very anti-processual: the consistent orders of worth, mapping to ideal type worlds or polities represent highly structured, recurrent and to a certain degree *stable* value-systems of reference. They seem to contrast with a view of the world in continuous becoming. Pragmatic sociology should not however be misinterpreted as an ideal irenic theory of society, where value structures neatly impose an orderly coordination, but rather as a useful model for the narrower object of explaining how actors ordinarily experience and denounce injustice (Thévenot & Stavo-Debaugé, 2016) in public contexts that do not satisfy their moral expectations (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2000). In this light, a specific focus on compromise agrees with a process view of the EW since coordination depends on the incessant working together of opposed values. Tests provide a stable, conventional way to manage conflict and reduce uncertainty, accounting for what is left behind as worthless (see arrow 3 in Figure 1). But a continuous possibility of criticizing test outcomes, in terms of exclusionary cuts (Barad, 2007) and costs produced across situations and over time (see arrow 4 in Figure 1) posits the instability of action coordination, well echoes with critical theory and with a situated and pragmatic theory of critique (see arrow 5 in Figure 1).

The extended notions of investment and sacrifice underlying the EW model's plural (and unstable) equilibria (Thévenot, 1984, 1989), suggest that the choice of a single EW test, while embracing its values, foregoes (i.e. leaves behind, sacrifices) the benefits that could be enjoyed through other economies and relative tests. The restriction of investment and sacrifice only to the other five, discrete economies, appears however to undertheorize the specific organizational affordance of forms of compromise. I argue that the "sacrifice of compromise", or the cost of refusing to compromise, is a relevant finding I observe in paper 3 in much organizational communication on what could have been. I thus propose to trace absent spaces and rejected forms of compromise to inquire the test-compromise, rejection-retention dialectic, by asking:

*What methodological and theoretical implications can the tracing of rejected forms of compromise have for a processual understanding of organizational coordination?*

*How do sacrifices resulting from investments and tests in single economies of worth relate to sacrificing the benefits of compromising?*

The aim of the above research questions, complementary to the efforts of papers 1 and 2, is to foreground how exclusions and leaving behind are not only a matter of indirectly missing out on alternative organizing possibilities (whether related to opposed narratives of the past or to alternative representations), but also involve taking a stance on values. I carry out an inquiry into the role of absence and compromise in organizational coordination, by looking at absent spaces and sacrificed forms of compromise in construction management, thereby contributing at shedding light on how managing means coordinating not only actions and activities, but also moral judgments and appraisals of actors, objects and their performances over time.

The EW is a refined model for understanding how a limited set of orders of worth – proposing themselves as universally valid (and therefore mutually exclusive) – allow to capture the multiple socio-material evaluation criteria fueling critique and controversies in organizations.

Paper 3 contributes a review of the growing organizational literature on compromises as conceptualized in the EW, to enhance a process organizational exploitation of the model. The cost of rejected forms of compromise multiplies the plurality afforded by the EW, allowing me to extend empirically the organizational leaving behind observed in the critical protests of actors, to the tracing of unchosen historically available options to manage critical situations. Rejected forms (of conceived spaces that remain absent, or of compromises that do not occur) represent the potential organizational sunk costs, in terms of actors regarding them as undue sacrifices or missed opportunities. Organizational communication importantly articulates an interesting spatiotemporal hypothesizing that weighs tests of the past to design present strategies, based on unfulfilled potentialities of the past. My contribution to the EW model echoes in classic literature on a *situated* grasp of organizational coordination (Follett, 1926, 1927, 1932), focusing specifically on critical situations. Moreover, the notion of absent space combines recent research on how coordination creates the integrating conditions of common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) via an orientation to absence, that signals not just the disappearance over time of past practices (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012), but also the unachieved possibilities of the past.

The third paper's contribution cuts in fact across the other two papers in its methodological focus on moral histories of *what could have been*. Actors articulate critical hypothetical scenarios of avoidable sacrifice that allow me to develop a communication-sensitive, situated conceptualization of organizational coordination. The ensuing processual view of organizing corroborates a practice-based understanding of organizations as they happen (Schatzki, 2006) that chooses to account also for what could have happened (Nicolini, 2013).

## **Contextualization of the present study**

The work of this dissertation benefited from a rich academic network and research experience. The first two papers of this thesis have been published in and submitted to, respectively, *Organization* (PAPER 1) and *Organization Studies* (PAPER 2). The third paper was presented at a key reference event for space and organization studies (the 2015 EGOS/APROS conference, held in Sydney, whose theme was *Spaces, Constraints, Creativities: Organization & Disorganization*). The three texts await citations, reviews and further revision that will allow me to advance the ideas developed so far. Four brief sections complete this introduction by contextualizing the genesis of these ideas. The first two refer to the first two years of my PhD and sketch the overview of a closely related research project. The third section briefly accounts for the third year of my doctoral education, spent in Paris on a mobility grant (SNF grant number 152272) and greatly influencing my writings. The fourth section wraps up this introduction with a few general remarks.

## **The role of relationality in urban transformation processes**

My PhD efforts began in February 2012, as research assistant at the Institute of Marketing and Communication Management in the faculty of Communication Sciences. I joined a two-year interdisciplinary research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF, grant number 138105). The project investigated “the relationality of urban transformations”, under the lenses of architecture, economy and communication. Retrospectively, searching for some order in my itinerary, it is natural to recognize the influence of my colleague architects, of my colleague economists and of course of my supervisor, as participants in that study. The communication research team, composed of Prof. Mengis and myself, asked the following research question:

*How do the multiple stakeholders involved in an urban transformation project coordinate their various specialist work practices, domains of expertise, and the multiple interests that are bound to their diverse specializations?*

The relationality of the above question, closely molded around the literature on organizational knowledge, is quite different from the concern addressed in the papers of this dissertation. A stronger influence is however traceable in the additional questions qualifying the broad topic:

*How do stakeholders deal and make sense of ambiguities emerging over the duration of a project?  
How do they negotiate their multiple interests in communicative practices?  
On what elements of stability and emergence do multiple stakeholders draw in their coordinating efforts?*

This dissertation, as mentioned earlier, tackles the complex processual relationship between space and time, between social and material elements of planning practices of representation. The underlying topics of space and process are approached by a sensitivity towards communication that examines not only how organizational actors make sense of ambiguities, but also how ambiguities help to stabilize their process of sensemaking. I explore organizational coordination via the multiple values through which actors represent, justify and manage uncertain situations exposed to critique. So “ambiguities emerging over the duration of a project”, “multiple interests” and “communicative practices” oriented my research, as did the pendulum between stability and emergence in processual views of space and coordination. In this respect, a counterintuitive focus on the “emergence of absences”, or on the constant submergence of planned spaces that did not materialize, signals, if not a *stable*, a recurrent empirical finding. This thesis advances a process organizational analysis of space becoming, through a special heed on the organizationally lived conceiving of space, in which an incessantly moving target translates over time into the leaving behind of many plans. Coordination problems around a runaway object (Engeström, 2006), a great theme of the interdisciplinary research I conducted, profoundly influenced my doctoral work. Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), along with Actor Network Theory (ANT) are in fact important theoretical frameworks for my writings, which here do not find space, despite having played (Petani & Mengis, 2014b, 2014d) and still playing a pivotal role in my progress as a researcher.

In the course of the first two years of studies and research, I carried out a large amount of data collection. I briefly mention below some aspects of this fieldwork that are not included in the methodological sections of the single papers, but may help to contextualize them.

### *Data collection*

I started my ethnography by turning largely to historical sources. My past professional career in publishing and daily newspapers directed me to gather all the publicly available information on the urban transformation I set out to study. The culture centre project had originated in 2000. Construction started in 2010. Early in 2012, I felt I had 12 years to catch up on, before I could approach the field. Little did I anticipate that this journey would eventually lead me to study not only those 12 years, but also many historically relevant events of the past 150 years of the city’s history, deployed by organizational communication related to the observed architectural project.

The preliminary media study I engaged in (maybe not so strange for a communication researcher, but fairly uncommon for an organization scholar), made me a well informed outsider in the eyes of the actors I approached for interviews and to negotiate access. I aimed to witness building site meetings and to gain the trust needed to obtain confidential working documents. When I

approached the council authorities to gather access, the project was in a very critical phase: the leader of the opposition was fiercely opposing the project, and regularly criticized it on all possible accounts in the free press Sunday paper of his party. This was one of the most read bulletins of the city and region; so much so that, contrary to what usually happens, it was the newspaper, founded in 1990, which created the party in 1991, and not the other way around. Tension reached the highest peaks when the party and newspaper leader's *brother*, who incidentally was also a subcontractor in the project, was fired by the general contractor. This instigated even fiercer attacks, ongoing legal litigation and enduring criticism. The general contractor was depicted as a foreign invader with no respect for local rules and values. It was at this stage that my research team tried to gain access to the field. Fortunately, going through the newspaper historical coverage of the project, made me aware of the delicate situation. Despite official authorization from highly ranked politicians, council administrators did not exactly welcome me with open arms. I focused on the official documents from the council, plentiful in a very productive public administration body that over the years made many resolutions, received, answered and published many requests for information, all of which helped to orient me towards the most strongly felt issues. I alternated the shadowing of the council project manager to participant observation with him at the council general archive, helping the architect to file all the project's documents, in the hope of bartering this free labor with full access to the field. Shortly after such voluntary collaboration had ended, and I was preparing to reap my reward, you can imagine my disappointment when I learned, early in 2013, that the project manager was quitting, which meant I had to start from scratch. Luckily, the manager who took his place introduced me to the building site with no further ado. Observations were finally allowed from May 2013 to January 2014, by which time I had interviewed all of the 60 key actors I had planned to hear, some of whom I interviewed twice (for instance whilst they were employed and after they had been fired, as a particularly delicate documenting of troubled leaving behind). This delayed access allowed me to come to the field with an already deep understanding of the critical processes of organizational coordination. As a foreigner researching an unknown city, I exposed myself ethnographically to many aspects related to the project. I attended public events of the culture managers' mundane life made of vernissages, art fairs and discussions about the prospects the culture centre would bring about. In parallel I also managed to penetrate the less-accessible but interesting milieu of local tycoons and elite groups, at whose informal events, like a rotary club dinner with a restricted conference to discuss specifically about the project, I had the chance of participating on invitation by an interviewed informant. Finally, my regular presence at building site meetings, twice also at the very restricted steering committee council meetings – convinces me that I currently know the city I studied as no other I have ever lived in. I believe I have plunged deeply enough into the project's organizational environment: the architects and top



managers at the town planning division still call me “shadow man” when crossing me in the street. Even the engineers and architects of the general contractor (some of whom allowed me to photocopy all of their daily to-do lists) still say hello and gladly exchange a few words on the phone and on social media, although they have now changed jobs and location. All this, to my surprise, even *after* reading some of the writings included in this collection...

### **Doctoral mobility exchange in Paris**

The mobility research project that sent me to spend one year in Paris (SNF grant number 152272) was titled “Justification practices in a public architecture project for the arts: the complex process of coordinating space and values”. This proves that by the third year of my journey I had defined my interests in space, process and values that I develop in the third writing of this thesis. Invited by Prof. Laurent Thévenot of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and by Prof. Valérie November of the Laboratoire Techniques, Territoires et Sociétés (LATTS) of the École des Ponts – ParisTech, I went to Paris to make sense and analyze the sea of data collected. The chance to follow the research seminars of Prof. Thévenot and Prof. Boltanski at EHESS, and the opportunity of deepening my interest in space during LATTS research seminars animated by some of the best geographers, architects and engineers active in many diverse research projects in Paris and around the world, was an invaluable opportunity. Attending and participating in paper development workshops and seminars with Prof. Roger Friedland (New York University), Prof. Antoine Picon (Harvard and LATTS), Prof. Luca Pattaroni, and Prof. Jacques Lévy (École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) also proved golden opportunities to study evaluation and space in organizations and beyond.

### **General remarks**

In concluding this introduction, I revisit the overarching Weickian inspired question I set out from:

*“How can I know what I retain and value until I see what I leave behind?”*

I anticipated how the papers articulate this general methodological thread in many specific theoretical concerns and research questions relevant to the study of organizations.

I hasten to clarify that what we retain and value, even because of its being revealed by what we leave behind, is subject to change, as second (third, fourth...) thoughts, emotional responses and representations adapt, measure and organize the uncertainty of the future, against some positive benchmarks of a desired and familiarly known past. What we identify as such benchmarks may appear a counterintuitive *selection of rejected items for retention*. Perhaps, to put it in much simpler terms, we do not often get to know what we desire and value, until we realize that we have left it behind, and risk losing it. Which is distinctly different from concluding that we desire or value all

that we leave behind. Organizational actors undoubtedly have an understanding of the opportunities they miss. Organizational life, and life more in general, is caught up in a limited time, which translates into being aware of the impossibility of realizing all the potentialities or possibilities at hand. This general sense of left behind that I develop in this thesis owes a lot to Marcel Proust. The novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (Proust, 1919) is a monumental attempt to account for all that could have been and was not. As Walter Benjamin puts it, Proust's work is "the constant attempt to charge an entire lifetime with the utmost awareness (...) filled with the insight that none of us has time to live the true dramas of the life that we are destined for. This is what ages us – this and nothing else. The wrinkles and creases on our faces are the registration of the great passions, vices, insights that called on us; but we, the masters, were not home" (Benjamin, 1968: 211-212).



## **1. PAPER 1**

### **In search of lost space: The process of space planning through remembering and history**

“Dans cette vie qui nous apparaît quelquefois comme un grand terrain vague sans poteau indicateur, au milieu de toutes les lignes de fuite et les horizons perdus, on aimerait trouver des points de repère, dresser une sorte de cadastre pour n’avoir plus l’impression de naviguer au hasard.”

(Patrick Modiano, 2007)<sup>3</sup>

#### **Abstract**

This paper explores the role of remembering and history in the process of planning new spaces. We trace how the organizational remembering of past spaces enters the conception (i.e. planning) of a large culture centre. By drawing on Lefebvre’s reflections on history, time and memory, we analyse the processual interconnections of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, namely between the planned, practiced and lived moments of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974). We find that over time space planning involves recurrent, changing and contested narratives on “lost spaces”, remembering happy spaces of the past that articulate a desire to regain them. The notion of lost space adds to our understanding of how space planning involves, through organizational remembering, a sociomaterial and spatiotemporal work of relating together different spaces and times in non-linear narratives of repetition.

#### **Keywords**

space, time, process, remembering, history, lost space, Lefebvre

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<sup>3</sup> “In this life that sometimes appears to us like a vague field with no signpost, amidst all the vanishing points and lost horizons, one would love to find some point of reference, compile a kind of cadastre to never again have the impression to be navigating at random”. (Our translation).

## 1.1 Introduction

This paper develops a processual approach to Lefebvre's spatial framework, as advocated in organizational literature (cp. Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Dobers & Strannegård, 2004; Taylor & Spicer, 2007), by integrating Lefebvre's understandings of history, temporality and memory (1970, 1975, 2004/1992) within his framework on the production of space (1991/1974). We address the specific call for investigating the history of how space is conceived (Mitev & De Vaujany, 2013: 327), produced and reproduced in the long term (De Vaujany & Vaast, 2013) by exploring how historic spaces of the past enter the process of space planning through remembering (Decker, 2014). From the qualitative analysis of our empirical study on the planning practices of a large culture center in a small Swiss city, we introduce the notion of "lost space" to indicate a remembered space that connects a happy space of the past with the experience of its loss that narratively articulates the desire to regain, repeat or compensate for it.

The concept is coined in reference to Proust's "lost time" (1919), which influenced Lefebvre's understanding of time "with the issues of loss and memory, recollection and repetition" (Elden, 2004a: x). In search of the history of a space, Massey (1995, 2005) argues that homogenous temporal linearity poses problems not only because many spatially displaced relations simultaneously produce a given place, but also because rival interpretations of a place's authentic pasts result in claims and counter-claims about its present. Aware of this insight, we argue it is important to understand the multiple spatiotemporal relationships between remembering and space at the phase of conceiving (i.e. planning), especially since organizational analyses of space in general, and adopting Lefebvre more in particular, have tended to privilege analyses of how already constructed spaces are transformed by organizational practices of end users, rather than addressing the long term organizational phenomenon of space planning.

We draw on Lefebvre's critical reflections on temporality, history and memory (1970, 1975, 1989/1959, 2002/1961, 2003, 2004/1992, 2014) to explore the productive imagination of the past through remembering. By tracing how the history of spaces gets remembered in planning a great urban project, we develop a more processual approach to Lefebvre's spatial framework (1991/1974). Consequently, we ask: What is the organizational role of remembering and history in the planning of space? How can a focus on remembering help us to develop a more processual understanding of the interplay between the moments of Lefebvre's spatial framework?

After presenting Lefebvre's spatial triad (1991/1974), we review and discuss the organizational literature that has engaged with it. We then show how Lefebvre argued for the centrality of a processual understanding of space, which we illustrate introducing some of his reflections on temporality, history and memory (1970, 1975, 2004/1992).

Finally, we present an analysis of how the organizational remembering of space enters the process of conceiving space by drawing on a focused ethnography of the planning and construction process of a culture center in a small Swiss city. We show how the sociomaterial incorporation of remembered space is a key organizational aspect of how space is conceived and produced over time.

## **1.2 Lefebvre's Spatial Triad and its Translation in Organization Studies**

In his influential book *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991/1974) proposed a spatial triad, which originated from his critique of Descartes' notions of *res extensa*, material space, and *res cogitans*, an abstract geometric representation of space allowing its quantitative measurement. According to Lefebvre, such dichotomy did not capture the experience of space in everyday life and the temporal, symbolically rich (and politically charged) process of its becoming. Lefebvre thus introduced the moment of lived space (Zhang, 2006) presenting a trialectic spatial framework consisting of perceived, conceived and lived space, which we summarize below (for extended discussions, see: Elden, 2004b; Schmid, 2008; Stanek, 2011; Zieleniec, 2007).

Perceived space accounts for the physical, concrete space, a *real* space used by all in the environment and explained by Lefebvre as *spatial practice* (1991/1974: 38). Examples are the road travelled to go to work or the office workspace that we transform through daily routines. Through these everyday spatial practices we materially transform space and negotiate various organizational and personal spaces.

Conceived space, on the other hand, indicates the way space is planned in abstract conceptualizations, an organizational prerogative of technocrats and urban planners, an instrumental space *imagined* through technical *representations of space* (e.g. maps, plans). For Lefebvre, this is “the dominant space in any society” (1991/1974: 39), so a powerful form of political control.

Lived space, which Lefebvre also calls *representational space*, is “the dominated space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974: 39). It is how we imagine the spaces we use, what such spaces mean to us. As a temporal and process-friendly reading puts it, lived space is “space as produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning (...) space as *real-and-imagined*” (Elden, 2004b: 190; see also Soja, 1996).

In their attempts to better understand how organizational spaces are conceptualized and struggled for, organization scholars have drawn heavily on Lefebvre's spatial triad, in particular to address the interrelation of power, identity and materiality (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013; Burrell & Dale, 2003; Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008; De Vaujany & Vaast, 2013; Dobers & Strannegård, 2004;

Ford & Harding, 2004, 2008; Hancock & Spicer, 2010; Hernes, 2004; Kingma, 2008; Spicer, 2009; Spicer & Taylor, 2006; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Wapshott & Mallett, 2012; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011; Watkins, 2005; Yeung, 1998; Zhang & Spicer, 2014; Zhang, Spicer & Hancock, 2008). For example, studies have shown how the materiality of space influences the construction of selves through forms of organizational oppression and control (Ford & Harding, 2008), analyzing both the power of aesthetically enchanting architectures (Hancock & Spicer, 2010), and the aesthetic strategies of workers to resist space-driven identity regulation (Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011).

When investigating the interplay between conceived, lived and practiced spaces, organizational research has studied corporate life struggles arising from a tension between the way space has been conceived and physically built and how it is appropriated or lived by users (Spicer, 2009; Spicer & Taylor, 2006; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011; Zhang & Spicer, 2014). In doing so, organizational scholars have mainly focused on the productive adaptation of organizational processes within already physically built spatial products (i.e. corporate buildings), exploring the tensions arising in constructed spaces conceived by non-users and later transformed by the *different* organizational practices of users.

We know little, however, about the specific organizational practice of planning space *per se* and how the three moments of Lefebvre's triad play out in the process of conceiving space.

In other words, rather than taking conceived space as the produced abstract representations of spaces (e.g. in architectural maps), few organizational studies have inquired on what goes into the production of conceived spaces, that is through what organizational processes (e.g. justifying in public official documents specific configurations of conceived spaces and not others) we plan and conceive space. In this process of conceiving space, a time-sensitivity seems particularly important to understand "the spatio-temporal implications of the past in the present" (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013: 1449). Although some studies have turned to the organizational history of construction projects as their empirical objects (Decker, 2014; De Vaujany & Vaast, 2013; Gastelaars, 2010; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Lancione & Clegg, 2013), few studies adopt a long-term spatio-historical approach and an explicit sensitivity for time drawing on Lefebvre. One such exception is the work by De Vaujany and Vaast (2013), which presents a long term perspective on how spatial practices (perceived space) change and how the symbolic history of space is used over time. Such a history sensitive approach still needs to be extended also to the process of conceiving space (as called for by Mitev & De Vaujany, 2013) and, in particular, to how space is remembered (Decker, 2014).

In our view, the lack of historical perspective is due to a misunderstanding of Lefebvre's work as a reorienting "away from time (...) towards a focus on space" (Dear, 1997: 49). Organization scholars have criticized such essentialist adoptions of the spatial triad that risk "to turn spatial

*becoming* into representations of the beings of organizational spaces, to prioritize the spatial products over the *processes* of their productions” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 49, emphasis added). A processual approach may help to appreciate the temporal definition of Lefebvre’s spatial triad as three interconnected *moments* of social space (1991/1974: 40) and to integrate some of Lefebvre’s key works on history (1970, 1975) and everyday life rhythms (2004/1992). In the latter, he suggests a methodology in which the researcher, “without omitting the spatial and places, of course, makes himself more sensitive to times than to spaces” (Lefebvre, 2004/1992: 22). Lefebvre’s temporal sensitivity in the theorizing of space explicitly states an interest in “the historical and its consequences, the 'diachronic', the 'etymology' of locations in the sense of what happened at a particular spot or place and thereby changed it” (1991/1974: 37). All these temporal phenomena become inscribed in a space where “production process and product present themselves as two inseparable aspects” (p. 37). Time and space themselves, albeit distinguishable, are not separable from each other (p. 175). Through this shift from “things in space to the actual production of space” (p. 37), Lefebvre’s work becomes interesting for process scholars.

In what follows, we introduce some of Lefebvre’s insights on time, history and memory to show how a processual adoption of his spatial triad can be better developed.

### **1.3 The Temporality of Space in Lefebvre: The Role of Remembering**

Lefebvre developed critical understandings of history and time in some of his key writings (1970, 1975, 1989/1959, 2002/1961, 2004/1992, 2014), which can help us to explore the role of remembering in the conception of space.

Already in the presentation of his spatial triad, Lefebvre (1991/74) theorized perceived, lived and conceived spaces as dialectical, interconnected and often contradictory “moments”. Not only does he thus define space temporally, he also charges a moment politically by defining it as “*the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility*” (2002/1961: 348, emphasis in original). The possible is in turn conceptualized as important to understand temporal becoming and history: “*The past becomes the present (or is renewed) as a function of the realization of the possibilities objectively implied in this past. It is revealed with them. The introduction of the Possible into historical methodology permits us to conceive the objectivity – while yielding its due to the relativity, novelty and inexhaustibility – of history*” (Lefebvre, 1975: 34, emphasis in original). In this light, the production of space starts to appear as a contested historical process of interaction between socio-material possibilities.

The possible is, in fact, bound to what is materially or objectively affordable (bringing with it a certain consequentiality between past, present and future), but also contains an openness given the



subjective stratification of past moments. The unfolding present has a history of incremental lived experience. Everyday sociomaterial practices are marked by “momentous events” that *pave* the objective path of what is made possible. But these turning points do not *set*, as new moments alter the subjective narratives of the increasing (and mutable) past. A particular space is thus produced by the interplay between decisive moments that materialize the objective possibilities implied in a space’s past (Lefebvre, 2003/1970: 178), and the more subjective, social products, like the collective imaginations and historical interpretations related to these revealing moments. In this way, production includes not only the material making of products and things, but also a “‘spiritual’ production, that is to say creations (including social time and space)” (1971: 30-31).

Despite the material consequences of decisive moments, Lefebvre is far from proposing a linear, deterministic notion of temporality or history. On the contrary, “each time one of these possibilities is realized, it retroactively sheds a new light on the initial event” (Lefebvre, 1975: 34) and it is here that memory becomes of importance. For Lefebvre memory is required to “grasp this present otherwise than in an instantaneous moment, to restore it in its moments... The recollection of other moments (...) is indispensable, not as a simple point of reference, but in order not to isolate this present and in order to *live* it in all its diversity, made up of (...) subjective states, objective figures” (Lefebvre, 2004/1992: 37, emphasis in original). Remembering is thus a practice that allows us to live our time and to understand moments beyond their instantaneous occurrence; “the ‘moment’ thus conceived of has its memory and specific time” (Lefebvre, 2003: 174).

The presence of other moments through the practice of remembering creates a “lived time”, a multifaceted reality that goes beyond notions of linearity, irreversibility and unity. It echoes with Proust’s view of time that Lefebvre appreciated as more polyvalent and more contradictory than abstract philosophical notions, as it allowed for memory and art (Elden, 2004b: 175). The remembering of moments is an interesting temporal repetition, a re-presentation that “involves the return and reintegration at a high level – individual and social – of elements of the past and of the surpassed” (Lefebvre, 2003: 174). It is this non-linear embedding of a moment in a temporally multiple lived time that allows for imagination and non-determinacy in the production of space.

In summary, Lefebvre’s socio-historical view of space is important to understand a production – and especially a conception – of space that involves what Dale calls a “social materiality”, accounting for, but irreducible to object or objectivity, as it is “imbued with culture, language, imagination, *memory*” (2005: 652, emphasis added). The production of space therefore involves the dialectical interaction of multiple, often contradicting moments of space, in which the realization of specific socio-material possibilities is attempted with the temporal contribution of memory. In fact, a moment with its specific affordances, does not stand by itself, but becomes related – through practices of remembering and the emergence of new present events – to other

moments. With a more temporal orientation to Lefebvre's framework of space, we now inquire into how the various moments of space play out in practices of remembering related to the process of conceiving a cultural center.

#### **1.4 Research Context and Method**

This study draws on a single longitudinal case, investigating through ethnographic methods the planning and construction of a public cultural center of considerable financial import (over 230 million CHF) in a small Swiss city of 60,000 people (140,000 in the extended urban area). The Council decision to build the center dates back to 2000, while construction started in 2009 and terminated in 2015. The cultural center represents the highest public investment in the history of the city, which is the major investor with over 200 million CHF. The Canton (region) participated with 5.5 million CHF. Initially, the center was planned to be situated in a XIX century former hotel, which was preserved from demolition in 2000 by popular referendum, but which later (2004) was sold by the city for 20 million CHF to private real estate developers, who restored the building to create luxury lakefront apartments. The culture center was placed next door, on a portion of the same lakefront area, and is designed to include multiple facilities: a museum, a theatre-concert hall, a rehearsal room, a bookshop, a café, administrative offices, a conference area and an underground parking facility (one floor of which was sold to the private developers for around 10 million CHF). Public spaces attached and related to the urban transformation include an invaluable XV century Romanesque style church with its former convent and cloister, a major new square and a backyard hill destined to become a public park.

##### *Data Collection*

Fieldwork was conducted between November 2011 and May 2014, with both authors actively involved in data collection. Our process sensitivity invited us to build on rich longitudinal data relying on archival sources, interviews, and field observations. Fieldwork started with an explorative media analysis of 153 newspaper articles published on the project between 2000-2012, allowing us to get a first sense of the strongly felt issues and related historical events (e.g. the public debate and referendum to maintain the *façade* of the former hotel), and of the project's key actors to be interviewed. The interviews further specified the events of the project's history and pointed to the organizational documents of the planning activities.

Overall, we collected over 130 public and private documents (ranging from the official urban planning and funding decisions in 2000 and 2004 to key, confidential and public documents of the construction phase), conducted 60 semi-structured interviews (all audio-recorded and verbatim transcribed) with the major stakeholders involved in the project, 70 ethnographic interviews (conducted throughout data collection, with repeated interviews with key informants), and engaged

in both participant and non-participant observation for a total of 43 days, distributed over the entire fieldwork time. After a difficult access to the organizational spaces of space production – partially because the project raised many political controversies in the media and legal disputes between council and general contractor – we were able to observe building site meetings and council steering committee meetings. Table 1.1 provides further details on the collected data.

**TABLE 1.1. Overview on data collection**

<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Nr</b>	<b>Details on Type and Number of Data</b>
Interviews	130	<p><i>Semi-structured interviews (60)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Actors from public sector (35, of which 7 council politicians) and private sector (25)</li> <li>· Architects (18), culture managers (15), engineers (11), jurists (8), press officers (5), business administrators (3)</li> </ul> <p><i>Ethnographic interviews (70)</i></p> <p>Repeated interactions with 11 key actors during and after observations (project architect; council project manager; director and deputy director of Town planning division; 2 members of their staff; council in-house lawyer; director of council culture activities; construction, design and building site managers of the general contractor)</p>
Observations	44	<p><i>Non-participant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Political steering committee meetings (2)</li> <li>· Building site meetings (7)</li> <li>· Meetings between client contractor for technical inspection (3)</li> <li>· Internal meeting between general contractor and expert specialist (1)</li> <li>· Daily work of council project manager and collaborators (3)</li> <li>· Public inaugurations and events designed to communicate the project to the citizens (4)</li> <li>· Private tours of the building site; official and informal project presentation to interest groups; audio and video recordings of speeches related to the project; selected TV and radio coverage on project; informal moments of socialization with employees of council or of general contractor involved in the project (i.e. lunches, hallway conversations, etc.) (17)</li> </ul> <p><i>Participant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· council public archive with project manager (5)</li> <li>· presentation of research to council authorities (1)</li> <li>· voluntary work during the inauguration day (1)</li> </ul>
Documents	132	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· International design contest documents (1)</li> <li>· Report of Jury on two phase design contest (1)</li> <li>· Call for tenders in two phases plus clarification requests by contestants (7)</li> <li>· Questions (21), interpellations (8) to the council (21) and answers (14)</li> <li>· Motions filed at the council (9) and comments provided by the council (3)</li> <li>· Council's official resolutions (19)</li> <li>· Council's budgets 2001-2013 (13)</li> <li>· Council's balance sheets 1999-2012 (14)</li> <li>· Bi-annual building site reports 2010-2013 (8)</li> <li>· Council's communication and promotional material (11)</li> <li>· Documents of new federal norms for public buildings (2)</li> <li>· Programmatic document by council's culture director on a production space for artists (1)</li> <li>· Lists of contractual amendments as archived by council and by general contractor (2)</li> <li>· Feasibility reports on contractual amendments (3)</li> <li>· Detailed to-do lists of years 2008-2012 of council architect (7)</li> <li>· Detailed notebook of the architect of the main contractor (1)</li> <li>· Detailed architectural plans (10), sketches</li> </ul>
Newspaper articles	153	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Region's most circulated quality daily newspaper (88)</li> <li>· Two weekly free Sunday newspapers (45+25)</li> </ul>

Data collection from the multiple sources proved highly interactive and iterative. We became particularly interested in tracing the changes intervened in the originally conceived culture center during its planning and construction phases. Documents pointed us to “dramatic” shifts (Pettigrew, 1990) in the project (e.g. the sale and repurposing of the former hotel and consequent relocation of the theatre). We used the insights from the documents to anchor specific questions in the interviews. The interviewed actors, in turn, indicated where we could find additional documentation on the changes or what meetings to attend. During our participant observation at the council archive, helping the council project manager to archive all the project’s planning documents, we realized the huge effort spent in conceiving possible spaces that never got materially constructed, but were not forgotten either. The manager’s frequent recalling of possibilities not chosen, or implemented elsewhere or in the past, backed by evidence in other interviews and in documents, led us to sharpen our sensitivity for the role of remembering of different times and spaces in the practice of conceiving. It empirically emerged that the project was not resulting only from the spaces conceived of in official documents, but also from imagined and experienced possibilities of other moments, remembered in narratives traced in newspaper articles, meetings and interviews. In this way, data collection became increasingly analytically focused.

#### *Data Analysis*

After a first descriptive analysis aiming to understand the sequence of events (developing a timeline, see: Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2009) and tracing how particular spaces changed over time, our thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) became more selective (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As a result we undertook more in depth analysis of the cases of spaces that got narratively related as justification of the changes to the original plan. Considering these narratives we realized that they drew a wider mnemonic landscape, made of far reaching temporal and spatial connections (e.g. comparing the culture center to other historical spaces of the city). From a processual perspective, this non-linearity in the process of conceiving (i.e. meaning that future spaces became related to past and remembered ones) was particularly interesting and we started to code more systematically a focused selection of documents. As these varied hugely in historical value, temporal scale and specificity, our selection targeted milestone documents, rich in narrative practices of organizational remembering (e.g. crucial funding resolutions), excluding documents that were less interesting to our ends (e.g. annual budgets).

We first coded these texts descriptively with codes such as “past spaces compared to the project”, “remembering a heroic past”, “remembering a space no longer existing”, “commemorating a past space” etc. The enlarged project’s story seemed to mnemonically expand to the level of urban history and beyond: evoked moments brought about spatiotemporal interrelations that needed neither to refer to events spatially unfolded in the project area (e.g. the moment when the city lost

its theatre in another area of the city), nor to follow linear temporal sequences (e.g. selectively looking at distant pasts of a space while ignoring recent events).

Our increased temporal sensitivity developed coding also for present and future oriented narratives, like “anticipated possibility”, “present available option”, “narrating a future space”. We then interrogated the organizational nature of these space-related moments inquiring into the relationships of the various codes (what is referred to as axial coding, see: Strauss and Corbin, 1990). We analyzed how specific spaces of the city were organizationally recollected as part of the project-specific history and investigated how driving possibilities were narratively related to collective spatial memories of past glories and losses. It gradually emerged that historical spaces that had been dismantled or that had been radically repurposed, were frequently remembered (“remembering a space no longer existing”) when delineating possibilities of future spaces (“narrating a future space”). We thus started to code these historic spaces of the past remembered with a sense of loss with “lost spaces” and started to inquire how their remembering played out in the process of conceiving.

For this purpose, we went back to the literature, reading up on historical accounts of space production, and Lefebvre’s theorizing seemed relevant for both space (1991/1974, 1996, 2014) and time/history (1970, 1971, 1975, 1989/1959, 2002/1994, 2003). So we started introducing in our coding the three moments of Lefebvre’s spatial triad (1991/1974) and compared “lost spaces” for their perceived and lived qualities. For example, were these spaces lost both in their perceived and lived dimension, or just in the perceived dimension? What makes it possible at different times for these spaces to enter conceived future scenarios?

The planning and construction of the cultural center was thus studied by tracing some of its key organizational narratives and material relations with other times and places, gradually moving from description to explanation (Pentland, 1999). For the presentation of our data, we favour depth of analysis over breadth and will illustrate our findings through a few examples of how remembering and history enter the conceiving of space.

## **1.5 Findings**

### *1.5.1 Remembering Spaces as “Lost”: The Old Theatre*

The longstanding mayor (an architect, in office uninterruptedly from 1984 to 2013) during his interview fondly related the origin of the culture center to a snowy Sunday of December 1999, when the idea struck him of demolishing the theatre of the city to accommodate a new casino in its place. The theatre, as part of an important cultural center, would be placed within the former hotel, a landmark building from the XIX century. Initially the new casino was planned at the former hotel,

but the lengthy structural renovation required by the historic, perilous building led to the ruling out of this possibility as the city wanted to make a successful license application for the casino to the federal authority. Consider how the decision to change spatial plans (an important historical urban transformation) is communicated in a public council resolution of early 2000, which approved the demolition of the theatre and granted 670.000 CHF towards the international design contest for the new culture center.

“...the extraordinary and prestigious location of the present theatre on the lakefront, and, not least importantly, the possibility of relying on the necessary spaces within the deadlines required for the license concession request [for the Casino]... [are] the conditions in order to present ourselves with the best chances to the Federal Authority and request a concession (...). From the new plan for the theatre and the casino... follows the suppression of the theatre, which therefore needs to find, as soon as possible, its new collocation in (...) the former hotel plot”

Note how the mentioned “possibility” regards not the theatre (let alone the culture center), but the socio-material (“granting a concession”, “necessary spaces”) and temporal (“deadlines required”) conditions for the conceived new casino. The perceived space of the theatre is reduced to its “extraordinary and prestigious location”, an opportunity for the “best chances” of the future casino. The theatre’s lived space is noticeably absent: the document remembers to forget (Anteby & Molnár, 2012). The theatre can simply be “suppressed” and replicated elsewhere. This implies forgetting the theatre’s *irreplaceable history*: the “deadlines required” for the casino kill the time of the theatre’s disembodied “location”, fixing it in the future and erasing its present, and especially its past.

Four years later (2004), when the theatre had been demolished, the casino inaugurated (2002) and the former hotel area destined to host the new culture center, the theatre re-entered the stage at the decisive moment of voting for the highest public investment in the city’s history. In the historic resolution of 2004 the council decided to release 200 million CHF for the culture center, and the lost theatre was narratively mobilized as a still *living* space (vivid in the collective memory) to keep the casino private stockholders<sup>4</sup> accountable for the financial support to the conceived culture center:

“The decisions the City took in favor [of the casino], were all based on agreements (...) that the organization [the casino] would support tourism and culture, and take upon itself the burden of the expenses for the theatre (...).

We remind (...) that:

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<sup>4</sup> For the sake of critical perspective, it must be noted that the council participated as majority stockholder also in the new casino project.

- The acquisition of the plot of land of the former hotel (...) was linked with the gambling business;
- On request of the casino, the city agreed to modify the project, for which the former hotel was initially acquired (...); it was therefore produced the sacrifice of the existing theatre, a structure tightly connected with the urban tradition, with an ideal location, an adequate seat capacity and an artistic and cultural bond with our reality, (...). Initially the casino assured that it would preserve at least the dome and the staircase [of the theatre], but later sacrificed even those;
- the repurposing of the hotel plot (and the following sacrifice of the theatre) took place for the exclusive needs the casino had of receiving a structure in a shorter time (...); clear as it was that the firm's commitment to fund the theatre (...) had not ceased to be valid as a consequence of the destruction of the theatre, but quite the contrary!

The city will therefore ask the casino (...) to contribute adequately towards the investment and running expenses, on the base of its history and by-laws (...)"

In this narrative, a financial obligation is created to compensate for the moral loss of the theatre that historically made it possible to produce the casino. Note the change in the tone between the matter-of-fact, future-oriented, abstract representation of the newly conceived theatre relocation in the 2000 resolution, vis-à-vis the emotional tone of the 2004 document. In 2000, the substitution between casino and theatre is proposed in lifeless, functional and spatiotemporal terms. "From the new plan", an inanimate conceived space, "follows" a quite neutral, hardly perceivable "suppression" of the theatre. Instead, in 2004, the theatre, with its dismantled past of perceived spaces (e.g. "*later sacrificed even (...) the dome and the staircase*") is re-membered in a space production story of sacrifice (e.g. "it was therefore produced the sacrifice of the existing theatre") to remind the casino of its commitment and historical debt towards the theatre. The theatre is no longer represented abstractly (e.g. a "prestigious location" ready to contain other projects), but is related to its incommensurable (because materially unrepeatable) past of a formerly perceived and lived time and space, "*a structure tightly connected with the urban tradition, with an ideal location (...) and an artistic and cultural bond with our reality*". Remembering ignites the previously carefully obscured lived and affective dimension of the theatre, here expressed in the more vivid re-presentation of the perceived and lived space, still present in a collective memory that resists (and seems almost reinforced by) the brutal "destruction". Organizationally, remembering the casino's obligations clarifies that the theatre is not simply a dead space; "quite the contrary!", the emphatic exclamation mark (rarely found in formal documents of this kind) suggests it is still alive and kicking.

The example illustrates that in the process of conceiving a new space (i.e. the culture center), previously lived and perceived spaces (i.e. the former theatre) are drawn in through narrative practices of remembering. Such drawn-in spaces extend the conceived space beyond the physical

location and time of the new construction (a sort of relational spatial *durée*). Spaces are therefore strategically remembered differently at different times (i.e. as easily disposable through suppression, as lost destroyed spaces) or even purposefully “not remembered”. Most importantly, the example shows that remembering space as a lost moment of its production can extend the lived temporality of perceived spaces of the past, allowing to enliven them even after their material disappearance. Such extended duration of space through remembering claims agency in the present process of conceiving: the spatial martyrdom of the theatre, however possible in the past, produces a moral and historic credit towards new spaces. Spaces planned “in the theatre’s name” go in search of a lost spatial legacy (De Vaujany and Vaast, 2013), not in an abstract or nostalgic evocation *per se*, but with the organizational objective of fulfilling the future possibilities of the city’s rubble.

### *1.5.2 Remembering Lost Spaces as to be Regained: The Former Hotel*

The former hotel – similarly to the theatre – features prominently in the council planning documents, commemorated for its historical and symbolical value. For example, on the first page of the call for tenders for the public construction contract, a short historical premise, signed by the mayor in 2007, thus presents the city and the architecture project to potential general contractors:

“When in 1969 the former hotel went out of business, not only did darkness fall upon the lounges of the most antique hotel of the city, but an important part of its history was taking its leave. (...)

The hotel was erected in 1855 by brothers X and Y, important characters within the independence struggles; (...). In 1851, X acquired the plot of the deconsecrated monastery and in August 1855, the hotel was inaugurated. The construction of the hotel coincided therefore with the start of a new era, that of the rich tourism of the XIX century, an industry that thrived following the opening, in 1882, of the railway connection (another project that Y had contributed to realize). (...)

The reasons why 37 years have passed from the abrupt closure of the hotel and the opening of the building site for the New Culture Center are complex. But for sure, in hindsight, one can say that it was the necessary time, allowing us to pass from a first project of the city as financial center (...), to a second project that draws its strength especially from the construction of the New Culture Center on the spoils of the former hotel. The preservation of the hotel façades on the private side of the project was intended explicitly to express this will for continuity (...). With the construction of the New Culture Center, the future of the city is being built and a precious space is given back to the citizens.”

The curious aspect of the text is the recollection of the history of the space of the project through the exclusive celebration of the former hotel building, which however will *not* be included in the conceived construction project, as three years earlier (2004) it was sold to private developers who renovated it independently. The call for tenders relates to the construction of a theatre, a museum,



a park and other facilities, but does not include the former hotel, which however remains in spatial perceived continuity with the new culture center, as both look onto the same public square.

In the attempt to better understand why the former hotel is remembered with such prominence and what it does in the process of conceiving the new culture center, we have to look at how it is narrated and what spatiotemporal moments are related to it. Although the mayor starts his solemn recollection of the hotel acknowledging a “loss”, both in terms of perceived space (“did darkness fall upon the lounges of the most antique hotel of the city”) and of the lived, vividly imagined historical space of development it stood for (“the rich tourism of the XIX century” related to the “railway connection”), he constructs a narrative of *positive continuity*. This narrative, the mayor recognizes, is more an expression of a will (“to express this will for continuity”) than of a perceived continuity, because, for unspecified “complex” reasons, 37 years “have passed from the abrupt closure of the hotel”. In this *non-linear continuity* with the good old days, the temporarily lost space of the hotel is “given back to the citizens” and its past glory needs to be regained in the spatiotemporal “building of the future”. The text selectively remembers the distant past of “good” organizational ghosts (Orr, 2014), the great politicians involved in the “independence struggles” who made history also by planning and constructing the hotel. Recent events related to the hotel, recollected in many interviews, are not remembered here: the homeless people who abusively occupied the hotel, the fire that almost burned it down (1994), and especially the most recent decisions of the council to buy the area (1996), then to save the building from demolition through a referendum (2000), and later to sell it to private developers (2004), are all purposefully forgotten. The recent history of the last 37 years is even archived in positive terms as “the necessary time” for the city to progress from its financial identity to a “new and old” development project based on tourism and culture<sup>5</sup>. The mayor thus remembers a spatially close symbol that remains standing, the old hotel, elaborating on its historically demonstrated possibilities of the past as a perceivable memento of great possibilities for the future. By suggesting to repeat these possibilities from the past, the text draws a line of continuity to future projects, and remembers the future (Weick, 2006). In this way, remembering a temporarily lost space to be regained is here an organizational way of reproducing “what we once knew and hope to find again” (Bachelard, 2000/1950: 26).

The conceiving of space appears here entirely “bound up with the *histories* which are told of [it], *how* those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant” (Massey, 1995: 186,

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<sup>5</sup> Later in the process of construction, such ‘progress’ of the city’s non-financial identity, already underway and visible in 2007, would expose greatly the construction project to the main opposition party’s critiques. Council budgets, balance sheets and annual estimates (e.g. 2014) report the decrease of annual tax revenues from the banking sector (the city’s main contributor), from 55 Million CHF in 2005 to 12 Million CHF in 2013, straining the capacity to absorb the onerous investment on the culture centre.

emphasis in original). The future conceived space does not need to be further detailed, it is enlivened entirely by remembering the hotel as a historic, objectively positive *product*. This refuge to the past, where fond memories of happy times help to regain a general point of reference (in Modiano's terms), narratively manipulates history's sense of direction (Lefebvre, 1970), at a moment of particular uncertainty for the city's future (e.g. the end of its financial identity).

In the next section, we show how remembering a space does not suffice to "produce it" as lost and how it is through the conjoint work of perceived and lived space that space gets charged with a search for regaining past possibilities in conceiving a new space. Because the production of space always implies alternative possibilities that actors need to negotiate, such process is far from obeying a historical determinism, but is constantly fueled by uncertainty, power and political struggles that are importantly managed through organizational narratives of remembering. In this way, lost space may represent both a strategic manipulation of the past that tells stories of necessary continuities and a moment to critique the production process on the base of losses suffered and untaken paths to regain them.

### *1.5.3 Failing to Remember Space as Lost: The Church*

At a crucial turning point of the project, when the planning application was being filed and the decision to sell the former hotel was taken, the history of the former hotel was remembered in a very different way from the one just considered. A council member from the same party of the mayor, in a 2004 newspaper article entitled "*Ghosts of Today and of Yesterday*", thus critically assessed the production history of the former hotel:

"If we raise the hardly chaste publicity veil covering the phantasmagoric ruin of the hotel, a façade appears that could be compared to the decomposing face of a corpse... We want to ignore what lies immediately behind these façades... I realize that the population has decided on the preservation of the façades. (...) The restoration and renovation of the façades will be a giant work that, aside the necessary time, will require an army of specialists (...) I do not want to act cruelly towards a project in which a simple professional estimate would frighten the interested investors (the auction will start from 20 million, plus a 50 million warranted commitment towards the construction [of the former hotel]). It is with a certain anxiety that I think of the possible absence of people interested in such a risky investment or, in the best case scenario, in a cost overrun based on too optimistic estimates.

Mr W<sup>6</sup> had at the time defended the preservation of the façades because "belonging to the city's historical and cultural heritage... Unconsciously, [he] had given more importance to the arrogant gesture of the hotelier of the time, who, conscious of the city's potential, in an arbitrary and merciless manner, had pasted the new hotel to the church, covering a side of it and its splendid cloister. I ask myself today if, to restore

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<sup>6</sup> Mr W is a star architect who acted as president of the jury of the international design contest.

a jewel of the ancient city, it would not have been better to release the church from the oppression of an arbitrary façade and find a solution more suited to the original aesthetic of the place. It would have been the moment to redress an ancient abuse. What a pity!”

Differently from the celebratory rhetorical history of one produced building (i.e. the former hotel), here the history of production and of conceiving is contested and enlarges to consider the stratified relationship of the hotel with other buildings of other times (e.g. the church).

The *façades* of the old hotel are here not remembered as the symbolic memento of the rich tourism they inaugurated in the mid XIX century. They are instead presented as “*the phantasmagoric ruin (...) oppressing in an arbitrary and merciless manner (...) a jewel of the ancient city*”. The council member, evoking the perceived space of the hotel as a historically dominating bad ghost (Orr, 2014), tries to demolish its lived space related to the grand touristic legacy (which contributed to the referendum’s outcome and the saving of the hotel’s *façades*). The church is depicted as the victim of a reproachable production process (“the arrogant gesture of the hotelier of the time”), thereby challenging the historical conceived space that produced the hotel.

The narrative expresses, however, not only a sense of guilt for not having saved the church, but also an organizational anxiety related to the culture center. It implies not finding an owner “*interested in such a risky investment*” and capable (at a warranted minimum cost of 70 million CHF) of restoring the former hotel, whose proximity to the culture center represents a problem that a demolition could have avoided.

The attempt to frame the church as a more authentic (simply because older) *lost* “jewel” to be regained remains a rather abstract way of remembering, conceiving the church as superior, on the basis of architectural and aesthetic reasons. This way of remembering the hotel and the church has little possibility of changing the public construction project: on the one hand, the hotel effectively remains a lived space even if a “decomposing corpse” (as sanctioned by the citizens in the referendum); on the other, the church remains perceived as idealized and objectified (an inanimate “jewel of the ancient city”) and lacks a lived dimension. The council member’s attempt to remember the church as a lost space fails.

The excerpt illustrates that even if remembering is here portrayed as a narrative and often strategic practice, open to diverse positions and subject to change over time, it is not independent of the lived and perceived space it seeks to organize. Spaces have a duration and a materiality that means they cannot be remembered in ways disentangled from these features.

Moments have their material possibilities and “best before” time of production; the remembering shown in the excerpt above comes after the public saving of the façade, attempting to frame the church as lost (and the hotel as oppressor), an impossible “utopia” (a word used in other parts of the article). The freed or regained church remains at the level of a conceived “what if” organizational scenario, an untaken path that was however “imagined as possible”, framing as desirable the repetition of an ancient, hotel-free spatial arrangement. Remembering this space as “lost” is, however, an interesting moment, as an attempt to realize a possibility (Lefebvre, 2002/1961); even if it fails, it constitutes a history of conceiving that may later be recycled. Remembering a space as lost requires to tap into perceived *and* lived spaces of the past and the present. We find that only remembering a space that is or was both materially practiced and imaginatively strongly appropriated allows it to enter the planning process as lost, in this way time-tuning it to the present and future possibilities, features that the church lacks in the narrative considered.

Analyzing the characteristics of the dominant organizational narratives of remembering should not however lead us to conclude that all well-crafted narratives of remembering hold the same power to translate into a conceiving of space. Consider the stance of the star architect W: evoked in the newspaper article as defending the questionable “historical and cultural heritage” of the hotel, in our interview he explained why he withdrew as president of the jury of the international design contest. When the council decided to sell the former hotel to private developers, he felt a “betrayal of the project”. Although citizens saved the *façade* of the old hotel, he maintained, they had lost the property of the building to private, multimillionaire owners. The star architect saw this in a particularly critical light, also because, as a consequence, the new theatre became physically invisible from the lakefront promenade, covered by the massive private building. He exclaimed: “Where is the theatre?!... A city builds a theatre every 200 years... And they don’t show it. Worse! They hide it!” In his critical remembering, that summarizes an authoritative organizational reconstruction of the production process (yet not represented in the council planning documents), neither the new planned theatre, nor the former hotel are effectively regained by the city.

The two examples illustrate the organizational debates and lived feelings (anxiety, anger, sense of guilt, frustration) of the planning process; beyond the level of its official records, which neatly crystallize robust historical narratives, a much more lively contested process sees the clash of political and professional positions. Critical recollections of organizational actors further confirm that events could have unfolded differently. The necessary work of time or history expressed by the mayor in his selective remembering and skipping of closer “complex” times, cannot be advanced as a necessary *and sufficient* explanation for how events unfolded and spaces got

produced and reproduced. At turning moments, intentional and powerful histories and organizational remembering of space inform the way in which available possibilities are represented.

## **1.6 Discussion and Conclusions**

In the attempt of developing a more processual account of space, our analysis has focused on the temporal interactions between the three spaces of Lefebvre's spatial framework, with a particular attention to the implications for conceiving space. While other authors before us have argued that space planning involves far-reaching, non-linear and space-time relational processes (Healey, 2004; Graham & Healey, 1999; Massey, 1995, 2005), our study shows how and why this is the case, by elaborating in particular the organizational role of remembering and history in the process of conceiving. In their attempts to represent future spaces, actors deal with future's uncertainty (Modiano, 2007) by creating references to even very remote historical pasts. They do so, however, not by keeping a singular, stable reference point, but by drawing narrative continuities between different spaces and times through remembering. We have shown that, at different moments in the planning process, these narratives of remembering are recomposed differently, thus creating from the past new possibilities for the future (Lefebvre, 1970, 1971, 1975). What further adds to this non-linearity is also that, at particular moments, multiple narratives of remembering draw different relations between spaces and times of the past. The imbrication of material contingencies with these diverse narratives of the past allowed us to show how remembering the past differently creates new possibilities in the present and, more theoretically, why moments represent neither one nor infinite possibilities (cp. determinism vs. interpretivism discussion in Lefebvre, 1970, 1975).

By integrating the temporal/historical understanding of Lefebvre in his spatial framework, we have shown, more specifically, how perceived and lived spaces, over time, feed into the conceiving of space. Our empirical evidence has led us to theorize about remembering and how it temporally extends lived and perceived spaces of the past, particularly those where a sense of loss (and a longing to make up for it) is produced and enters conceiving. By representing the future repetition of past spaces as desirable, lost space is a spatiotemporal product of remembering (i.e. a narrative reconstruction) that needs to take into account the materiality of perceived and lived spaces. Comparing the different places in our cases, we can see, for example, that while the theatre was remembered as lived and lost, just after its perceivable duration was over (i.e. when demolition made it materially disappear), such an option of traumatic remembering/resuscitating could not involve the church, which was tried to be remembered as lost at a time when it was still materially present and well preserved. On the contrary, the hotel's more ruinous perceived state compared to

the church, better allowed for qualifying it as lost. This gives indications that for a space to become lost, a sociomaterial losing has to occur, and that remembering is therefore dependent on the sociomaterial spatiality of its context, and not free to remember whatever it wishes. In this way, organizational remembering is *relational work*, where mnemonic references are not only (differently and recursively) brought into a line of relative continuity, but also have to account for the spaces (lived and perceived) in which they take place. Remembering thus requires – similarly to what Hallbwachs (1980/1950) argued for collective memories – a spatial framework. If remembering space cannot account for spaces as merely set in stone, because narratives shape their becoming beyond materiality, we should also consider that remembered spaces are not just produced by words either, since the stone that spaces *are* made from (i.e. their materiality) constrains the narratives about them.

Moreover, the temporal sequence in which words and stones are organized, demolished (or dismembered) and remembered makes a difference. Lost space is in fact not only a sociomaterial, but also a spatiotemporally embedded product, and therefore subject to change during its long term production process. A comparison between the former hotel and the theatre can illustrate this point. While the continued material presence of the nearby former hotel (as perceived space) allowed for creating a spatiotemporal continuity between the golden age of tourism and the new conceived culture center, the theatre's perceived space had exhausted its "material" time, so its duration could be extended through remembering only by its imagined dimension (lived space). The examples show that lost space, reflecting through remembering the entanglement of narrative construction and materiality, attempts to specify and organize the temporality of this materiality. Lost space is creatively remembered by anchoring decisive moments to practiced and lived spaces of the past, therefore articulating the temporal unfolding of production, as a creation (and especially a destruction) of specific spatial possibilities. As Bachelard argued, in our search of the past we spatially fix a sequence of moments in spaces that can house our memories (1964/1958: 8).

From an organizational standpoint, lost spaces are relevant because their socio-materiality presents the affordance to enliven spaces of the past by temporally extending their duration. They can therefore express both a critique of moments responsible for losing past possibilities and a will to regain in the future a continuity with bygone times. Lost spaces can therefore be used strategically to motivate and justify the planning of certain spaces.

We want to clarify that the organizational remembering we analyzed through the notion of lost space, is not entirely like Proust's *madeleine*. Although sharing the search for a happy, vanished state of the past, lost space is different from Proust's involuntary memory of the *madeleine*. Lost space is in fact the purposeful product of a narrative, strategic practice that remembers spaces of the past to regain their possibilities in the present.

The notion of lost space has helped us to integrate some of Lefebvre's key notions of time, history and memory (1970, 1971, 1975, 2002/1961, 2003, 2004/1992, 2014) within his spatial framework (1991/1974). It has allowed us to add specificity to the temporal dynamics in Lefebvre's spatial framework (1991/1974): by extending the moment of conceived space to the process of conceiving, we could show how spaces of the past – perceived and lived – become part of the recursive efforts to conceive future spaces through remembering. Lefebvre's understanding of moments as multiple attempts to realize possibilities, and of possibility as a temporal, processual notion to grasp the never definitive or predetermined repetition of past moments in the present, helped us, more in general, to explore the *becoming* of space over time. We hope that this can complement understandings of how in the conceiving of space, spatial legacies (De Vaujany & Vaast, 2013) and historical interpretations of space (Decker, 2014) get narratively organized through remembering.

Despite these contributions, we are aware of several limitations of this study. First, whilst our research provides some indications that the organizational remembering of specific spaces at specific times shows intentionality towards certain objectives, further research is needed to explore the strategic use of these remembering narratives and how they are negotiated amongst multiple actors. This would include hypothesizing recurrent patterns in spatial planning, through critical questions like: Are planners demolishing, with a deliberate long term strategy of later commemorating spaces as lost and then justifying compensating or regaining plans? While our study fails to reply to this politically relevant question, it points to the interesting finding of the productive and mnemonic force of destruction.

Moreover, our analytical focus on the process of conceiving space through remembering has privileged a post-humanist explanation that acknowledges agency both for texts and the materiality of spaces, at the risk of de-emphasizing the human politics, struggles, and negotiations surrounding official planning documents. In particular, our focus on planning has operated with clear temporal cuts, for instance excluding the role of the “end-users” of space, as the cultural center was not built and therefore occupied at the time of our study and the voice of users was not focal in our data. Our study has, however, shown that planners are no less “users of space” as they inhabit (live) the conceiving with remembering past spaces. In this way, our move from the moment of conceived space to the process of conceiving (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013) has showed how the planning of space is far from the cold, abstract and detached space of planners (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), but is tightly entangled with lived and perceived spaces. This points to an area we could only cover loosely here: the everyday living of conceiving. Conceiving has, indeed, a history with a small h, made of all the plans that do not get built, which would allow further processual inquiries into space planning and construction.

Our contribution brings time and space together in foregrounding the sociomaterial role of remembering in space planning. For “space reasons” (and not because we forgot, or ran out of time) we had to skirt major related themes; we trust however that our call for a spatiotemporal and sociomaterial analytic frame may fertilize debates on organizational memory (Schatzki, 2006; Walsh & Ungston, 1991), organizational remembering as practice (Feldman & Feldman, 2006) and indeed the historic turn of organization theory (Bucheli & Wadhvani, 2014; Rowlinson, Hassard & Decker, 2014).

We have taken remembering and history as space-specific phenomena to theorize about how different times and spaces get relationally organized in the conceiving of space. Our findings introduced the concept of lost space and contributed to a better understanding of the organizational remembering of space. As a lively product of remembering, lost space is a powerful narrative mechanism that strategically aligns convenient times of the past towards intended objectives of space planning.

Finally, we hope our study has convincingly argued that Lefebvre was not exclusively interested in space. His work on temporality and history may help to bridge the spatial and historic turns in organization theory.



## 2. PAPER 2<sup>7</sup>

### Is space time's blind spot? Towards a processual theorizing of space representation<sup>8</sup>

“I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep rooted; places that might be points of reference, of departure, of origin [...] Such places don't exist, and it's because they don't exist that space becomes a question, ceases to be self-evident [...] Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It's never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it. [...] Space melts like sand running through one's fingers. Time bears it away and leaves me only shapeless shreds:

To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest some precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.”

Georges Perec, (1997/1974)

#### **Abstract**

This paper addresses an often neglected level of process organizational analysis – space. A processual account of space shows how spatiotemporal assumptions matter in organizational practices of representing. We review theoretical challenges related to space representation, moving from static assumptions of space as simple location, and from critiques of the spatialization of time, to views of lived space as relational simultaneity of multiple durations. We show how these different conceptualizations of space underlie construction management practices, and influence the planning and construction of a great culture center. Our findings suggest that organizational representations of change reflect a separation of time and space as unitary and discrete containers. These representational practices influence how the temporal becoming and change of planned space is managed. While topographic representations maintain useful stabilizing functions, they fail to account for the multiple lived, relational and temporal dimensions of space, a relevant blind spot of process analyses.

#### **Keywords**

space, time, process, representation, change, performativity

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<sup>7</sup> This paper is based on a homonymous paper, co-authored with Jeanne Mengis and presented at the Process Symposium of 2014 in Rhodes. It is currently under review at *Organization Studies*.

<sup>8</sup> The title is partly inspired by Michel de Certeau (1984), who brilliantly summarized: “the functional organization, by privileging progress (i.e., time), causes the condition of its own possibility – space itself – to be forgotten; space thus becomes the blind spot in a scientific and political technology” (p. 95).

## 2.1 Introduction

Process organization studies have repeatedly insisted on the need to pay special attention to time and to how organizational phenomena unfold temporally (Chia, 2002; Hatch, 2002; Hernes, 2014; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2013; Langley & Tsoukas, 2010, 2016; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In so doing, process-oriented research rarely accounts for time's counterpart, namely space, which risks being treated as a less processual, or as a static, mere representational dimension. The scarce attention to spatiality seems to emerge in the time-driven argument that "thinking process" orients around themes of temporality, wholeness, openness, force and potentiality (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014, pp. 5-10). The doubt arises: is space (becoming) time's blind spot?

As the question risks falling into the deadlock of a time-space dualism (Lorino, Tricard & Clot, 2011, p. 774), conceptualizing time and space as two separate phenomena, we embrace a relational view to explore how space can integrate (*not* substitute) a time-sensitive process theoretical agenda. Never and nowhere are phenomena a-temporal or a-spatial and organizational process scholars are in a prime position to draw time and space together in explaining organizational phenomena.

We propose a relational account that enquires into how theoretical representations and assumptions of space emerge in the organizational practice of representing space and how these representations matter in organizing. Understanding performative effects of representations is ever more important for process organization studies, which suggested that theoretical and practical representations simplify, or "abbreviate" the world (Cooper 1992) and that the territory's latency always exceeds its representation on a map (Cooper, 2005). Yet, we seldom reflect on which understandings of space underlie particular organizational mappings, and what such representations pragmatically achieve (Lee, 1998). Without mistaking a map for its represented territory, we investigate the organizational *mapping* of space and how *mapping*, in turn, organizes. We ask: How may process organization studies advance a time-sensitive, but *space-aware* theorizing of organizational representation?

We address this question by focusing on the empirical setting of construction management. In particular, we will show how construction managers organize changes to the planned space of a great culture center, a situation when the interconnection of space and time appears more evident. We thus focus on the temporal becoming of space, by analyzing data on organizational representations of spatial change. We review how space representational problems have been theorized in organization studies and in selected authors of process philosophy and geography, weaving in classic theoretical reflections on the separation of space and time. We then analyze the performances of practical organizational representations of space and time.

A process theoretical view is well equipped to add to the organizational research on space (Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008; De Vaujany & Mitev, 2013; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010). It can contribute to a nuanced account of space, seen not as a given context (see Perce's opening quote), but as evolving over time (Halford & Leonard, 2006; Hernes, Bakken & Olsen, 2006; Hydle, 2015), and struggling reflexively with its own representational challenges. Process organization scholars have fought against assumptions of the *a priori* existence of the so-called contextual features of organizations, such as space and time (Tsoukas & Chia 2002). However, while organizations are "bound up in various ways with time and space" (Holt & Hond, 2013, p. 1588), process organization scholars rarely articulate explicitly that if "the very notion of 'process' involves the development of some phenomenon over time [...] the organizing process also involves space" (Lorino & Tricard, 2012, p. 209). Much can be gained if process scholars reflect on their understanding of space, especially since a process view guards us against "thinking in terms of divisible space" (a discrete, independent dimension separable from organizing processes), and rather invites us "to think in terms of undivided continuity" (Nayak, 2008, p. 181). While a space-aware organizational process approach opposes "a vocabulary of stasis, representation, reification and closure, with one of intensities, capacities and forces; rhythms, cycles, encounters, events, movements and flows..." (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, p. 47), we propose, rather than to shun representations, to address the performativity of static theoretical vocabularies and practical representations. Since "how we represent space and time in theory matters, because it affects how we and others interpret and then act with respect to the world" (Harvey, 1990, p. 205), it is important to address the performances also of anti-processual representations of space and time.

This paper presents an unconventional text organization. After presenting the empirical context and methodology of the study, we first introduce briefly, then review extensively theoretical problems of space representation in two sections dedicated to theoretical conceptualizations of space. Both sections are followed by empirical findings on the practical performance of organizational representations of space. A final discussion elaborates on the contributions and limitations of this study.

## **2.2 Context of study**

We draw on a two-year longitudinal ethnography – deriving from an interdisciplinary research financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) – on the planning and construction of a great culture center. The observed architectural project is the single highest public investment in the recent history of a small city, with the council investing over 230 million CHF and the region

(the Canton) participating with 5.6 million CHF. The construction was coordinated with private real estate developers, who acquired from the city (for over 20 million CHF) the adjacent XIX century hotel on the same plot of land to build luxury lakefront apartments. Planning started in 2000, construction in 2009 and the center was inaugurated in 2015. The project includes a museum, a theatre-concert hall, a bookshop, a café, administrative offices, an underground car park, a refurbished convent, a major square, a XVI century church, and a hillside area to the rear transformed into a park.

The study initially aimed at understanding the coordination practices of a public-private enterprise network, focusing on the communication between multiple stakeholders with specialized knowledge, different concerns and interests. Space emerged as a theme in its own right, raising questions on what it meant to various actors and how they conceptually and organizationally represented space to manage the multiple changes observed over time in planning and construction.

### **2.3 Data collection and analysis**

Fieldwork unfolded between November 2011 and May 2014, with both authors actively involved in data collection. We collected archival data of over a 100 public and confidential project management documents, conducted 60 semi-structured interviews with major stakeholders, and carried out 36 days of participant and non-participant observation (focusing on building site's interactions between the town planning staff and the general contractor).

During data collection, the critique of constant changes to planned spaces, even well into the construction phase, emerged as an important theme from interviews, observations and documents. Many changes posed notable challenges to the construction site, where different representations attempted to manage the transforming building. Informed by a processual, relational and performative approach to the map-territory spread or differential, we focused on how space representations performed in managing the changes (e.g. how represented changes unfolded, or failed to unfold in practice). The dynamic between the material solidity of the physical space versus the relative mobility of the representation (“one may not be able to move the mountain itself, but it is easy to move a model or map of it”) (Cooper, 2016/1992, p. 183) led us to compare the spatiotemporal assumptions of different representations.

The documents we collected ranged from public council resolutions (e.g. annual budgets and estimates) to confidential organizational tools (e.g. everyday to-do lists, diaries and files tracking the administration of contractual changes, council biannual reports on the project's progress, personal notes, plans and sketches). Particularly important for this paper, each deviation from the general contract required an official request – called contractual amendment (CA) – to change the

master plan with the general contractor's deliverables of the culture center in terms of time, quality and cost (the holy trinity of construction project management). The CA was considered "*the most important working instrument in the relationship between the client and the general contractor*" (from the council's bi-annual progress report, 2011). Changes could be suggested by both client and general contractor, and then either got approved and integrated into an updated agreement, or rejected maintaining the original plan and contract. We obtained two Excel files used by the council and the general contractor to record the details of each change (in total 153 from the start of the construction in late 2009 to mid 2013), thereby documenting the costs involved, the dates and contents of formal communication exchanges of all proposed changes.

Based on Whitehead's understanding that everything *is* how it *becomes* over time and space (Bakken & Hernes, 2006, p. 1610), our data allowed us to trace how space changed, in particular how it was conceptualized in various organizational tools (e.g. contractual amendments), and how these representations mattered in managing the project. To understand the performative effects of the spatial representations, we conducted a set of additional observations and interviews. During six participatory observations, we helped the council project manager architect to archive all project-related documents, gaining a temporally stratified idea of the project's paperwork. Thirty-eight non-participatory observations (including political steering committee meetings and building site meetings) helped us to analyze how spatial representations were part of organizational practices and how they were enacted and made sense of by practitioners (Weick, 1995). To this end, we also conducted 60 semi-structured interviews, which allowed us to take stock of the perspective of key actors' at different temporal stages of selected changes. As recently remarked about process organizational analysis, the challenge was "to capture the ongoing experience of individuals and to avoid representing their experience as a linear sequence of discrete moments in time", enabling "respondents to think carefully about the process of re-construction of the past and the future" (Hernes, 2014, p. 180).

After a quantitative descriptive analysis of the 153 contractual amendments, we focused our qualitative analysis on five major changes: the change of the museum's holding-structure material; the change of purpose of spaces at the former convent (from a hostel for artists to office space for culture managers); the progressive reduction in volume and scope of the park; the addition of one floor to the center with plans to create a restaurant; finally, the modified accessibility to the theatre stalls for people with disabilities. For each of these changes, we initially proceeded rather inductively and compared proposed and implemented changes, the duration of the changes' realization, the spatiotemporal interdependencies with other elements of the construction, and the challenges managed by the representations of each spatial change. Emerging results did not allow for judgments about the (in)effectiveness of specific spatial representations, but rather pointed to

their multiple and, to some extent, contrasting effects. Aiming to better understand these contrasting results, our reasoning became more abductive (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013) and we inquired on what theoretical assumptions of space (e.g. simple location, multiple durations) informed the observed practical representations and how these contributed to explain the project management problems.

This paper, in line with an ethnographic narrative, shows in-depth how the multiple space representations mattered for the realization of one “single” change. The important approved change, from now on identified as CA104, rendered more accessible the theatre hall for disabled people. During the construction, new regulations introduced stricter requirements that public buildings needed to comply with in terms of their accessibility for disabled people. Although not immediately mandatory for the project, the council decided, at considerable extra costs, to comply with the new federal rules. This example not only illustrates a common scenario of new institutional representations of space normatively shaping construction practices, but also captures the interesting case of a major change introduced very late in the process, which we analyze over time from various vantage points. We first reconstructed the change through the architect’s narrative and visual representations just after its approval (July 2012). We then captured the construction manager’s recollection one year after this process (April, 2013). Finally, we followed up our interview with the architect in January 2014, long after the change was implemented. Multiple data sources contextualize, beyond the punctual spatial change considered, the broader change management process of the project.

#### **2.4 Towards a process-minded theorizing of space**

Theorizing space and time poses above all a challenge of representation. Broadly understood, “representationalism is the belief that our knowledge represents the world as it is” (Tsoukas, 1998, p. 781), which process scholars find very problematic (Lorino et al., 2011). Refusing the ontological distinction between representations and things waiting to be represented, which underlies representationalism, processual approaches prefer to “focus inquiry on the practices or performances of representing, as well as on the productive effects of those practices” (Barad, 2007, p. 28).

Much as the map is not the territory, the (theoretical) word is not the world (Tsoukas, 1998). In organization studies, time and space are often theorized as abstract concepts, and referred to metaphorically (Boland, 2001), following a substance ontology of discrete fixed entities, in stark contrast with a relational ontology of becoming embraced by a process approach (Cooper, 2005, 2007; Nayak & Chia, 2011; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Wittgenstein's (2001/1921, p. 5) concise definition of the world: "*the world is all that is the case*" – by which he meant all that happens, "the totality of facts and not of things" – is a useful springboard to sketch two ontologies and diverging interpretations of space and time.

A first interpretation, deeply disconcerting for a process view, resembles closely the following equations:

$$\text{World} = \text{Space} / \text{All that is the case} = \text{Time}$$

Corollary: (Space = container of things/objects) / (Time = container of facts/events)

Such ontology suggests space as a given, relatively static container that accommodates objects, and *in which* – through a discrete and linear movement *in* time (a superimposed container) – events occur. This interpretation assumes space and time as relatively static and separate containers, reflecting a substance ontology that privileges being over becoming (Prirogine, 1980), discrete individuality over the interactive relatedness of activity, and separation over wholeness (Nayak & Chia, 2011; see Rescher, 1996, p. 35).

To present an alternative, more process-ontological interpretation of Wittgenstein's statement, we borrow from the words of anthropologist Tim Ingold (2006, p. 892): "To my mind the world is a world, not space; and what is going on in it – the processes wherein its manifold forms arise and are held in place – are processes of life, not time". Ingold clearly refutes the equation: world = space. He explicitly mentions the processes of life (i.e. the manifold arising forms of the world) and denies also the equation on time. This ontology of space and time positively refutes the first interpretation, and echoes with the insight that "the actual world is a process and (...) the process is the becoming of actual entities" (Whitehead, 1929, p. 22). Accordingly space, instead of being separate from (or even opposed to) time, can be theorized in a relational manner, "*as process and in process (that is space and time combined in becoming)*" (Crang & Thrift, 2000, p. 3, emphasis in original). This suggests that time and space are equally part of, and actually relationally combined in the lived process of becoming, thereby not independent of one another. In what follows, we dig deeper into theoretical explanations of why static understandings of space underlie *also* process representations of space separated from time. We then empirically analyze the space assumptions of construction management representations observed in a particular case of spatial change. A double dialogue between theory and data explores how process organization studies may better account for space representation.

#### *2.4.1 Theoretical representation of space as simple location, indiscernible or separated from time: the problem of the spatialization of time*

When representing time and space, a major theoretical problem consists in separating the two into single, fixed and discrete dimensions. Whitehead (1926) tackled this issue through the notion of *simple location*. For him, the view of clearly identifiable things located in space rests on a "fallacy

of misplaced concreteness” (see Nayak & Chia, 2011, p. 285). Simply located things are understood in terms of being in a “definite finite region of space, and throughout a definite finite duration of time, apart from any essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time” (Whitehead, 1926, p. 72). Whitehead (1926) argues that no element, neither objects and activities, nor time possess “this character of simple location” (p. 72), but all reach out temporally (in terms of duration) and spatially (in terms of distance or extension) within a complex web of relations. According to Nayak and Chia (2011), organization studies often fall for the fallacy of simple location, misrepresenting organizations “as clearly circumscribed entities locatable in space rather than as dynamic and evolving configurations of relations” (p. 285). The risk lies in conceptualizing space as the static container/context where organizational events temporally unfold (as in the first interpretation of Wittgenstein), and leads to problematic views of “the organization and its environment”, as if they were “distinct domains separate in space and time” (Cooper, 2016/1992, p. 183; cp. Spoelstra, 2016).

Aiming to overcome static notions of organizational space as simple location, the quest is to think space and time not independently from each other (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Lorino et al., 2011). This is a representational problem of separation, which originates from the critique of the *spatialization of time* (Bergson, 2001/1889). By representing time spatially along a graphical arrow from left to right, the claim is that time is spatialized, stripped of its vital, non-linear dynamics. This argument however assumes that space *tout court* (and not just the topographic representation of time) is a flat, static and a-temporal container. Yet the never a-temporal space and the nowhere a-spatial time are locked in an unescapable relation, especially in matters of representation: “[t]he two simultaneous and actual infinites discern themselves and intertwine in representation. Each is represented in the other and cannot be represented except through this other” (Lefebvre, 1980, p. 44)<sup>9</sup>.

The trap to avoid is rendering space and time analytically undistinguishable in their representation. Deleuze (1988), developing on Bergson (1944/1907), explains the problem: “we make time into a *representation* imbued with space. The awkward thing is that we no longer know how to distinguish in that representation the two component elements which differ in kind, the two pure *presences* of duration and extensity” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 22, emphasis in original). Bergson’s philosophy of time suggests a clear analytical division between duration, “endowed with the power of qualitatively varying with itself”, and “space, which never presents anything but differences in degree (since it is quantitative homogeneity)” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 31). This reading of Bergson helps us to trace a

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<sup>9</sup> The translation from the original French is ours.



separation of time from space, with a theoretical representation of the two dimensions in processual terms, clearly referring to their distinctive ability to change. In simple equations:

Time/duration = qualitative variation (in kind) with itself / (heterogeneity)

Space/extension = quantitative variation (in degree) with itself / (homogeneity)

Such dichotomy implies methodological rules, such as stating and solving problems in terms of time rather than space (Bergson, 2007/1946). Bergson criticized explicitly the representational mix-up between the two dimensions: “language was largely responsible for this confusion; duration is always expressed in terms of extension; the terms which designate time are borrowed from the language of space; when we evoke time, it is space which answers our call” (Bergson, 2007/1946, p. 4).

Conflations of space with extension, or with distance between fixed points, still underlie spatial analyses of *objective space*, “designated by a trio of coordinates” and “graphically plotted along three perpendicular coordinate axes” (Schatzki, 2010, p. 7; cp. Hydle, 2015). In this first quantitative conceptualization of space, variations are indeed represented in terms of objectively measurable *quantitative homogeneous extensions*, or *distances* between fixed points (e.g. increasing/decreasing square meter office space availability, or relocating offices to an address measurably distant from the previous). Parallel representations of *objective time* undoubtedly still dominate through instrumentally measurable quantities, independent from human organized activity – like “the time required for the Earth to orbit the Sun” (Hydle, 2015, p. 645; Schatzki, 2010), or clock-time, representing time as unfolding homogeneously in a spatial/visual variation (Lefebvre, 1980).

Differences in how space and time change influence process scholars’ time-driven views of space, echoing bergsonian, anti-spatialization concerns. How topographic representations render time static, at the expense of network, relational representations (Tsoukas, 1992), surely remains an important issue. Taken too far, however, it risks creating a blind spot for a processual theorizing of space. Bergson’s view that “we cannot make movement out of immobilities, nor time out of space” (2001/1889, p. 115) suggests the slippery equation:

Time = movement / Space = immobility

Bergson tackles philosophically the limitations of graphical representations of time that are inherently static (in his terms spatial) in nature. Spatializing time in theoretical representations means taking self-contained, topographical divisible extensions – like the measured movement of the hands of a clock around a dial – for temporal duration. This surely poses the problem of muddling up the analytically distinct characters of space and time. But solving this through separation risks underestimating how space and time are instituted as one-dimensional, so that “different times are not simultaneous but successive (just as different spaces are not successive but

simultaneous)” (Boyarin, 1994, cited in Osuri & Banerjee, 2003, p. 141), reducing spatiotemporal movement to sequential, linear steps. We now turn to see how a representation of space as simple location, unrelated or separated from time, matters in practical accomplishments of space construction and change over time.

#### *2.4.1.1 Organizational representation of spatial change in practice: administrative tools performing a clear separation of space and time*

The great efforts in managing a complex building’s deviation from the original plan illustrate that how spatial changes were represented made a difference: the management of contractual amendments (CAs) took the public client (i.e. the city) and the general contractor (i.e. the constructor) considerable time. Many other spatial representations also suggest that construction management orients to pre-established plans/contracts that represent space as a simple location, separating it from the rich time of its becoming.

The observed representation practices of both contractual parties show that they struggled to anticipate the durations of spatial changes. The problem was retrospectively made sense of (Weick, 1995), explaining how forecasts had relied on deceiving representations, orienting toward an original inaccurate map to draw other maps, and failing to anticipate the temporal spread between map and territory. The call for tenders had initially described what needed to be built. On the base of such organizational representation of “what had to be the case” (a projected “contractual world” in Wittgenstein’s terms), constructors calculated costs and times and submitted their tenders of how they intended carrying out the project. This latter representation, in the case of the winning general contractor, proved too optimistic. The misjudgment of the project was blamed on the call for tenders. Consider how the construction manager justifies himself (20/4/2013, Excerpt 2.1):

“Here we were facing an execution work plan, where in some parts there was almost a construction programme, or a level of detail, I’d say almost up to the contractor (...) anyway complete and very detailed. Our idea and our target was a complete plan, so very little design duties and, instead, a lot of production staff, because I have to build a project, which has already been thought through, over many years and in all the minor details. This was kind of our idea... Then, clearly, more than a hundred changes, variations, great, small, some accepted, some not... This implied a work of engineering and architecture that in my view was not foreseeable when we made our tender, particularly for the detail we were given.”

Excerpt 2.1 suggests that the space representation of the call for tenders, with its very detailed technical plans (i.e. “a complete plan” with all the “minor details” “thought through”) communicated a sense of fixedness and a-temporality of space. The only spatial change foreseen, on the base of that representation, was the quantitative, homogenous and sequential “variation in

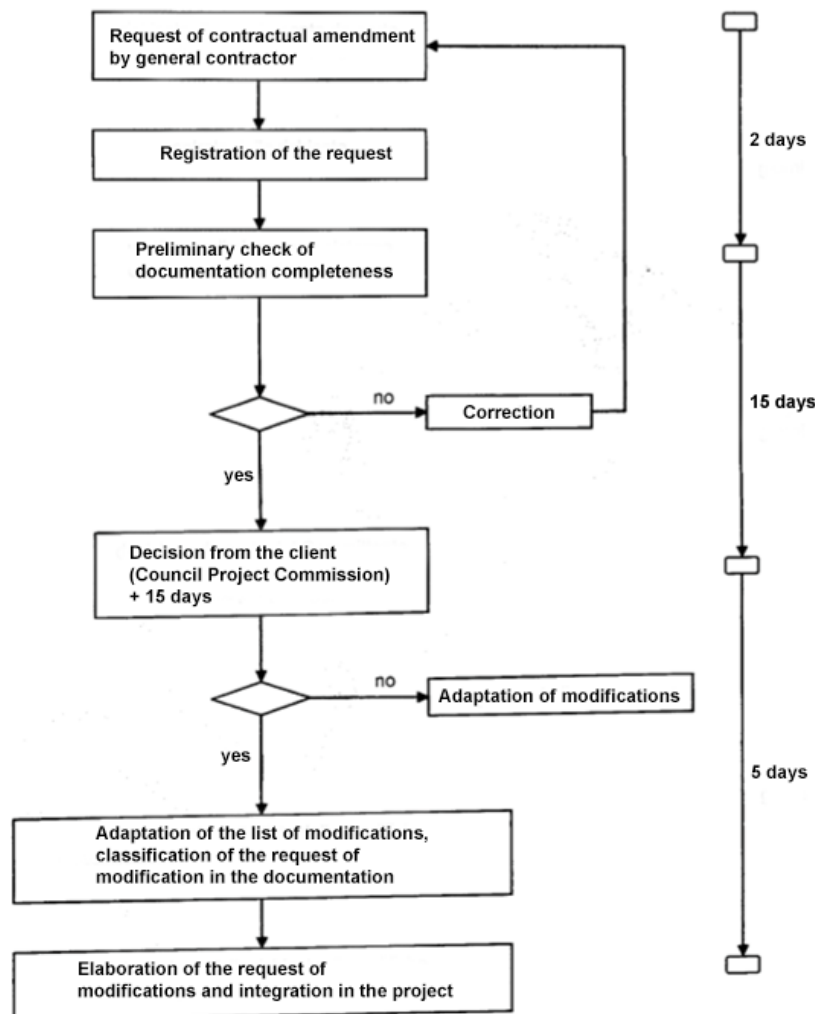
degree” connected with carrying out the project: from first brick to last, to use a visual metaphor. The task was to build the quantities of space *as* represented, to replicate the detailed plan in all its pre-defined qualities, taking the call for tenders as a sort of bricks’ blueprint. Enough time had apparently been allocated to design, as the plan had been worked out “over many years”. In other words, time for space to vary qualitatively, to reflect a change “in kind”, went unaccounted for. In taking the represented space for the world, the general contractor did not anticipate changes involving much “work of engineering and architecture” (i.e. further planning and design), but expected the project to require mostly “production staff” (i.e. material execution according to contract specifications).

Contrary to such static and sequential representation of space, the project continued to change well into its construction phase, and both parties struggled to manage the necessary changes emerging over time. Each proposed change to the initial plan required a contractual amendment (CA), which had to be spatially and temporally well-bound, indicating what single artifact would change, and with what cost and time implications. Both client and constructor could suggest changes. After assessing the change together, they either approved to integrate it in the contract, or rejected it, maintaining the original plan.

The characteristic feature observed in the CA as a representation of spatial change was its a-temporal assumption of simple location. The procedure circumscribed change to a well-bound space, and homogenized its temporal horizon by containing it in fixed steps, thus spatializing time (for an overview on the administrative process of the CA, see Figure 2.1).

Consider the flowchart of Figure 2.1, through which the town planning staff briefed the general contractor on the management of CAs. The bureaucratic procedure of straightforward, temporally-bounded, homogeneous steps of paperwork exchange was envisioned in theory (i.e. on the map) to last 22 days in all, independently from the “kind *and* degree” of the changes involved. Some changes just modified minor details, while others added a whole floor and restaurant, or suggested the inclusion of a lift to connect the centre to the underground car park.

OUTLINE OF THE REQUISITES FOR CONTRACTUAL AMENDMENTS (CA)



**Figure 2.1. Flowchart of the contractual amendment management process (from council town planning briefing to general contractor, translated, but in original layout).**

So in practice, on the building site’s territory, the appraisal of each CA required a much longer, less homogenized assessment. The management of each of the 153 analyzed CAs took, on average, 214 days, almost ten times longer than anticipated. A much wider relational network loomed behind the bureaucratic check of formal documents representing ‘single’ changes. The “relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time” (Whitehead, 1926, p. 72) proved challenging as spatial change revealed a plurality of spatiotemporal and socio-material dynamics (more of which in the next empirical section).

The lengthy assessment of the many changes played an important role and led to a general dissatisfaction with the managerial tool of the CA, as confirmed by most interviewed actors. A telling building-site joke renamed (i.e. re-presented) the whole culture centre by changing its acronym – composed of letters L, C and A (C and A standing for Culture and Art) – into “Long Contractual Amendments”. Many interviewed actors found the CA to be underperforming also on

account of its output. Not only did the administration of CAs take much longer than expected. As the construction manager points out in Excerpt 2.1, while some of these changes “great and small” got accepted, a lot were rejected: a quick descriptive overview confirms that the approval/rejection ratio was approximately fifty/fifty. Rejected CAs did not take less to manage either, which explains why most actors saw the process as largely inefficient, “wasting half of the time to no effect”, as some informants put it.

Looking for organizational representations of time, we noticed, in the Excel sheet with all information on the 153 observed CAs, a spacious column with the promising heading: “observations on timing”. However, the cells of this column were left consistently blank. What does this *absence of time* tell us? Are time implications so fleetingly instable to require constant, impractical updates? Never accounting for the temporal impact of spatial changes, for instance how delivery dates would shift, demonstrates an enacted separation of space from time, or signals awareness of the practical impossibility of containing temporal implications within single changes? Time was not entirely absent from the Excel sheet. Key events of each change were sequentially tracked by the town planning in the spatialized form of a chronology listing all exchanges with the general contractor (for CA104 see Figure 2.2).

Number	Situation status of the practice
104	02/02/2012: TP requests to GC a feasibility control of the intervention; 07/02/2012: GC, via letter, presents 3 solution hypotheses; 10/02/2012: GC, via email, newly forwards the plans in electronic format; 05/04/2012: GC, via email, sends the notification documentation (only design); 17/04/2012: GC, via email, sends the price list (revision A), complete of execution costs; 31/05/2012: GC, via email, sends modules 1 and 2 reviewed (revision B); 01/06/2012: GC, via email, completes the documentation with updated price list (revision B); 01/06/2012: TP anticipates approval of the proposal; 18/06/2012: TP authorizes the proposal, subject to council approval; 18/06/2012: TP + GC adapt the sum accounting for the execution plan; 21/06/2012: GU, via letter, sends architectural, structural and plant engineering design.

**Figure 2.2 Detail of the Excel sheet of the council list of interactions relative to CA104, translated, but in original layout (TP = Town Planning; GC = General Contractor).**

Figure 2.2 shows a schematic representation of time that allowed to order events in a contained, well-bounded and closed sequence of administrative events from start to end, with no future projection towards organizationally related events. The Excel topographic cell merely contains text input: the chronology is not classically spaced, listing one date per line, but dates and corresponding events are simply stacked. The cell is thus used as a text repository to be scrupulously updated, allowing to trace the process backwards step by step. Note also that the CA chronology records no comments about the events’ significance or meaning, but provides purely objective, quantitative specifications of the spatial change (e.g. “price list”, “execution costs”). These lifeless, static

representations played important roles in organizing, acting as a sort of receipt register for many incoming documents, achieving a simple graphical filing into clear boxes of different spaces and times. This was important in light of the entangled context, in which actors managed up to 40 different CAs simultaneously, and needed to organize, retrieve and quickly process distinct paperwork.

Overall, we observed that while practitioners were not unaware of the processual quality of time (as the existence of the cell “observations on timing” suggests), they rarely addressed it, leaving it empty and practically managed the complex task of spatial change by separating time and space, focusing on the spatial targeted outcome without specifying its temporal implications. The change that added a ramp for disabled people to reach the first row of the theatre (CA104), further supports this finding (see Figure 2.3).

**ADDITION NOTIFICATION**

Increased services    Decreased services    Modified services    Additional services    Project modification

Client's request    General contractor's request

**1 Request of addition nr. 104 – Design of new connection ramp for disabled 1<sup>st</sup> row of Theatre Revision B**

Project	[Redacted]	Date	[Redacted]
Part	THE (for Theatre)	Attachments	- Specifics: 104 construction THE 1st row disabled Rev. B - CA 104 - 120229 CA 104 Connection disabled THE – preliminary plan
Location	Lateral pathway theatre between axes N and M	Basis	Tender contract of the 26.11.2009
Description	Design and executive planning of architecture, structures and plant engineering related to a footbridge going from height of 4,69m to height of 3,71m, including the necessary coordination with the police fire. Change of all architectural, structural and plant engineering executive plans already produced or being produced Change of the existing structures already executed	Repercussion on deadlines	Impacts on execution times to be evaluated with the client on the base of the latest revision of the work programme
Cause	Client's request of the 23.1.12	Repercussion on costs	Net Total VAT included   CHF   593.568,00
Author	[Redacted]	Observations	[Redacted]
Date / Resp.	31 may 2012	To be compiled by controller!	Stato*: P.F.   Data: cl. dp. 2012   Resp. DT- E11 Stato*:   Data:   Resp. Stato*:   Data:   Resp. Stato*:   Data:   Resp.

TP *[Signature]*   form 1 – addition notification   *[Signature]* 1.06.2012   Version 2 – 28.01.2010

**Figure 2.3 Signed form of CA104, with basic description and summary translated, but in original layout.**

Figure 2.3 shows the page of the official signed form sanctioning approval of CA104. A concise summary of what is being signed, in the standard form of boxed components, helps the signer to understand the change at hand. The ticked boxes neatly identify it as a client’s request of an additional space. The short, factual description clarifies that the change involves an added footbridge, connecting two exact points in space: one at 4,69 m, and the other at 3,71 m of height. The total cost is 593.568 CHF. With such precise coordinates, the spatial change is clearly confined to a mere matter of quantities (both in Swiss francs and in objective space). Within this representation, suggesting predictability, it is interesting to note the box titled “Repercussions on deadlines” in red, which explains: “impacts on execution times to be evaluated with the client on

the base of the latest revision of the work programme”. The assessment of the temporal repercussions of the spatial change is postponed, and made contingent on other representations, related to the general advancement of the construction (“the latest revision of the work programme”). In so doing, while such omission acknowledges the spatiotemporal entanglement, space is separated from time, privileging a spatialized account that isolates the change *within* its a-temporality and fails to calculate the outward temporal impact on deadlines that its execution implies. Time is represented as a relevant dimension, but *external* to the specific spatial change. Although omitting to fix time could indirectly acknowledge its spatiotemporal plural relationality, extending beyond the single space representation, the impression is that the CA procedure fails to assess a) any quantifiable addition in time, and b) any qualitative effect on other spaces of the project. We shall see in detail the multiple spatiotemporal implications of this change, but for now it is worth focusing on how even a major change like this, after five months to get approved, did not address temporal repercussions. This is surprising since every single day of delay came with a contractually sanctioned penalty of 30.000 CHF for the general contractor. Perhaps the red of the “Repercussions on deadlines” box communicated a sense of urgency. In fact, later in the collaboration, the collective temporal implication of the many change requests had to be acknowledged. In October 2013, the general contractor and the city avoided litigation through an addendum to the general contract, in which the contractor was entitled a compensation lump sum of 7.8 million CHF, and discounted 15 of the 24 accumulated months of delay, with a commitment on the part of the client to stop contractual amendments. Representing spatial changes in a void of temporal relations clearly had its costs.

We find that construction management draws on representations of space as simple location, quantifying each spatial change and isolating it both from time and from other related spaces. Space and time were treated as discrete unities or single, independent entities, divisible into homogenous, standard quantitative objective components (work hours, days of document administration, price of materials and professional services). Change in space emerged as a self-bounded matter of difference in degree (i.e. more or less of the previous units of measurement). Graphical representations reduced space to an objective dimension. In so doing, construction managers not only spatialized time, but also space. The separation from time flattened space to its own topographical reduction on a plan. We now turn to more processual theories of space, then show how CA104 prompted also qualitative understandings of spatial change and representation.

#### 2.4.2 Theoretically representing the temporal becoming of space via its multiple, lived durations

Henri Lefebvre tackled the representational problem of equalizing time and space (1980). Instead of replacing “temporal analysis with spatial analysis”, he addressed “the relation between space and time, and in the process rethought both concepts” (Elden, 2004a, p. 170). Adding to Bergson, Lefebvre (1991/1974) argues that “time is distinguishable but not separable from space (...). Space and time thus appear and manifest themselves as different yet inseparable” (p. 175). Lefebvre overturns Bergson’s insight on the impossibility to make time out of space, inquiring into “*the temporal process which gives rise to, which produces, the spatial dimension*” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 130, emphasis added). To account for the productive temporal processes of spatial representation Lefebvre (1991/1974) distinguishes between “conceived” and “lived” spaces or – as he also called them – between “representations of space” and “representational spaces” (p. 33). Representations of space indicate “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (p. 38), constituting the dominant space in any society. Representational spaces grasp “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’... This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (p. 39, emphasis in original). Lived space foregrounds how space is qualitatively experienced and addresses the concern that quantitative and objective organizational representations of space (conceived or planned space) are mistaken for space as we practice it (what Lefebvre called “perceived space”) (Lefebvre, 1991/1974). Lived space attempts to bridge the dissociation between the spatial and the temporal (p. 175), explicitly addressing the map-territory, theory/practice differential, and raising the political issue of how abstract representations (re)produce space.

The gap between abstract representations and life’s practical experience (activity and duration) did not escape Bergson, whose processual reflections on time actually echo in much of Lefebvre’s work on space (Fraser, 2008). Bergson’s famous melting sugar experiment helps us to understand the lived dimension of time:

“If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, willy-nilly, wait until the sugar melts. This little fact is big with meaning. For here the time I have to wait is not that mathematical time which would apply equally well to the entire history of the material world, even if that history were spread out instantaneously in space. It coincides with my impatience, that is to say, with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract as I like. It is no longer something *thought*, it is something *lived*” (Bergson, 1944/1907, p. 12-13, emphasis in original).



The passage teases out the *lived experience* from mathematical, instantaneous and objective time. The impossibility of extending or reducing the time of neither the perceived materiality undergoing the experiment, nor of the experimenter's own life, grasps the simultaneity of misaligned times changing together, where the containing capacity of abstract time, potentially applicable to "the entire history of the material world", fails to compress the unfolding of lived time, which 'overspills' in Bergson's impatience. In simple words, objective and perceived time do not correspond in lived practice. Both Lefebvre's *lived space* and Bergson's *lived time* refer to the practical experiences of space and time, which deeply contradict their abstract representations as precise, unitary and discrete containers. William James articulated a similar critique of one-dimensional, abstract representations of the world, which fail to reflect life's processually multiplying spatiotemporal relations:

"That *one Time* which we all believe in and in which each event has its definite date, that *one Space* in which each thing has its position, *these abstract notions unify the world incomparably*; but in their finished shape as concepts how different they are from the loose unordered time-and-space experiences of natural men! *Everything that happens to us brings its own duration and extension, and both are vaguely surrounded by a marginal 'more' that runs into the duration and extension of the next thing that comes*" (James, 2012, p. 71, emphasis added).

James expresses the perceived disconnection between the unifying abstractions of 'simply locatable' time and space, and the unordered, unbounded experience of human life. In refuting unitary container-notions of space and time, the quote offers an ideal process reflection on Wittgenstein's definition of the world as everything that is the case: "everything that happens...runs into the duration and extension of the next thing that comes". Life continuously unfolds as duration *and* spatial extension, breathing into space a future-oriented "marginal 'more'", a becoming beyond "abstract notions".

Bergson, Lefebvre and James all reflexively denounce the shortcomings of abstract concepts vis-à-vis the vitality of the world. Space reveals a *temporal, plural and lived movement* disconnected from abstract, unitary and static representations. The reason why it is particularly challenging to theoretically represent space in more processual ways is that "[r]epresentation – indeed conceptualization – has been conceived of as spatialisation" (Massey, 2005, p. 20). Representation takes on spatialization's ability of setting multiple things and concepts side by side, as successive, discrete entities, a key aspect of organization (Cooper, 2016/1992). Representation is mostly understood as fixing, or rendering a-temporal the mapped territory, so space results deprived of the vital, temporal dynamics of its production: "[t]he equation of spatialisation with the production of

‘space’ thus lends to space not only the character of a discrete multiplicity but also the characteristic of stasis” (Massey, 2005, p. 23). Insisting too far on the representational affordance of divisible space (its spatializing container qualities) deprives space of its multiple, non-objective lived durations. Massey’s suggestion, resting on “the interpenetration, though not the equivalence, of space and time” is to define space as “the dimension of multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories-so-far” and “of a multiplicity of durations” (Massey, 2005, p. 24).

A step toward a process-oriented representation of space is to better understand the performative effects of space representations (Barad, 2007). This implies not so much *avoiding* the static vocabulary of organizational representations of space (however fruitfully embracing alternative non-representational vocabularies, see Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, 2013), but analyzing what different representations and vocabularies achieve (Lee, 1998). The act of *representing* reveals over time how space becomes in practice, produced by a plurality of lived experiences and interpretations. Space becomes in a dialectic, political and lived tension between multiple overlapping durations (Massey, 1992, 1995, 2005), organized by both static and dynamic representations. We now return to CA104 to analyze the latter.

#### *2.4.2.1 Representing organizationally the temporal and emotional lived becoming of space*

The general contractor’s construction manager well synthesized, in his interview, the multiple implications of the *single* CA104 change as he lived them (20/4/2013, Excerpt 2.2):

“In the original design, the seats for disabled people were in the last row (...) Then a new norm was introduced. It wasn’t retroactive, but far more protective, demanding equal access to all kinds of seats for disabled people. We reached the compromise of granting access also to the first row, so we had to insert a ramp here ((pointing to a plan, see Figure 2.4)), cutting the staircase... One problem was to find an agreement with the architect, because we actually removed... You know, he had these two important stairways of access... Then this change arrived very late. We had already built the stairways, so we had to organize a demolition... But the city strongly wanted it so we started discussing in February 2012, made all the new plans and estimates and by May it was approved and we proceeded. But this was a variation that changed a lot. Every time you touch something, it’s not only about that single part. You need to consider, even from a statics point of view, there’s a great pressure coming from the mountain, an opposite push from the lake. Then all is anti-seismic in case of an earthquake. It’s not the usual iron reinforced structure in cement but pre-stressed cables help the structure’s resistance. The loads, the so-called design parameters are very tight. (...) So every time we touch something, we have a problem with the architecture, with the statics and with plant engineering, and so everything needs to be coordinated again.”



**Figure 2.4** Photo-frames of the video-taped explanation of the CA104 by the construction manager, collected during the 30/4/2012 interview (see Excerpt 2.2).

Excerpt 2.2 provides a different appreciation of spatial change in general, and of CA104 in particular, compared to the first empirical section. The construction manager explains that CA104 had implications not only for a discrete, “single part”. It was “a variation that changed a lot”. It required even demolishing and rebuilding parts of the theatre. The change does not resemble a dominating conceived space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), imposing an abstract simple location (Whitehead, 1926), but was organizationally lived in its concrete multiple relations. CA104 did not happen as a single event, but indeed ran into the duration and extension of the many things that came next (James, 2012). These included spatially related material forces, and multiple disciplinary and social concerns, simultaneously entangled in the process. The statement: “Every time you touch something, it’s not only about that single part (...) we have a problem of architecture, of statics and of plant engineering” clarifies the *simultaneity*, *multiplicity* and *relationality* of space. It is clear that CA104 was not merely a quantitative variation, or a difference in degree (Deleuze, 1988). Far from representing an event in a fixed world, this qualitative spatial change, resulting from many related acts transformed that world, and the new space emerged in a mutual, simultaneous constraining and enabling spatiotemporal relations with other objects, forces and people. The change did not simply find the necessary m<sup>2</sup> or move a homogeneous spatial substance (e.g. the seats for disabled spectators) to a different position, with clear objective spatial coordinates (e.g. from last to first row). It involved enacting multiple, qualitative and quantitative differences in degree and in kind, organizing re-orientation to its many diverse representations (e.g. the design parameters, the architect’s design, plant engineering plans etc.). A public space adapted for a fruition of disabled people is a good example of a complex container, whose becoming followed an entangled set of social and material relations: the change was influenced by social relations reaching spatially and temporally beyond its construction (e.g. a new national norm for disabled

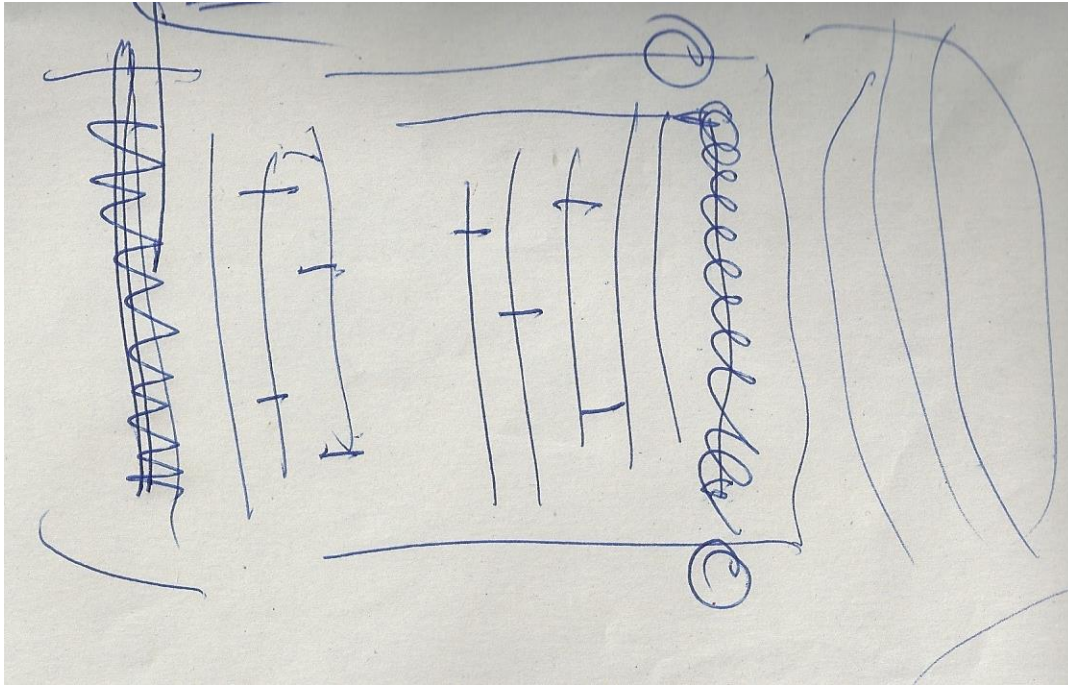
people), and coped with multiple, spread material relations (e.g. the opposed pressures from lake and mountain, the reinforcement of pre-stressed cables).

The construction manager complained that dismissing this change as a discrete intervention to a single part (i.e. simple location), without acknowledging all its problematic relations, was indeed a gross misrepresentation that failed to grasp what performing the spatial change involved in practice. The abstract representation of Figure 2.1, reducing CAs to a sequence of document exchanges, greatly contrasts with the lived reconstruction of Excerpt 2.2. This map-territory gap contributed to underestimate the many project management activities and durations to produce CA documents, when ‘everything needs to be coordinated again’.

Excerpt 2.2 illustrates also the complex temporal, non-linear becoming of space over time: the demolition of the already built staircase suggests an extraordinary intentional organizing move backwards in the temporal becoming of space, enacting a spatiotemporal qualitative reversibility that allowed a new move forwards. This seems in contrast with Bergson’s insight that space presents only “differences in degree (since it is quantitative homogeneity)” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 31). It is difficult to think of a demolition as a mere increase or decrease in quantity of space (available, built, etc.), as it literally makes “movement out of immobility” (Bergson, 2001/1889, p. 115).

The entanglement of simultaneous and successive, quantitative and qualitative variations of space *and* time is missed by abstract representations, but lived in a multiplicity of interpretations. While CA104 repaired, according to the representation of the new norm, a “spatial discrimination” towards disabled people, their (dis)location was all but simple, raising two qualitatively different meanings as illustrated by the architect’s account of the history of spatial conceiving of CA104 (02/7/2012, Excerpt 2.3):

In 2009 a new norm came out that I find contradictory, but I’ll explain. In 2008, (...) the minimum obligation was to put three disabled people in the theatre hall. Three. We wanted to put seventeen. (...) However, we placed them all on one high row. We had placed them here as they had the security exit here ((pointing at the last row on an improvised sketch, see Figure 2.5)). We did not decide this by ourselves, but after consulting the regional association for disabled people. Now, what does the new norm say? That to be *democratic*, you know? Disabled persons have to be placed like this, *everywhere* ((stabbing random pen marks perpendicular to the rows, see Figure 2.5)). And what about the fire regulation? Fire tells me that if tomorrow this burns, disabled people are the last to exit, because they need to be taken out. Before, one needs to evacuate everyone else. Now, imagine a disabled person here in the middle ((pointing to a mark in the middle of a row in Figure 2.5)). All hell would break loose... [...] How would everyone get out? They’d need to kill one another. [...] I don’t find that very *democratic*.



**Figure 2.5 Sketch by the architect of the project on CA104, collected on the 2/7/2012 interview (see Excerpt 2.3).**

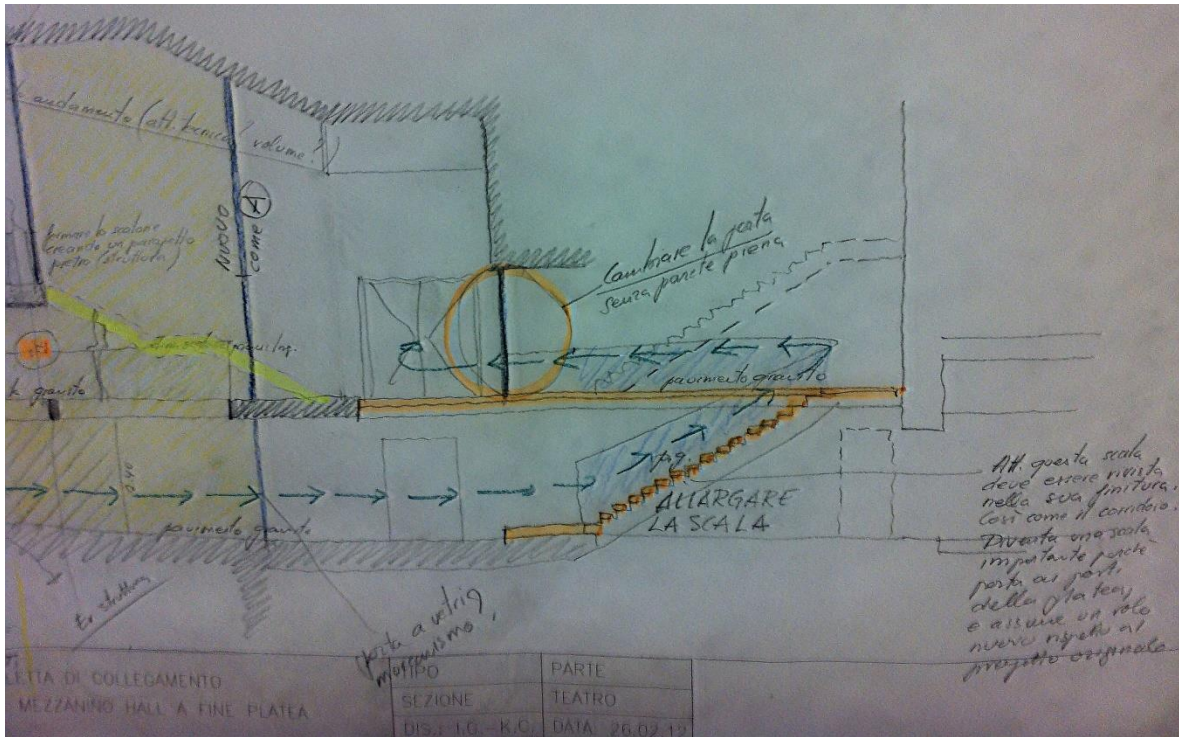
Excerpt 2.3 shows that the new norm on the equal access of disabled people in public spaces was not a neutral representation, exempt from critical interpretations. Conceiving the access of disabled people to the theatre was organizationally perceived and lived (or practiced and imagined) over multiple temporalities (Lefebvre, 1991/1974). Already prior to the new norm, the architect had engaged with the regional association for disabled people, and the later abstract spatial representation of democratic access did not meet unconditional approval. While everyone in principle (on an ideal map) may wish for an equal practical fruition of space for all users, disabled included, the normative prescription of such a possibility faces multiple concerns, such as guaranteeing security in case of fire. We can thereby note the conflicting temporalities and projected representations of spatial changes: the ideally conceived future of democratic access to public space for all disabled people, versus a concrete future, projected towards the practical need to evacuate space in the shortest time in case of fire. The history of CA104 told by the architect differs from the chronology of Figure 2.2, building also on an emotional, lived representation, which we monitored over time.

Excerpt 2.3 stems from an interview with the architect just after the change was approved, when his own lived experience about the decision was fresh in his memory, but its consequences still had to materialize. Over the following months CA104 would dramatically transform his plan. The demolition of *his* staircase, remembered by the construction manager (“he had these two important stairways of access”, see Excerpt 2.2), signals the delicate nature of negotiating with someone,

who, after painstakingly “fixing” the project in the detailed call for tenders “for many years” (2002-2008), see Excerpt 2.1, saw an entire staircase disappear because of a norm he found to contradict other normative representations (i.e. fire regulations). In a follow-up interview in January 2014, the architect guided us through some of the most important changes, including CA104. Asked if disabled people needed to be near emergency exits, the architect exclaimed (29/1/2014, Excerpt 2.4):

No! Because if this burns, no, the last to exit is the disabled person. Before, everyone needs to exit as the disabled must be helped. In our plan, this was fine, even in case of fire, because they could exit directly. If you place a disabled person here, a disabled person there and there ((pointing on a plan))... I explained it to the wizards of Zurich! I said “But if I have a disabled person here, one there and another there, how can the others escape? It’s a mess!”

A year and a half after his first interview with us, the architect repeated his doubts and feelings almost in a word for word citation of his previous account. This shows that the multiple stories-so-far and histories of space (Massey, 1995, 2005) are not necessarily always changing. The architect’s strongly held conviction on his conceived space was lived (i.e. inhabited by his imagination) in a persistent way over time. He never obstructed CA104 and the project welcomed disabled people also to the first row. He however justified his original representation of space against the abstract, falsely democratic representation of “the wizards of Zurich”. Abstract conceptions often conflicted with lived (and affective) organizational representations of space, as the latter faced the material temporal complexities of conceiving space in practice, while the former appeared a-temporal idealizations of space. During our second interview with the architect at his studio, we bumped into more representational evidence on how CA104 had absorbed his professional life (see Figure 6).



**Figure 2.6 Detail of a wall size sketch of the CA104 variation.**

Figure 6 is the detail of a large, pencil-drawn, scribbled representation of CA104, found hanging on the greater part of a large wall. The working organizational representation seems to embody “the temporal process which gives rise to, which produces, the spatial dimension” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 130). On top of the drawing, a 9-item list, with the heading of “Changes”, details material and social concerns (e.g. change of materials, aesthetic notes on modifications, who still had to be consulted and why); the drawing is saturated with future projected notes and comments highlighted in bright colors, and traversed by bold green arrows indicating the sense of direction, along which users, also represented, would cross the space. Figure 6 is a lived representational space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974). Notes articulate explicitly an emotion-sensitive and aesthetic imagination. Importantly from a temporal, processual perspective, the drawing is scribbled over with spatial actions all but fixed and yet to be undertaken. Such non-fixity is marked by a pencil drawn micro-becoming of all the fragmented, yet intensely lived spaces related to CA104, as exemplified in notes like “this staircase now becomes important because it leads directly to the seats and gains a new role compared to the original design...”, “change the door” or related uppercase memos like “ENLARGE THE STAIRCASE”. Figure 6 well captures the “marginal ‘more’” mentioned by James (2012), representing CA104 as all but a change that involved a single space at a single moment in time. This representation of space grasps the process of representing space and its performance: the architect had to conquer a space that was never given, never his, but

part of a widespread organizational process of conceiving. In view of space's (disturbing) non-fixity, he had "constantly to mark it, to designate it" (see Perec's opening quote).

## 2.5 Concluding discussion

Our theory-data dialogue has shown the implications of different ontological assumptions of space and time: as separate, unitary containers, and as entangled plural relationalities. In managing and making sense of spatial change, practitioners used organizational representations of space and time informed by both assumptions. The official representations (e.g. the call for tenders, the general contract, the contractual amendments, the flow charts, and the Excel sheets) mostly embodied an understanding of space as simple location (Whitehead, 1926) and separated from a linear spatialized time (Bergson, 2001/1889). Managing the spatial changes involved however also representations (e.g. sketches, architectural drawings, notes, narrative reconstructions), with a radically different understanding of the temporal becoming of space, a dimension lived through a "simultaneity of stories-so-far" and entangled in a "multiplicity of durations" (Massey, 2005, p. 24).

Based on these findings, we contribute specific insights to a process-friendly time-sensitive *and* space-aware theorizing of organizational representations. First, representations pointing to the "containment" of space play an important role. Our analysis showed that, in managing a building site, times and spaces were materially and socially interwoven in complex ways, and that not accounting for these relationalities in the main managerial representations proved very costly (remember the 24 months of delay in the construction and the millions of CHF in loss, which forced the abolishment of the contractual amendment as a managerial tool). In spite of this important finding, we refrain from discarding a-temporal representations that do not account for space's multiple relationalities (its connections to other spaces and times) and lived qualities (its conflicting meanings and interpretations). Not all reductive representations are useless (Cooper, 2016/1992), and our performative analysis suggests that space representations assuming space as simple location had important productive affordances. They allowed the organizing of change into clearly contained areas, responsibilities, and a well-bounded, albeit misrepresented, sequence of administrative steps. Differently from more relational, network representations, topographic representations (Tsoukas, 1992) worked to contain and fix space, creating container-spaces separated from time. Such fixing was found to be important also at the level of organizationally lived space, which, although imbued with multiplicities and temporalities, also required stability for abstract idealizations of space. The change granting equal access to public spaces for disabled people has shown that spatial becoming, because it is permeated with effort, emotions and strong



convictions, brings about concretely applied, situated representations that persist over time. Recursive attempts to achieve stability are thus important for a processual view, and unitary concepts of space and time, in all their finished and theoretically limited shape (James, 2012) play a significant practical role in these attempts. The new norm on disabled and existing fire regulations were unitary, important representations (i.e. solving one aspect at a time). Rather than exchanging “a vocabulary of stasis, representation, reification and closure with one of intensities, capacities and forces”, embracing a non-representational approach (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, p. 47), a process organizational view can build also on representations and vocabularies that “contain” the relationalities of space and time, achieving the unity, closure and stability necessary to organizing. After all, we all use maps to orient ourselves in territories, just as the architects and engineers needed representations of space and time to simplify their complex construction tasks. Famous process organizational analyses have shown how at times any old map, to the extreme of a map of a different territory, may guide lost actors (Weick, 1995)<sup>10</sup>. The homogenized, spatialized briefing on how to deal with contractual amendments through abstract temporal steps allocated to document exchange is indeed a simplified misrepresentation of a far more complex process; but what would an alternative, process-aware briefing look like? Would recognizing the impossibility of fixing time ahead of particular changes and contractual amendments achieve any organizational result? Non-processual, “abbreviated” organizational representations (Cooper, 2016/1992) of space and time build on abstract notions of unitary time and space play different roles from processual ones. They simplify reality and “unify the world incomparably” (James, 2012, p. 71), continuing to organize our world in practice (Harvey, 1990). We thus do not conclude that it was “wrong” to separate space and time in our organizational representations. Problems rather lied in a lack of awareness about the potential blind spots of such simplicity. Our performative analysis of organizational space representations hopes to be a step towards recognizing space-aware representational limitations and tradeoffs.

Acknowledging the importance of problematic representations as containers does not undermine representations that account for the multiple and lived dimensions of space. The second indication of our study is, in fact, that official managerial representations rarely reflect awareness about the inseparability of time and space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), and such entangled, processual nature of space emerges only in less official representations. During the practice of (re)conceiving space, practitioners drew on several space representations that indicated relationalities with different times and spaces, expressing the affective investments of the organizational production of space. These

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<sup>10</sup> Weick (1995, p. 54-55) tells the story of a troop of Hungarian soldiers, who, lost in the Alps, manage to find their way back to their camp using a map, which, without their knowing so, represented the Pyrenees instead of the Alps.

processual representations remained “dominated” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), despite the struggle of practitioners to perform organizational conceptions of lived and practiced space, against its abstract representations. Our analysis provides indications on why this might be the case: processual representations proved complex and not practical enough (remember the mostly empty cells awaiting “observations on timing”), and lacked legitimacy vis-à-vis institutionalized representations of space (e.g. Figure 2.5 vis-à-vis the representations of the “wizards of Zurich”). Abstract space and time dominate by economical clarity. Aware of the limits of representing space as a simple location independent of time, some representations however “temporalize space” and account for its inexorable plural becoming and its *multi-temporal relationality*, so that the blinding effects of conceptual abstraction do not produce impractical spaces. Such representations need to be further researched, and their lack of unifying simplicity (and related performativity) critically assessed vis-à-vis well-bounded, fixed representations. Tradeoffs between representations that integrate benefits and costly differences from what is represented, may advance via a process organizational analysis of the temporality of space.

Because the map, however processual, is never the territory (Cooper, 2005), we call for a better understanding of the distinct performative effects of different kinds of representations of space, and of the ontological underpinnings that inform them. The delays in managing contractual amendments were due, in part, to practitioners mistaking the map for the territory: implementing represented spatial changes, they were surprised that new relationalities continued to emerge despite their attempts to fix space. By sharpening our knowledge on the different performances of representing, we can better understand how (or if) spatial representations contribute to the problems they intend to solve. Managing change through abstract, objective representations of space with locatable boundaries and linear pathways – thereby spatializing not only time but also space – leave unaccounted for multiple spatial and temporal relationalities, further explaining the important delays stratified over time.

Knowledge on the organizational performances of different representations contributes not only to an increased reflexivity in their use, but also to an appreciation of how they relate to one another. Our study suggests that much can be gained if we move from single, isolated representations of space, to analyzing how representations build on each other, how they unfold over time, and what their effects are both on the territory and on other maps. In fact, we showed the important performative effects not only between the map and the territory, but also between multiple – theoretical and managerial – representations or maps. How we theorize space in organization studies can therefore influence how practitioners represent and manage organizational phenomena. Space became a blind spot for process organization studies partly because important philosophical debates by process scholars claimed, as extensively reviewed, that time was space’s blind spot. It

has also been argued that space exercises a sort of non-processual tyranny in organizational analysis (Boland, 2001), where space is equated with spatialization. Our paper wished to initiate a conversation on how space can instead become an integrated part of the agenda of process organization studies. As spatial language and topographic representations (i.e. spatialization) do indeed fail to account for the lived, plural and relational becoming of time (Bergson, 2007/1946; Tsoukas, 1992), we believe that process organizational scholars are in a prime position to build theory on space and time representation. In particular, process scholars can leverage on their rich work to overcome the topographical reduction of time dynamics to inappropriate divisible and measurable arrows, and use it to address the similar representational reductions of space.

To this end, we repeat the call for process-sensitive accounts of space in organizing to focus on the *practices* of representing space and their performances, rather than on single – whether abstract/unitary or lived/relational – representations. A focus on performances and practices is often seen as opposed to a focus on representation (Barad, 2007). Our analysis suggests, instead, that construction managers engaged in elaborate socio-material practices of representation, that are informed by theoretical representations of space and time, which matter for how space is produced (Lefebvre, 1991/1974) or enacted (Weick, 1977). A performative analysis of practices of representing space and time can thus contribute to understand how, out of a position of emergence and entanglement, organizations struggle for a continuously precarious stability, even in the case of something seemingly so ‘given’ and ‘objective’ as space. If representations and theoretical conceptualizations are interpreted as spatialization (Massey, 2005), then time is ripe to distinguish space and spatialization and to question taken-for-granted conceptualizations of space.

Our study is only a first step in this direction and is subject to several limitations. In reconstructing a varied, longitudinal picture of a ‘single’ spatial change through different representations of it, our analysis focused primarily on changes requiring formal amendments to the general contract, and we presented, close up, exclusively one out of over 150 changes. This choice inevitably forced us to overlook other wider-scale organizational representations of space and time in construction management (i.e. Gantt charts, building site journals, etc.). The specific choice of CA104 as representative of the organizational change process can also be questioned as the change was approved without fierce contestation between the actors, which characterized many no-less-representative rejected or approved CAs.

Our study of a construction project foregrounded the socio-material process of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), but should by no means imply the equation: construction = becoming of space. Spaces neither start their temporal becoming with construction, nor do they end with demolition. As multiple durations of space extend to other spaces and times (James, 2012; Massey, 2005), buildings are transformed by different representations after construction (De Vaujany &

Vaast, 2013; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011), but also before construction and after demolition (Petani & Mengis, 2016).

While our analysis focused on what organizational representations of space *do* (Helin et al., 2014), a lot remains to be done to better understand not only how space and time affect organizations, but also how organizations in turn influence multiple spatiotemporal dynamics through abstract representations, sayings and doings. The world may change differently if we strengthen a processual awareness of space's quantitative *and* qualitative, socio-material *and* temporal shifting features. These may be better managed if grasped as a relational (and political) plurality (Massey, 1992, 1995, 2005), heeding the limitations of "abbreviated", albeit useful, representations (Cooper, 2016/1992) that indeed draw on dominating, abstract assumptions of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974). We believe that representational *and* non-representational approaches to organizational space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012), substance *and* process vocabularies (Weik, 2011) can fruitfully complement a theorizing through both abstract constructs (which continue to be key in organizing) and their practical translations in managerial practice.

Deep spatiotemporal relations are in need of research across different historical and geographical organizational settings (where changing uses of words and material representations can shed light on the nature of organizing). Process organizational scholars wishing to develop a spatial awareness, can ponder on the following remarks and question:

"As time goes by imagined-and-real things-and-relations change. As time goes by abstract ideologies become ontologically transformed and confirm or alter the concrete morphology of spatio-temporal materialities on earth. As time goes by space-and-time make a difference which makes a difference. As time goes by, how do we represent the meaning-and-matter of life in specific timespaces

from other timespaces?" (Gren, 2001, p. 208,

*spacing* in the original).

### 3. PAPER 3<sup>11</sup>

#### **Third way management in a public construction project: coordination on the horizon of absent spaces, sacrificed compromises and what could have been**

“When we compromise, something is always lost. Moreover, we do all of us want our own way, want the way which seems to us right. I can get my own way by imposing my will upon others or by joining my will with that of others. To impose one’s will upon others sounds so crude that there are few people who will confess to wishing to do that, but suppose that I am willing to dominate and to acknowledge it; even so, is it the process most likely to succeed in the long run? I think not, because the fellow executive on whom I impose my will, next time will try to impose his will on me. I think that the principle of integration rests on the most profound philosophy of the ages, and that it is also decidedly to our interest in the long run.”

Mary Parker Follett (1927)

#### **Abstract**

We theoretically develop the economies of worth (EW) as a framework of organizational coordination. We challenge the theoretical assumption that evaluation through tests in single orders of worth is logically superior to coordinating through third way tradeoffs between two or more orders of worth, defined as compromises. After reviewing organizational research on the EW understanding of compromise, we empirically illustrate how testing and compromising processually shape each other across critical situations. By methodologically focusing on the under-theorized costs of sacrificing the benefits of compromise, we expand the EW horizon of uncertainty, critique and sacrifice, showing the actors’ compromising capacity.

Data on coordination practices in the construction management of a public culture centre show how compromising and testing are not binary, mutually exclusive and alternative modes, but they co-constitute each other processually over time. Actors show an awareness of sacrificed EW in terms of future-oriented pragmatic articulations of what could have happened.

**Keywords:** absent space, compromise, convention, coordination, critique, investment in forms, sacrifice/cost, test

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<sup>11</sup> This paper is based on a previous version, titled “Waste, loss and compromise in space design and construction”, which was presented at the conference *Spaces, Constraints, Creativities: Organization and Disorganization* of the Asia Pacific Researchers in Organization Studies (APROS) in Sydney, December 2015.

### 3.1 Introduction

The discursive and material practices through which actors coordinate to build a publicly funded center for the arts well illustrate the organizational and managerial activities of testing and compromising. Different stakeholders converge, and often clash, trying to deploy their professional expertise and corporate interests through widely accepted evaluation conventions, sociomaterially constructing the project in conflicting ways. Actors navigate over time across misaligned administrative forms, morals and controversial tests, balancing sacrifices and benefits of their investments through pragmatic, makeshift arrangements that aim at reducing the uncertainty of coordination by enhancing a common understanding of whom and what counts.

In public construction projects, the conventions of private and public organizations show misaligned temporal constraints, different ways of assessing spaces' functions, and related diverging ways of coordinating to failures and missed objectives. This paper contends that compromising is a key organizational and managerial skill, the absence of which is found by practitioners to greatly harm coordination. The absence of material objects and social values that actors know are available but that over time get rejected in uncompromising closures of controversies on the base of clear cut values, form an important source of critique. In this view, we suggest organizational coordination, not just as an ordering together of interdependent activities, information and knowledge, but also as the *overcoming of multiple, disparate and opposed moral appraisals on people and objects, in critical situations subject to public scrutiny and critique.*

Recent organizational literature on coordination foregrounded that coordination mechanisms like objects, representations, rules and routines accomplish integrating conditions such as accountability, predictability and common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). Yet not all actors judge these mechanisms in the same way, and evaluations also change over time. A practice perspective on the process of coordinating has in fact suggested the importance of performative-ostensive cycles in the continuous creation and modification of these mechanisms, showing particularly how absence shapes coordinating activity (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012).

Coordination is the interactive process that integrates a set of interdependent tasks (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) and management studies on interrelated know-how and expertise have emphasized “the temporal unfolding and situated nature of coordinative action” (Faraj & Xiao, 2006: 1155). Organization and management research rarely addresses the fact that such temporality and situation often proves a contested process of coordinating diverse judgements on the same action (Favereau, 2007). In other words, the coordination of organizational behavior is not just a matter of information or knowledge competence, but involves a *moral dimension* where legitimacy, in

critical situations, depends on the qualification of actors, objects and their relations, which get ordered according to alternative conventions of the common good or economies of worth (EW) (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). These orders of worth recur in reducing the uncertainty and cognitive disorder about prevailing values that hinder action during controversies; they allow in fact to re-establish order and organize the values of a criticized situation, co-ordinating it by applying tests that assign worth. Of course situations vary over time, and actors orient themselves on the outcomes of past tests and on the uncertainties looming on the horizon.

Compromise has been theorized as the fragile composition of such diverging justifications (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Different notions of the common good frame action according to opposed evaluations, prioritizing certain coordination mechanisms and principles of equivalence over others. Compromise instead involves, albeit at the cost of sacrifice and loss, a more or less *integrated* composition or joining together of such differences (see opening quote). Two parallel aims underly this paper. The first is to introduce the EW as a relevant model for the study of organizational coordination as a moral ordering of critical situations, reviewing organizational research on compromise. The second, building on the first, is to contribute to the EW model itself by further inquiring into the processual relationship between compromising and testing and focusing on how the absence of alternative administration forms and spaces, and a refusal to compromise, help us methodologically to account for the broad pluralities of sacrifice of critical situations.

Classic literature in management proposed long ago “co-ordination as a reciprocal relating of all the factors of a situation” and “as a continuing process” at the core of organization (Follett, 1932: 291). In this mutual, processual and continuous relationality of all the factors of a situation, noticeable absences (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012), and awareness about sacrifices and losses resulting and stratifying from previous confrontations are important. They help us to grasp coordinating not as a single activity of integrating interdependent tasks, but as a conflictual and relational process of compromising between multiple ordering modes, whereby what is judged a lack or deficiency by one actor is not perceived as such by another, originating critique and uncertainty. Organizational scholars call for research on the “interplay and adjustments between modes of coordination” (Gkeredakis, 2014: 1500) to understand how organizations over time shape coordination mechanisms and conventions to produce accountability, predictability and common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). Compromising is an integrating mode in this process. The coordination integrating condition of common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) relies on conflicting high order moral conventions of justification and critique (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Actors show the organizational ability of hedging between these value repertoires, or ideals of the common good, composing different pragmatic arrangements in the act

of compromising, whenever single orders of worth fail to gather consensus as the unique, general way to test a particular controversy. Opposed justification and critique principles allow in practice alternative framings of *critical situations* to attribute worth to objects and actors through tests, which accomplish an equilibrium via the closure of action-hindering disputes. Tests however are not always applicable, and compromises are possible as more or less stable conflict-suspensions, worked out between two or more orders of worth: participants acknowledge the incommensurable values on which they differ, favoring the common good of overcoming the quarrel, without clarifying the principle of their agreement (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006: 277). In compromises, actors sacrifice the specific coordination benefits of the component orders of worth for the sake of suspending a crisis: “each side gives up a little in order to have peace, or, to speak more accurately, in order that the activity which has been interrupted by the conflict may go on” (Follett, 1926: 2).

This paper contributes to theories of organizational coordination by inquiring into the dynamic through which *actors assess the sacrifice or cost involved in failing to compromise, when carrying out tests in single logics*. We inquire into how organizational coordination implies a processual interplay not just between the tests of opposed logics or economies of worth (EW), but also between tests and compromises, and between alternative forms of compromise and their benefits. Contrary to views that claim a logical superiority of tests as coordination mechanisms, relegating compromises as second-order options (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), we argue that the absence of compromising produces systemic, intersituational sacrifices in organizational common understanding and therefore in coordination.

The economies of worth (EW) approach has rarely been considered by organization studies as a theory of coordination (Gkeredakis, 2014), although it accounts for both the materiality of objects and representations (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) and the ostensive, critical and performative capacity (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999), that actors are equipped with to change coordinating mechanisms (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012). The approach shows how abstract, ideal types are used pragmatically to frame action, compose differences and adjust conventions to the critical action-hindering situations at hand. The EW model addresses not only the domain of economics, but a plurality of economies of coordination (Diaz-Bone & Thévenot, 2010), contributing the important organizational and managerial insight that *action coordination implies also coordinating moral judgments on action*, (“the way which seems to us right” in the opening quote), assessing the worth of actors and objects in a critical “relating of all factors of a situation” (Follett, 1932: 291).

Moreover, the conceptual architecture of the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1987; 2006/1991) specifically sustains a definition of organization as a device to compromise between different forms



of coordination (Thévenot, 1989, 2001). Organization studies are thus well positioned to build theory on compromise, and this paper expands the framework in this direction.

The EW model understands compromise as a hybrid overcoming of controversies between (most often two) opposed orders of worth, which cannot achieve closure of a dispute through a test. In foregrounding the incompatibility and related critique-matrix, opposing six conflicting types of evaluation (i.e. market, industrial, domestic, civic, fame and inspirational orders of worth), the EW model relegates compromises to a second-order mode of coordination. Compromises appear as fragile compositions because all participants lose, to different degrees, part of their original, conflicting investments, so that compromising proves at most a second-choice, bearing a particular cost or loss (see opening quote). For the sake of overcoming controversies that hinder action, actors sidestep tests, meeting halfway. Renouncing to a robust investment in one single economy and its specific test – for example in the market economy of worth, whose test is price – implies sacrificing the full return in coordination that such an exclusive commitment affords. This happens for example when civic concerns for market negative effects on society compose civic-market hybrids like Fairtrade, and compromised tests like “fair prices” (Reinecke, 2010).

Compromises result therefore from the suboptimal impossibility of solving disagreements in the more robust testing frame of the EW, each economy providing a consistent test to assign worth to things and people and to justify action in situations subject to public scrutiny (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1987, 2006/1991). A compromise-specific gap derives from not accounting in turn for the implications that result from sacrificing the benefits of compromise, when investing in robust single orders of worth. Further addressing this gap is consistent with analyzing coordination as “the *reciprocal* relating of all the factors of a situation” (Follett, 1932: 291, emphasis added), including the processual orientation that spans temporally across successive situations (see opening quote).

Heeding the iteration of abstract conceptualizations and practical performances of coordination mechanisms, we may better understand how these two work together (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012) in the pragmatic interplay and adaptation of conventions (Gkeredakis, 2014). To this end, we build theory on the coordination strategy of compromising, contending that compromises are neither theoretically inferior to, nor empirically separable from tests. In a processual view of organizational coordination beyond single and isolated situations, we show how over time the two modes, although distinguishable, co-constitute and complement each other.

We argue that hybrid agreements between incompatible orders emerge from and prepare to tests, grasping the actors’ capacities to both anticipate and compensate for (i.e. to manage) the critical disequilibria generated by coordination’s uncertainty, shaped unavoidably by sacrifices resulting

from rejected forms of coordination. In this view, *refusing to compromise bears important coordination costs that remain undertheorized* by the EW, and contribute to organizational theories on the role of absence in coordinating activities (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012). This paper thus develops a compromise-focused methodological approach induced by latent absences, which we analyze through the EW model.

We review growing EW-inspired evidence from organization and management research on compromises, drawing relevant compromise-specific insights on the importance of tradeoff dynamics in organizational coordination. Building on such literature, we inquire into the complex, reciprocal and inter-situational relationship between tests and compromises. Acknowledging the historical emergence of the EW from the economics of convention (Diaz-Bone, 2014), we support a joint understanding of uncertainty and coordination, mobilizing the concepts of “investment in forms” (Eymard-Duvernay, 1986; Eymard-Duvernay & Thévenot, 1983a, 1983b; Thévenot, 1984, 1986a) and “sacrifice” (Thévenot, 1989), less deployed in organization and management studies.

We observed how actors reflexively and self-critically addressed uncertainty, by reasoning on how they could have better managed some token critical situations. This dynamic drove actors to assess the reasons for unaccomplished objectives, and to creatively hypothesize organizational alternatives that could have led to better outcomes, in order to adjust their future behavior.

The lack of unifying, shared evaluation criteria hinders the establishment of accepted equivalence across heterogeneous groups of things and people, harming predictability and common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). The EW framework, suggesting a set of conventional grammars of evaluation based on moral expectations, provides an elaborated understanding of how actors coordinate by judging uncertain situations in view of their moral expectations (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2000). The approach offers a relational, open-ended theoretical stance that avoids determinism (Boxenbaum, 2014) and accounts for the role of materiality and for the plurality of institutionalized forms, relied upon to manage uncertainty (Mailhot, Gagnon, Langley & Binette, 2014). Values and unequally recognized qualifications practically drive actors towards attempting tests and compromises, by investing in particular administrative forms (Thévenot, 1986a), or divesting from them.

We contend that compromise is key for organizational coordination and empirically foreground specifically how practitioners criticize its sacrifice or absence, in the case of uncompromising tests, and even in the presence of less justified compromises. Compromises are fragile and flexible, two characteristics that help to understand how actors deploy them strategically to manage the rigid inflexibility of tests and their aftermath. In developing a more processual approach to the EW

framework, we find compromise to be a quintessential, although not always effective, managerial and organizational strategy for dealing with the outcomes and hazards of tests, reflecting the attempt to reduce long term costs of uncertainty and critique across situations (the “long run” of the opening quote).

Whether compromises prove more robust than single economies of worth remains an empirical question. We suggest therefore to avoid considering compromises as *a priori* less justifiable. Given also the unit of analysis of the situation (Diaz-Bone, 2011), it is important to consider all its factors (Follett, 1932). Our recurring, ethnographic data on compromises induced a methodological focus on what actors discursively mobilized as “what could have happened”, a way to trace empirically what actors perceived to be critical, processual sacrifices of their coordination.

Organizational literature has already compellingly argued for the advantages of compromising in the EW, showing how dissonant concurrence of investments in multiple orders of worth constitutes a pragmatic process of managing and exploiting uncertain situations (Stark, 1994, 2009). Perhaps the rather technical definition of “compromise” in the EW struggles to establish itself because the profane use of the term tends to suggest only a negative connotation, linked mainly to the implied sacrifices (see opening quote). A more relational and processual view may redress such imbalance, looking on the bright side of controversy and ambiguity, *and* on the dark side of conflict resolution. The notion of “constructive conflict” (Follett, 1926) long ago suggested that “as conflict – difference – is here in the world, as we cannot avoid it [...] Instead of condemning it, we should set it to work for us” (Follett, 1926: 1). Such an insight is at the base of a positive view of dissonance (Stark, 2009), which valorizes the affordance of compromise in highly innovative contexts, where organizational coordination intentionally exploits the frictions between different values and expertise. From a similar perspective, compromise in construction design appears not so much as a mutual diminishing of opposed positions, foregrounding conflict, loss and sacrifice, but rather a complementary coalition between logics (Henn, 2013).

Our theoretical and methodological contributions aim at an organizational understanding of compromises vis-à-vis tests, through perceived absences in the process of coordination (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012). By comparing the advantages and affordances of compromises and tests, we examine the interplay of trade-offs and sacrifices. Tests achieve closure of critical situations and disputes. Compromises afford a complementary re-opening and/or rebalancing of disputes, which prepare over time to successive closures, but also manage, compensate for and adapt to the undesired costs of tests’ past outcomes. Therefore compromises are exploited concomitantly with tests. Both tests and compromises rely on conventions, or “understandings, often tacit but also conscious, that organize and coordinate action in predictable

ways” (Biggart & Beamish, 2003: 444). Under uncertainty, actors face a plurality of such broad based moral understandings to frame critical situations. Our study joins discussions on the constitutive role of conventions in accomplishing organizational coordination (Gkeredakis, 2014; Gomez & Yves, 2000).

We review and expand the growing body of organizational research that focuses specifically on compromises as conceptualized by Laurent Thévenot and Luc Boltanski (Boivin & Roch, 2006; Charron, 2015; Daigle & Rouleau, 2010; De Cock & Nyberg, 2014; Holden & Scerri, 2015; Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015; Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011; Knoll, 2015; Mailhot et al., 2014; Mesny & Mailhot, 2007; Nyberg & Wright, 2012, 2013, 2015; O’Reilly, Nazio & Roche, 2013; Oldenhof, Postma & Putters, 2014; Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2009; Ramirez, 2011; Reinecke, Spicer & Van Bommel, 2015; Roch, 2005; Stark, 2009; Taupin, 2012; Van Bommel, 2014). This literature mainly focused on the affordances and necessary conditions of success of compromises, *despite* their critical instability.

Complementing organizational research exploring integrations of the EW with other organizational theories (most notably the Institutional Logics literature, e.g. Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012), this paper builds on empirical evidence to challenge some of the EW model’s assumptions, aiming to contribute to the EW framework itself, whose rich conceptual framework still needs to be fully appreciated by organization studies.

We take a counterintuitive approach to the opportunity cost of justification and critique practices and focus on how flexible compromises integrate the coordination process of testing within rigid (uncompromising) orders of worth. Alternative forms of coordination populate observed critiques of rigid testing conventions. Our data suggest that the avoidance of particular value-laden forms of compromise (even while adopting alternative forms of compromise), is subject to critiques of coordination defaults worth tracing. We therefore ask:

- What methodological and theoretical implications does the tracing of rejected forms of compromise have for a processual understanding of organizational coordination?
- How do investments and tests in single economies of worth relate to sacrificing the benefits of compromising?

We proceed in four steps. A first section introduces extensively the EW framework, identifying a theoretical gap and reviewing organizational literature on gap-related issues. A second section illustrates our empirical setting and the abductive method emerged for answering our research questions. A third section presents our findings, and a conclusion outlines the limitations and the possible developments of our contributions.

## 3.2 Theory Background

### 3.2.1 Historical (polemical) prelude

A rich body of French social theory, known as the economic sociology of conventions, is at the origin of the economies of worth framework (Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Diaz-Bone & Salais, 2011; Jagd, 2004, 2007). It has been studying labor conventions, institutional standards and organizational coordination for over thirty years now. Organization and management studies have only just started exploring (Scott & Pasqualoni, 2014) and have inadequately acknowledged this literature (Diaz-Bone, 2014), so a brief sketch seems useful for organizational coordination scholars to appreciate the depth, breadth and relevance of this tradition for their concerns.

Research on conventional forms of qualification developed in France at the intersection between an economic perspective<sup>12</sup> (Desrosières & Thévenot 1979, 1988; Dupuy, Eymard-Duvernay, Favereau, Orléan, Salais & Thévenot, 1989; Eymard-Duvernay, 1986, 1994; Eymard-Duvernay, Favereau, Salais, Thévenot, & Orléan, 2006; Eymard-Duvernay & Marchal, 1994, 1997; Eymard-Duvernay & Thévenot, 1982, 1983a, 1983b; Favereau, 1988; Favereau & Lazega, 2002; Orlean, 1994; Salais & Thévenot, 1986; Storper & Salais, 1997; Thévenot, 1979, 1984, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c; Thévenot, Eymard-Duvernay, Favereau, Orléan, & Salais, 2005), and a sociological one. This latter originated in the late 70s and developed throughout the 80s as a sociology of critique, in opposition to Bourdieu's critical sociology (Boltanski, 1979a, 1979b, 1987/1982, 1990a, 1990b; Boltanski, Darré & Schiltz, 1984). The two perspectives, influenced by the work of other French scholars – notably Bruno Latour and Michel Callon (Callon, 1986; Callon & Latour, 1981; Latour 1983, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1979), but also Foucault (1970/1966)<sup>13</sup> – found a fruitful synthesis in the interdisciplinary framework of the economies of worth (EW), originally developed by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1983, 1987, 1989, 1999, 2000, 2006/1991)<sup>14</sup>. The framework entered anglophone organizational literature, via sociology, only

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<sup>12</sup> The birth of convention theory can be traced back to a 1984 conference titled “*Les outils de gestion du travail*” (lit. transl. “*The tools of labor management*”) (Orlean, 1994, cited in Jagd 2004), the papers of which were later collected in *Le travail, marchés, règles, conventions* (lit. transl. “*Work, markets, rules, conventions*”) (Salais & Thévenot, 1986). Another foundational publication is issue 40(2) in 1989 of the journal *Revue économique* (Diaz-Bone, 2011: 45).

<sup>13</sup> Foucault's (1970/1966) conception of micro-powers, as articulated in his “history of resemblance” and “of the relations of similarity and equivalence” is a rarely discussed reference for pragmatic sociology (see Thévenot & Stavo-Debaugé, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> For English language reviews of the EW: in an economic perspective, see Wilkinson (1997); from a sociological angle, see Wagner (1994, 1999). For short historical introductions and outlines, see Dodier (1993), Jagd (2004) and Thévenot (1995). For a sharp articulation of historical academic debates between American economics and sociology, explaining the basic assumptions of the theory, see Stark (2000). For an insightful review collection of French scholars taking stock of the framework, see Breviglieri, Lafaye and Trom (2009). For a thorough, systematic academic survey of the theory in French language, refer to the series *Raisons Pratiques* of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), and especially to volumes 4/1993; 8/1997; 9/1998; 10/1999 and 12/2001. See: <http://editions.ehess.fr/collections/raisons-pratiques/>

quite recently (Biggart & Beamish, 2003; Girard & Stark, 2002; Lamont, 2012; Stark, 1996, 2000, 2009) and has since been labelled in many ways<sup>15</sup>: we here refer to it as the economies of worth (EW) framework. We do not consider later developments by Boltanski (Boltanski, 2011/2009, 2012/1990, 2013/2004; Boltanski & Chiappello 2005/1999; Boltanski & Esquerre, 2014) and Thévenot (Thévenot, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014; Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye, 2000) to focus in depth on the original framework they developed together (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1999, 2000, 2006). We contextualize it historically by dwelling on particularly compelling concepts that may help us to grasp organizational coordination as introduced at length: compromise and conventions, the unit of analysis of the situation, linked to qualification, and the notions of investment, sacrifice and equilibrium (Thévenot, 1984, 1986a, 1989) aim at specifying better the orders of worth, with their relative tests and valued forms of space, time, actors and objects.

In reviewing foundational concepts at the origin of the EW, we signal how relevant this literature is *in its own right* for organization and management theory *as a whole* (that is, beyond punctual and useful comparisons between the EW and *other* organizational theories). So far, mainstream organization and management studies have failed to discuss broadly this important approach, whose interdisciplinary research efforts ignited a close collaboration between economics and sociology and fostered fruitful collaborations across the social sciences (e.g. moral and political philosophy, history, law, urban sociology and environmental studies). It seems particularly relevant to remind organization scholars that the first empirical testing of this theory focused on the socio-economy of the firm, and on how organizations navigate different modes of coordination and logics of action, generating various kinds of compromise and critique (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1989: v).

The lame response of organization and management literature is striking considering that the EW model, after drawing inspiration from canonical texts of political philosophy, specifically took *management literature* to support its theory building (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1987, 2006/1991). A radically new conceptualization of organizations later explored ways to explain sociopolitical change and variation across time (Boltanski & Chiappello, 2005/1999) and space (Lamont &

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For a recent four-page resume in French of pragmatic sociology see Thévenot and Stavo-Debaugé (2016).

<sup>15</sup> For a selected, informative list: “a structured pragmatism, which does not place too great an emphasis on contingency” and “an analytic sociology in which analytical philosophy’s imaginative laboratory of thought is replaced by the laboratory of empirically observed actions” (Dodier, 1993: 564, 565); “a new institutionalism for the social and historical analysis of the plurality of action frameworks in economic worlds” (Storper & Salais, 1997, cited in Diaz-Bone, 2011: 43); sociology of critical capacity (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999); sociology of worth (Stark, 2000); convention theory/ French school of organizational institutionalism (Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010); sociology of conventions (Diaz-Bone & Thévenot, 2010); moral and political sociology (Basaure, 2011a); pragmatic sociology (Blokker, 2011; Jagd, 2011; see also Thévenot & Stavo-Debaugé, 2016); (French) pragmatism (Brandl, Daudigeos, Edwards & Pernkopf-Konhäsner, 2014); French Pragmatist Sociology (FPS) (Boxenbaum, 2014; Bullinger, 2014; Cloutier & Langley, 2013); “a political economy of pragmatic coordination focusing on coordination and evaluation problems in situations” (Diaz-Bone, 2014: 346, emphasis added) and “the critical pragmatic analytical framework” (Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015: 457).

Thévenot, 2000), comparing historical and cultural geographical differences (Wagner, 1999: 352). In spite of all this, mainstream organization and management studies have not engaged with this literature as broadly as they might have. A strong indication in this respect is the absence of special issues, literature reviews or a more systematic empirical employment of the framework in leading American journals<sup>16</sup>. The situation in extra US English-language organization and management journals is only slightly different<sup>17</sup>. True, important publications on the framework by organizational sociologists have appeared outside organization and management journals proper (Girard & Stark, 2002; Jagd, 2004, 2007, 2011; Mesny & Mailhot, 2007; Nyberg & Wright, 2012, 2013; Stark, 1996, 2000), and, a part from special issues, empirical papers adopting the EW are growing also within English-language organizational outlets (Boivin & Roch, 2006; Daigle & Rouleau, 2010; De Cock & Nyberg, 2014; Fronda & Moriceau, 2008; Gkeredakis, 2014; McInerney 2008; Nyberg & Wright, 2015; Huault & Rainelli, 2011; Mailhot et al., 2014; O'Reilly, Nazio & Roche, 2013; Oldenhof, Postma & Putters, 2014; Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011; Pernkopf-Konhäusner & Brandl, 2010; Ramirez, 2013; Roch, 2005; Reinecke, 2010; Taupin, 2012; Van Bommel, 2014). But as for theory building and conceptual developments, organizational research is still exploring some key notions and assumptions of the EW, mainly through comparisons with the predominant concepts of institutional logics (Cloutier & Langley, 2007; Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Dansou & Langley, 2012; Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010; Special Dialog section of *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Issue 23(3), 2014). This literature refrains from critically challenging the model on its own grounds, building theory from it, or engaging with wider bodies of theory (although see Charron, 2015; Holden, Scerri & Owens, 2013; Reinecke, Spicer & Van Bommel, 2015). Broad reviews of organizational research using this approach are strongly needed (for an isolated case, see Jagd, 2011). This paper proposes a compromise-centred review.

Focused discussions are usefully clarifying how EW and institutional logics can complement each other (Arjalies & Friedland, 2015; Gond & Leca, 2012-2015; Dialog in *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2014 23(3)), and different compatible and complementary (communicative and Habermasian) approaches to organization (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006, 2008; Scherer & Palazzo,

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<sup>16</sup> We here refer to the usual suspects: *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Annals*, *Organization Science*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Management*, *Management Science*.

<sup>17</sup> Scarce space has been dedicated in proper organizational outlets (see *Journal of Management Inquiry* 2014, 23(3), Dialog section: 314-337!). Implications for particular niches were explored through comparison with mainstream theories – see Annisette & Richardson (2011) and West & Davis (2011) for reviews in accounting and public administration respectively. The most consistent academic attention to the model was developed outside organizational outlets. Special Issues appeared in the *European Journal of Social Theory*: 1999, 2(3); 2001, 4(4); 2011, 14(3); in the *Historical Social Research*, 2011, 36(4); 2012, 37(4); 2015, 40(1); 2016, 41(2); in the *economic sociology\_the european electronic newsletter*: June 2004, 5(3) and November 2012, 14(1), and in *Trivium*: 5|2010. For the only organization studies-specific review of the framework, see Jagd, 2011.

2007, 2011; Scherer, Palazzo & Seidl 2013) have recently opened promising new theoretical interfaces for future research in the EW (Reinecke, Spicer & Van Bommel, 2015), for instance interestingly seeking to analyse stakeholder interaction by combining the justification of the EW with concepts of power (Gond, Barin Cruz, Raufflet & Charron, 2016). This paper aims at contributing to the EW framework itself. We identify and address a gap within the framework, and suggest to broaden the horizon of sacrifice and uncertainty in the EW, through theoretical and methodological contributions relevant for organizational coordination and focused on compromise, as a fundamental strategy of organizational coordination. The next two sections extensively introduce the core tenets of the EW model and review the organizational research which mobilized the EW notion of compromise.

### 3.2.2 *The coordination architecture of the economies of worth (EW)*

#### 3.2.2.1 *Compromise*

Compromise is crucial to understand the EW as a coordination theory of specific relevance for organizations, as the complexity of multiple coordination modes holds deep ontological implications at the level of the firm:

We conceive of the firm as a device (*dispositif*) of compromise finalized to manage tensions between multiple natures, including at least the market and the industrial nature. This definition highlights the plurality of worlds that are involved in the functioning of what we indicate as a firm, a plurality that demands the elaboration and the maintenance of a device of compromise. (Thévenot, 1989: 179).<sup>18</sup>

The evidence we accumulated opened the way to a new and systematic approach to organizations, construed not as unified entities characterized in terms of spheres of activity, systems of actors, or fields, but as composite assemblages that include arrangements deriving from different worlds. [...]

No organization can survive, however industrial it may be, if it does not tolerate situations of differing natures. It is precisely the plurality of the mechanisms deriving from the various worlds that accounts for the tensions that pervade these organizations (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 18).

We have explored a view on complexity, which results from the variety of modes of coordination. They are in critical relationship to one another but *compromises* can bring local and temporal compatibility between them. We can then theorize organizations as arrangements, which have been specifically designed for such a compromised complexity. Therefore, their members have to engage in different modes of coordination, depending on the configuration of the situation in which they find themselves (Thévenot, 2001a: 410, emphasis in original).

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<sup>18</sup> For this and all other citations of original French publications unpublished in English, the translation is ours.



Compromises conceptually represent “composite arrangements that include people and things capable of being identified in different worlds” and that “are not fatally undone by disputes” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 277). Compromise therefore emerges indirectly, from a negation of disputes. The reciprocal, critical relationship between various worlds poses a complex plurality that compromise can temporarily tame. While enabling compatible judgments from disparate worlds (assuaging critical tensions and redefining the *raison d’être* of the firm), compromise is characterized by a fragility due to its inability of ordering actors and objects on the base of a unique relevant worth, a common good recognized as legitimate because belonging to the same nature of the judged beings. Compromise is instead a hybrid nature, a liminal space of compatibility between opposed tensions, a provisional area of truce for coordination disputes. However, even if it proves the most preferable solution in practice, compromise “*is not entirely defensible in logical terms*” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 278, emphasis added). Compromises lack a solid, unitary and consistent logic of reference to articulate a clear judgement and put it to the test. Indeed, like in many organizational situations, one needs to find a makeshift or third way agreement to deal with or suspend quarrels for the sake of resuming operations.

Organizational actors reveal critical capacity (and compromising skills) within a particular and limited set of *public situations*, in which they have to manage uncertainty and disputes over the worth of people and objects in ways that are justifiable (a condition for which is that they do not engage in violent resolutions). These specifications and reductions of scope are important to avoid misunderstanding the merits and faults of the EW framework for those of an entire alternative theory of society (Wagner, 1999: 343) or a general sociology of action covering all aspects of human behavior (Basaure, 2011b: 362). The narrower theoretical and empirical entry point is *critical situations*, in which actors, exposed to critique by *public scrutiny* and constrained by a related *justification imperative*, articulate an acceptable logic of common good underlying their conduct. To justify their actions, actors deploy a limited set of conventional, *general repertoires of evaluation* that equip their particular behaviors against public accusations. Boltanski bounds justification theory to actors’ capability, amongst many others, of *coordinating by equivalences* (Basaure, 2011b: 363).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The theory’s incompleteness was well known to its authors, who later integrated their analyses of public action, subject to justification, in different ways: by further distinguishing the plurality of cognitive and communicative formats intervening across the increasing relational distances of other “regimes of engagement”, notably “engaging in the familiar” and “engaging in a plan” (Thévenot, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2011), or by identifying different pragmatic regimes; Boltanski resumes: “(I) developed a matrix of four regimes of action (*régimes d’action*) the construction of which is based on two distinctions. On the one hand, I differentiated between regimes of conflict (*régimes de dispute*) and regimes of peace (*régimes de paix*); and, on the other hand, I differentiated between the regimes in which equivalences play a role and those in which equivalences do not play a role”. (Basaure, 2011b: 363)

Public controversies highlight *multiple moral evaluation principles*, by which we simply mean (but it is crucial to appreciate what the EW model adds to economic and sociologic theories of action coordination) that *one cannot separate the axes of value and justice from that of pragmatic coordination*. Succinctly put, in the EW “*there is no coordination of behaviors without a coordination of the judgements on behaviors*” (Philippe Corcuff, cited by Favereau, 2007: 44, emphasis added). Even when disagreeing, actors possess a minimum common understanding or a grammar of rules on how critical positions may legitimately differ, which helps to clarify what the differences consist of. Disagreements require an agreement on what it is that parties disagree on. The economy of conventions, in opposition to neoclassic and transaction cost economics, developed an extended notion of coordination that no longer opposes, but *integrates* controversy and uncertainty, which deeply inspired the EW framework<sup>20</sup>. In fact “*coordination is a test (épreuve) which is accomplished on the horizon of failure, and in particular of conflict and critique*” (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006: 27). To the extent that it involves heterogeneous actors, unfolds over time and aims at products (or services) not entirely defined in advance, all coordination is uncertain. To overcome such uncertainty, organizations rely on conventions that channel uncertainty through common forms of evaluation that qualify objects and people (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006: 29).

### 3.2.2.2 Conventions

Conventions are “explicit representations (or technologies of representation) with extended validity, that allow actors to represent stable connections across a broad spectrum of activities [...] [and] to evaluate and make their efforts compatible beyond the ‘here and now’ through the development of relevant proofs” (Gkeredakis, 2014: 1475; cp. Thévenot, 2001a; 2002). Conventions thus have a kind of spatiotemporal warranty of quality, in which actors invest to reduce uncertainty (Thévenot, 1984, 1986a), deeply structuring organizations (Gomez & Jones, 2000). Conventions can therefore be understood as interpretation schemes devised by actors to proceed in the evaluation and coordination of situations of action (Diaz-Bone & Thévenot, 2010). Conventions moreover question “the simple opposition between individualism and holism”: indicating “both the device constitutive of an agreement of wills, and its product, endowed of a compulsory normative force, the convention should be understood at once as the result of individual actions and the constraining frame of subjects” (Dupuy et al., 1989: 143). Conventions are reliable

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<sup>20</sup> Economics of convention (EC) claims to have renovated the integration of “three issues that have been disconnected by a century and a half of economic thought: the characterization of the actor and of his reasons for acting, the modes of action coordination, and the role of values and common goods (Dupuy et al., 1989 ; Orléan, 1994 ; Salais et Thévenot, 1986)” (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006: 23)

if they prove valid, across critical situations, as means for justifying or criticizing public conducts, providing different degrees of coordination capacity (Thévenot, 1986a). Conventions may take the form of abstract, ostensive routines, local and temporal administrative tools, which establish taken-for-granted commensuration and evaluation patterns for recurring coordination situations (e.g. recruiting policies, see Gouldner, 1954); or they can be technical formalizations, legally binding standards and universally accepted regulations (e.g. clocktime, see Zerubavel, 1982).

### 3.2.2.3 *Situation-qualification*

The situation needs to be understood as a fundamental relation between “person-states and thing-states” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006: 1). Such basic unit of analysis (Diaz-Bone 2011, 2014), far from establishing a structural fixed system, points to a pragmatic and processual relationship, subject to change and critique. People and things are continuously tested and managed (and indeed mismanaged). Organizational actors therefore react and interact in more or less effective justifications and critiques of their behaviour, negotiating their “states” of public qualification and legitimacy in different and evolving situations. Situation and qualification are deeply connected, but the meanings of the terms differ from their mundane use. Within the EW, the situation describes a state in which beings (i.e. people and objects) are qualified. Qualification, in turn, implies the identification of beings by assignment to an equivalency class, conventionally designated by a pragmatic category that specifies what *qualifies*, almost in the legal sense of what code or world applies to the situation. In this way, qualified beings relate to a performative code, whose evaluative dimension presupposes them as connected to common worlds (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006: 359). Justification and critique unfold in public critical situations, with beings identified as belonging to common worlds and involved in action. Such processes thus do not constitute a purely discursive or rhetorical argumentation: they pragmatically anchor to material proofs, as evidence in a trial, offered to raise the legitimacy of behavior “objectively”, that is, detached from personal convenience and relying on conventions (and objects) widely acknowledged to support the common good. Actors facing critique therefore raise from particular situations to more generally valid and applicable sociomaterial worlds of reference for evaluating the common good. On the base of these worlds, actors coordinate, passing justificatory and critical judgments and aiming for the closure of controversies through specific tests of the EW.

### 3.2.2.4 *Order of worth - test*

Competing orders of worth differ about what matters and what is negligible or contingent (and therefore possible to sacrifice and ignore) in solving coordination problems. To end a dispute, in which two or more actors argue on the unequal relevance of facts being compared, actors need to

re-establish order. Orders of worth are “moral and political artifacts which result from the questioning about unjust power with regards to a systematic relationship between human and non-human beings” (Thévenot, 2001a: 410). The notion reinforces an understanding of co-ordination on the horizon of conflict (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006), where alternative orders stem from a critical challenge of relationships experienced to be unjust.

The notion of test (*épreuve*) grasps the pragmatic, moral legitimacy of coordination<sup>21</sup>. It embodies “the polarity between a pragmatic approach and a new understanding of social normativity. The test has fundamentally two properties: it is an instituted element, which establishes a certain organization of the world, while providing the possibility of disrupting that order” (Breviglieri, Lafaye & Trom, 2009: 10).

The test designates “an action that can be posited as probative, because it engages objects of a same nature. We foreground that this test, which aims at an agreement or at an equilibrium, is only possible on the basis of this common presupposition [...]. A dispute cannot be resolved, an agreement cannot be found, an equilibrium cannot be reached, if not on condition that a test can be performed on the basis of this common presupposition” (Thévenot, 1989: 163). These basic natures – the equivalency classes of the qualified situation – are the multiple orders of worth that establish consistent alternative framings of the common good. Disparate tests grasp the plural horizon of critique in coordinating between (and within) opposed natures. Orders of worth and tests are therefore closely related: if the former are constitutive value frameworks that guide the conduct of actors, tests represent a) either a questioning of the appropriate value framework to apply (i.e. what order to refer to), or b) the actual judgment establishing the degree of worthiness within a certain framework (see Dansou & Langley, 2012: 511). Evaluation of worth by testing does not produce a binary outcome of compliance or fitness, but allows for a scaling in degrees of the worth of various beings. This is important to appreciate the processual states of beings, whose critical capacities and investments allow them to negotiate their worth. Moreover, the possibility of compromise between unequally powerful orders enables a refined account of the complex plurality of the (dis)equilibria in organizations (Thévenot, 1989). The multiple and competing evaluation criteria available to all actors, map on pragmatic coordination worlds, with specific and consistent beings, forms of investment and spatiotemporal values (see Table 3.1 for a synthesis).

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<sup>21</sup> The term *épreuve* is often translated “trial” when used by Latour, and “test” in Boltanski and Thévenot’s use (Guggenheim & Potthast, 2012: 174). Lussault and Stock (2010: 13) highlight nicely its pragmatic meaning: “In French sociology, the expression ‘*épreuve*’ has been developed in order to gain insight into the practical relationship to the world [...]. The Oxford Dictionary shows the following translations of ‘*épreuve*’: proof, test, examination, event, trial, but also piece of evidence. Yet, we find a very interesting meaning of “proof” in the Oxford Dictionary: ‘the proof of the pudding is in the eating’, a proverb indicating that ‘the real value of something can be judged only from practical experience or results’”.

**TABLE 3.1. The economies of worth by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006/1987), adapted from Thévenot, Moody & Lafaye, (2000: 241), with the addition of the investment/sacrifice row.**

<b>EW</b>	<b>Market</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>Civic</b>	<b>Domestic</b>	<b>Inspired</b>	<b>Fame</b>
<b>Mode of evaluation (worth)</b>	Price, cost	Technical efficiency	Collective welfare	Esteem, reputation	Grace, singularity, creativity	Renown, fame
<b>Investment / sacrifice</b>	Opportunism / sacrifice of bonds with one another	Innovation progress / effortful sacrifice of resources	Transcending oneself / sacrifice of particular interests	Accept duties to close entourage / sacrifice of selfishness	Escape from habits, accept risks / sacrifice of stable forms	Reveal everything / sacrifice of secrets
<b>Test</b>	Market competitiveness	Competence, reliability, planning	Equality and solidarity	Trustworthiness and hierarchy	Passion, enthusiasm	Popularity, audience, recognition
<b>Form of relevant proof</b>	Monetary	Measurable: criteria, statistics	Formal, official	Oral, exemplary, personally warranted	Emotional involvement and expression	Semiotic
<b>Qualified objects</b>	Freely circulating market good or service	Infrastructure project, technical object, method, plan	Rules and regulations, fundamental rights, welfare policies	Patrimony, locale, heritage	Emotionally invested body or item, the sublime	Sign, media
<b>Qualified human beings</b>	Customer, consumer, merchant, seller	Engineer, professional, expert	Equal citizens, solidarity unions	Authority	Creative beings, artists	Celebrity
<b>Time formation</b>	Short term flexibility	Long-term planned future	Perennial	Customary part	Eschatological revolutionary, visionary moment	Vogue, trend
<b>Space formation</b>	Globalization	Cartesian space	Detachment	Local, proximal anchoring	Presence	Communication network

### 3.2.2.5 Investment - sacrifice - equilibrium

The economies of worth, also called worlds or polities, are regulated by a notion of investment, in which “the sacrifice required to accede to a state of worth then appears linked to the *setting aside* of the other polities” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 78, emphasis added). To choose one of the six worlds and a specific test thus involves leaving behind or sacrificing the benefits enjoyable in the other worlds, specifying inter-world coordination. Moreover, “having an *investment formula* is a key condition of a polity’s equilibrium, since by tying access to the state of worthiness to a sacrifice, it constitutes an *economy of worth* in which benefits turn out to be balanced by burdens” (p. 142, emphasis in original). This specification clarifies the internal sacrifice dynamics of polities, whereby actors invest to receive proportionate returns on their investments: the burden of sacrifice (or cost) stabilizes, albeit temporarily, the uncertainty of the situation, “*the benefit in exchange consisting in ease of coordination*” (p. 359, emphasis added).

Such general understanding of investment extends beyond a direct relationship with a measurable capital. Investment is “a costly operation to establish a stable relation with a certain *lifespan*”, like the purchase of a patent (Thévenot, 1984: 9, emphasis in the original; cp. also Thévenot, 2015).

This raises the question of the spatiotemporal validity, or lifespan, of the forms codifying stable relations among beings (i.e. objects and actors). Conventions and the invested forms structuring them provide the advantage that they do not “emerge in every situation anew. *Investments in forms enlarge the scope of conventions*, so that conventions do overarch situations” (Diaz-Bone, 2014: 325, emphasis added).

Investments therefore organize a certain type of intentional sacrifice or cost, in view of a *coordination return*, but actors can criticize sacrifices, or what is set aside as an unfair damage of their investments. As Thévenot remarks: “I would relate criticism to the complaint of *undue sacrifice*” (Blokker & Brighenti, 2011: 387, emphasis in the original).

The EW model thus captures a *critical framing of action* according to different natures or orders of worth, which justify conducts by submitting to structured forms of equivalence through costly investments made of sacrifice both within and across conflicting orders of worth. To these opposed ways of justifying action the model “*relates an order with a form of coordination*, and accounts for the *possibility of closure* on one or the other of these different natures” (Thévenot, 1989: 161, emphasis added), where closure of a dispute accomplishes an agreement and equilibrium, only under the constraining condition of performing a test (Thévenot, 1989: 163).

### 3.2.3 A gap in the economies of worth for organization and management theory

The EW model develops well the closure affordance of the test, in the face of critique and dispute. It develops less, despite allowing for, the *possibility of (re)opening, or omitting to solve controversies for the common good*, which management studies started researching in compromise. The purposeful nurturing of ambiguity through compromises is a possibility, which the coordination through tests (and the necessary closure of disputes) clearly sacrifices. This intentional “unstable equilibrium of worth” is undertheorized and escapes the EW accountability of sacrifice. In other terms, by restricting dispute resolution to the choice of one out of six worlds (and tests) the model does not account for the sacrifice of the full creative potential of compromising options. If choosing one polity and its test implies setting aside the benefits of the other five, it also implies rejecting whatever options of compromise may be available, and suggested by actors to manage the situation. We address this gap by exploring organizational coordination through such *sacrificed possibilities of compromise*.

We argue that the uncertainty surrounding which test to apply to overcome controversy through closure is integrated, within the notion of investment and sacrifice, by the organizational and managerial awareness about the benefits and drawbacks (the opportunity cost) of compromising. Actors recognize the compromises available to them across recurring situations. Accordingly, when choosing to invest in a particular form and its relative justification, they know how testing precludes not only the closure benefits of alternative value-laden tests, but also the benefits of compromise. Integrating the sacrifice of compromise in this uncertainty, we argue, helps us to account for the strategic, managerial function of reducing the costs of coordination by tests across situations. Equally, even choices to coordinate through specific compromises face sacrifices not only of the pure justifications in single orders of worth and their tests, but also of alternative compromises.

The orders of worth are “the very fabric of calculation, of rationality, of value” (Stark, 2009: 11) and capture the moral and rational aspects of coordination. The EW conceptual architecture however addresses less how compromises over time coordinate action between and across tests (and other compromises), in a stratification of situations and outcomes. Compromises appear indispensable tools for dealing with the tensions, side effects and undesired costs of closures and exclusions sanctioned by tests. Managerial activity involves a coordination process of balancing and *integrating* (see Follett’s opening quote) compromises and tests, in a situated learning curve not dissimilar from the pendulum between exploration and exploitation (March, 1991), with ostensive and performative cycles of disruption and repair that orient to absence and replace the coordinating mechanisms it finds lacking (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012).

At the core of the seminal book *On Justification* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) is a query on the paradoxical tension between mutual exclusion and concomitance of different value frameworks: “how can justification be valid and co-ordination be effective if several underlying principles of justifiable action are available and each is supposed to be universally valid?” (Thévenot, 2002: 183). Our research questions aim at contributing insights on organizational coordination by developing the sacrifice of compromise as a key processual element of the EW equilibria, which can push the framework further in answering its own coordination dilemma.

### **3.2.4 Organizational research on compromises between economies of worth**

A growing research on organizational processes and controversies analyzes compromises as multiple evaluative frameworks, mobilized *with* tests at different times (Holden & Scerri, 2015; Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015; McInerney, 2008). Management studies have shown how, to repair severe legitimacy threats with different stakeholders, “agents can move from the logic of testing to the logic of compromising” (Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011: 1831). As legitimacy and justification pose essentially a moral *and* pragmatic problem of coordination in the EW, organizational research has inquired into the managerial implications of compromising.

Organization studies embraced the process-friendly view supported by the economies of worth (Cloutier & Langley, 2007, 2013; Denis, Langley & Rouleau, 2007; Jagd, 2011), whereby polities do not deterministically reproduce rigid structures expressing binary notions of legitimacy as fit (Boxenbaum, 2014), but afford a plurality of malleable arrangements, appreciating the nuance that worth is scaled in degrees (Reinecke, Spicer & Van Bommel, 2015). Even when the aim is to resist change (Taupin, 2012), organizational compromises capture not an exception it would be better to avoid, but a necessary strategic resource for coordination. Organizational empirical research on architectural planning and construction depicts the complex oscillation between test and compromise as one between conflict and coalition (Henn, 2013). This leads us to an understanding of how compromises afford over time the opening up (i.e. repairing and preparing) of disputes, not just by reacting to tests, but deploying an intentional coalescing creativity of their own.

#### *3.2.4.1 Test or compromise? Balancing sacrifices and exclusions with coalition opportunities*

Holden and Scerri (2015) focus on the nature and trajectory of compromises (interestingly, both the attained and the only merely attempted) of a long-term urban development project in Vancouver. They start from a “principled position towards the value of compromise in the public sphere”, reckoning that “supporting compromises in planning contexts is often as good as it gets” (Holden & Scerri, 2005: 5). In their processual interpretation, compromises nurture tests of



exclusion: “The emergence of a test out of a compromise situation highlights the refashioning of an order of justification, such that those objects that do not ‘fit’ or ideals that are conceived differently (from the new order that is created) are excluded” (Holden & Scerri, 2015: 376). While focusing methodological attention on these excluded objects and ideals, the processual insights we retain are: a) justification orders are not fixed structures, but evolve in exclusionary sacrifice-bearing refashionings, and b) tests may emerge from compromise.

Another empirical analysis of a large-scale urban redevelopment (in Melbourne) concluded that the “array of justifications and denunciations that actors launch has a direct bearing on the nature of the compromises reached” (Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015: 17). Such insight addresses the reverse dynamic, whereby a) the reaching of compromises is not pre-structured, and b) compromises emerge from (and are reached through) tests and protests. Tests and compromises seem thus linked by a mutual relationship, shaping one another over time.

Although these studies greatly develop the EW model, they still theorize the excluding/including relationship between justification/critique and compromise, positing the two coordination modes as separate levels of analysis. Instead of separating temporally these moments, we processually contend that actors have a capacity to rely on compromising strategies even *during* critical testing and, to revert the perspective, that testing continues within compromising. Differently stated, sacrificed or excluded benefits regulate coordination in such a way that compromises and tests co-constitute each another, in a constant attempt to organize uncertainty and critique, by alternating and combining evolving modes of coordination, and anticipating possible undesired outcomes.

Whether coordination implies uncertainty reduction in legitimacy repair (Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011), productive exploitation of uncertainty (Stark, 2009), or compensation for uncertain cross-situational sacrifices and costs (Ramirez, 2013), organization and management studies have shown that compromises and tests work together. We posit the two coordination processes as distinguishable but not analytically separable.

Compromises attempt to reshape the rigorous application of tests and conventions. Evidence that actors compromise to prepare to (or to compensate for) the undesired effects of tests finds wide empirical support. Management studies have for example found compromises especially necessary during critical testing-processes, like the introduction of new standardizations across professional practices. Ramirez (2013) documents how a new conventional test for auditing in the UK, shaped from the best practices and values of large auditing companies, met fierce resistance and critique, and had to be adapted and recalibrated (i.e. compromised) by other orders of worth before becoming applicable also to smaller organizations.

Compromising on the other hand does not so much *avoid* moments of test, but rather represents a strategy to manage tests' possible outcomes. In the multiple controversies over the safety of nuclear power, following an accident involving a large energy company based in Sweden, compromises repaired the legitimacy of nuclear power, from threats testing its justification as an institution (Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011).

Focusing on the fragile, yet flexible nature of compromises, organizational analyses foreground that ongoing maintenance of justification is accomplished through adaptations, deploying rhetorical discursive strategies (Taupin, 2012), but also adjusting behavior and transforming material objects and buildings (Mailhot et al., 2014; Oldenhof & Bal, 2015; Oldenhof, Postma & Putters, 2014).

#### *3.2.4.2 Heterarchy, organizational hedging and productive ambiguity of compromises: potential drawback of clarity*

Excellent studies have explored the positive traction that organizations intentionally draw from dissonance and fragile compromises. When heterogeneous expertise converges in highly collaborative and innovative contexts, actors “benefit, not from asserting or fixing their worth in one order, but by maintaining an ongoing ambiguity among the coexisting principles” (Stark, 2009: xiii-xiv). This sort of productive disagreement – which Follett called constructive conflict (1926) – signals a purposeful hybrid design and embodies not a vertical hierarchy, but a lateral “heterarchical organization” (Stark, 2009: xvii), a strategic coordination of differences.

Cultural analyses across different historical and sociopolitical contexts of change discussed compromises as paths that opposed single ways through a “bricolage of multiple social logics” (Stark & Bruszt, 2001), thus cultivating productive frictions between discrepant values to foster innovation (Antal, Hutter & Stark, 2015; Stark, 2009; Girard & Stark, 2002), and allowing the recombinant strategy of organizational hedging (Stark, 1996). This latter notion inspires our relating of compromises to tests through the loss and sacrifice that each mode implies. Back to the opening quote, loss *in the long run* arises both from compromise *and* from the unilateral imposition of one's will and way. Integrating the two hedges the costs and prospective coordination returns of both modes taken individually.

A Canadian sociological study on the necessary conditions of successful compromises demonstrated how the imposition of non-hybrid forms hindered an industry-academic partnership: a non-negotiated contract, imposed as an uncompromised and unadapted convention, left unspecified the price of research and issues of intellectual property, encountering the critical organizational incapacity to blend inspirational and civic forms with market and industry ones (Mesny & Mailhot, 2007). Ambiguity therefore is not a carefree ingredient of compromise, it needs organization. One thing is ambiguity as agreed heterarchy, another is ignoring one party's stances.

Overall, organizational findings signal both the benefits of compromising, and the drawbacks of refusing to compromise for the sake of tests' clear closures. Our focus on the longitudinal sacrifices of testing and compromising aims at accounting for the stratified sacrifices and adjustments of organizational forms against various constraints, where clarity, consistency and ambiguity present evolving pros and cons. As a counterintuitive insight on the mysterious ways of organizational common understanding and coordination (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009), recurrent findings relate the success of compromise with an avoidance of clarification and a maintenance of ambiguity, provided this supports a common good or interest (Huault & Rainelli, 2011; Van Bommel, 2014). Symmetrical insights corroborate evidence that compromises are counterproductive ways of clarifying by creating similarity across differences. Within compromises, inadequate clarification strategies may in fact backfire and spark further criticism, for example in corporate engagements addressing the delicate issue of climate change (Nyberg & Wright, 2012). Pure market commensurations of the natural environment do not hold, and market is found to work better in combination with other justifications and regimes (Blok, 2013; Centemeri, 2009, 2015), although this effectiveness does not necessarily make compromises fairer. This points to the risk that ambiguity of compromises may dissimulate, or obscure strategies that "clearly" obey the market, or other predominant orders of worth "under hybrid cover". In the case of state-led urban regeneration, badly masked compromises, with market values overtly overriding civic concerns, have shown how composite arrangements result in unfairly balanced assemblages (Fuller, 2012). Ambiguity on the other hand cannot get away with a self-evident taken-for-grantedness of the *status quo* (Mesny & Mailhot, 2007), but needs to be purposefully constructed. Feeble compromises that simply rest on unexplained 'managerial interventions', seemingly beyond public accountability of how they favor the common good, may ignite fierce criticism, as shown in the case of private equity in the UK (De Cock & Nyberg, 2014). These studies clarify that a) ambiguity of compromises does not automatically result from a lack of clarity, but needs to be organized, and b) conflicting orders of worth do not weigh equally in compromises.

#### *3.2.4.3 Compromise: a moral, recomposable order of weak legitimacy and high scope*

Strong empirical evidence supports the view that compromising has specific coordination rules, and that its legitimacy remains open to critique about the deep disequilibria it may reproduce. Compromise constitutes a sort of fragile and flexible, though a no less powerful composed and recomposable order of worth, which actors invest in through a complex ensemble of administrative makeshift conventions.

Compromises have their own specific equipment of more or less established material and normative forms, variously *invested in* (Thévenot, 1984, 1986a) and adapted over time. Rich, qualitative data

illustrate how organizations invest, across micro and macro coordination contexts, in heterogeneous and flexible administrative compromise-friendly forms. These include: strategic plans, in Quebec-based not-for-profit arts organizations (Daigle & Rouleau, 2010); different attitudes in human resource management (HRM) in Germany and Russia (Pernkopf-Konhäsner & Brandl, 2010); Austrian-variations of HRM training practices in multinationals like McDonald's (Pernkopf-Konhäsner, Lazarova, & Maryhofer 2015); *compromising conventions* and attitudes towards full-time maternal employment in Denmark, Spain, Poland and the UK (O'Reilly, Nazio & Roche, 2013); conceptions of corporate environmentalism, sustainability and climate change risk in large Australian firms across sectors (Nyberg & Wright, 2012, 2013, 2015); professional standards for the accountability of auditors in the UK (Ramirez, 2013); Fairtrade minimum price setting (Reinecke, 2010); integrated accounting reports in the Netherlands (Van Bommel, 2014), or paradoxically “unchanging” credit rating regulations in the financial industry (Taupin, 2012).

Organizational research also explored forms invested in for constructing and regulating markets, as in the case of risk commodification to create a market for weather derivatives in Europe (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011), or EU's hidden regulation of carbon markets (Knoll, 2015). This latter case processually explains how the “*compromising historicity of conventions* is the reason why these forms of equivalence will never erase uncertainty fully”, as “*conventions are always under construction* and frequent renewal of the form investment is needed” (Knoll, 2015: 138, emphasis added).

Although various formats of equivalence (i.e. conventions) try to stabilize coordination's uncertainty, a “multi-situational complexity” (Pernkopf-Konhäsner, Lazarova & Maryhofer 2015), a “moral complexity” (Centemeri, 2009), or “moral multiplexity” (Reinecke, Spicer & Van Bommel, 2015) seem unescapable. Legitimacy does not obey norms of fit to binary variables, but ranges across ordering strategies that differ in scope and certainty: in this view, compromise represents the paradox of an ambiguous and uncertain order, coupling weak moral legitimacy with a high coordination scope (Reinecke, Spicer & Van Bommel, 2015).

To understand specifically how tests and compromises are related and how coordination looms on the horizon of failure (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006), we empirically traced failures, or evidence of sacrifices in critical (and less critical) situations, where actors made sense of significant absences (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012). This leads us to our methodology and empirical case. We engaged with Boltanski and Thévenot's notion of compromise (1987, 1989, 2006/1991: 277-335) in a data-inductive approach (our warrants and data), which led us to trace long-term organizational

processes of coordination, focusing on investments in the realized and failed forms of compromises, and theorizing on their role (our claims) (Toulmin, 2003).

### **3.3 Empirical setting and Methodology**

Two communication scholars participated in this research. Although both researchers had a native/bilingual proficiency in the language of the observed discursive practices, they were importantly unfamiliar with the context, the first being foreign, and the second coming from a different linguistic and cultural area of the country. Inspired by an interpretivist ontology and a reflexive stance (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), we cultivated an awareness of the need to compare, contrast and question our interpretations of the observed phenomenon. This was the organizational process of planning and constructing a public culture center in a Swiss town, which we anonymize as agreed during our access. This study originated from a two-year interdisciplinary research project on the relationality of urban transformations, which also involved two architects and two economists. Our reflexivity thus benefited also from a specialized feedback on emerging findings, checking with qualified architects if we were understanding the organizational communication as we learned to talk “architecture and engineering”.

The observed culture centre was built in a small Swiss town of 70.000 people (140.000 in the extended urban area). The cost was of over 230 million CHF, almost entirely born by the town’s budget, making the project one of the largest public investments in its history. The project was planned in 2000, built from late 2009 to January 2015, and inaugurated in September 2015. It designed a new theatre/concert hall for an audience of 1000, an art museum, connected facilities (e.g. storage and rehearsal rooms), a bookshop, a café, a restaurant and a multi-level underground car park, while externally creating a pedestrian public square overlooking a lake and a hillside park to the rear. On the same plot of land there was a XVI century Romanesque style church and, physically attached to the church, a XIX century historical hotel and a former convent, both of which were refurbished during the construction of the new contiguous culture center. The dense area of the urban intervention rendered material conditions very sensitive and complex for the coordination of the three separate building sites. The former hotel had belonged to the city since 1994. After a period of abandonment and a fire endangering its survival, a public referendum saved the building from demolition in 2000, but it was later sold to private real estate developers for 20 million CHFs (2004), along with one floor of the underground car park, sold at the cost price of 10 million CHFs. A financial crisis emerged between design and construction, with a dramatic drop in the town’s annual tax revenues from the leading banking sector (from 55 million in 2004, to 12 million in 2013; source: council budget 2014). This comprehensibly exposed the whole project to

harsh political criticism and greatly complicated our access, which started from late 2011. After over a year of formal and informal attempts to gain the permission to attend meetings, we negotiated access to observe building site and council steering committee meetings, by bartering our cooperation in a mutually convenient participant observation at the council general archive, with the first author helping the project manager to file all the project documents. This exposed the first author to the many rejected possibilities of the project (e.g. unchosen designs, general contractors' unsuccessful tenders, etc.), and the values that informed these rejections.

### *3.3.1 Preparatory fieldwork, data collection and emerging themes*

We set out to observe, with an ethnographical orientation, how things worked (Watson, 2010) in the coordination practices around such a complex organizational object. We began at the end of 2011, with data collection and analysis protracted until May 2014 and well beyond<sup>22</sup>.

To familiarize ourselves with the project, we conducted a thematic analysis on local newspaper items (153), covering the project from 2000 to 2012. A sensitivity towards official texts and key actors led to the extensive collection of publicly available council resolutions, integrating insights gathered during interviews, participant and non-participant observations. Following a snowball technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), our data collection extended widely, in an iterative crossfertilization between different sources (for a detailed overview on data collection, see Table 1.1 on page 8). We formed a basic timeline (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2009) of relevant coordination events and actors' turnover (see Table 3.2), which we later integrated with particular organizational histories of space planning and construction, traced as illustrative of coordination mechanisms and organizational communication constitutive processes (Mengis & Petani, 2016). We also extended the initial list of informants (i.e. main architect, mayor, council project manager, councilor responsible for both Culture Activities and Town Planning, culture managers, management staff from the general contractor) as documents, news items, interviews and observations suggested to interview many more actors (60) and to have repeated interactions with key practitioners (see Table 1.1).

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<sup>22</sup> The first author participated also as volunteer at the inauguration of the culture centre in September 2015.

**TABLE 3.2 Timeline of major events and actor turnover in the organizational coordination of the project.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Events</b>			
<b>2000</b>	Decision to demolish and replace the old theatre with a new casino, building a new culture center at the former Hotel plot (670K for design contest) (CR)		Referendum saves former Hotel façades from demolition	
<b>2001</b>	Design contest jury shortlists four projects	Star architect A, president of the design contest jury, polemically resigns		
<b>2002</b>	Winning project of design contest identified		New casino inaugurated	
<b>2003</b>	6.8M approved for planning application at former hotel plot (CR)			
<b>2004</b>	169M voted for new culture center construction (CR)	Public auction: TP sells former hotel plot to private investors for 20M		
<b>2005</b>	Council and architect-directed specialists collaborate: missing logistic area for trucks added to the project			
<b>2006</b>	TP hires architect AA as project manager	CA director V, in office since 1990, resigns/is fired		
<b>2007</b>	Estimate for restoring the convent	Call for tenders for a GC 1 <sup>st</sup> phase		
<b>2008</b>	Decision to restore convent: 10.5M (CR)	Call for tenders for a GC 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase	CA director W hired with no public contest	
<b>2009</b>	Call for tenders selects GC 2 <sup>nd</sup> classified B files appeal	Culture policy chart approved	Cantonal court confirms validity of council GC selection	GC signs contract with council
<b>2010</b>	Decision to fund 9.7M for museum extra floor. Canton (region) contributes 5M towards merger of regional and city museum (CR)	General manager X of culture center hired with public contest		CA director W resigns
<b>2011</b>	Wage dumping and illegal recruitment of workers by subcontractors of GC, public prosecution and controversy		CA director Y hired without public contest	
<b>2012</b>	City hires engineer E as TP deputy director and project manager	Inauguration of donated private art collection space near culture centre	Inauguration of car park adorned by famous urban landscape artist	
<b>2013</b>	AA quits TP	Historical opposition leader dies within days of elections, won by his party which replaces old mayor, in office since 1984	X fired. Hired Music director Mus with public contest	TP pays GC 8M to avoid litigation Old mayor quits polemically
<b>2014</b>	New general manager Z, hired without public contest, replaces X	Theatre director T quits polemically. Substitute TT is hired with public contest	Marketing manager Mkt hired with public contest	
<b>2015</b>	Events manager U hired with public contest. Outcome criticized by media, overturned, then confirmed by lawcourt.	City manager/Council Secretary General fired with highly criticized “golden handshake” of 780K	Inauguration of culture center during two weeks of shows	

**Notes:** CR = Council Resolution; GC = General Contractor; TP = Town Planning; CA = Culture Activities; M = millions; K = thousands (CHF); Letters A, AA, B, E, Mus, Mkt, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, T, TT preserve actors’ anonymity

We interviewed key actors that the project had “left behind” before or during our study: culture or administration managers deeply involved in the project (6) (e.g. V, W, X in Table 3.2); architects, engineers and subcontractors, who resigned, were fired, or were still undergoing legal litigation with the council or with the general contractor (6) (e.g. A, AA, B in Table 3.2). This allowed us to gain a longitudinal picture on the ramified history of the project, tracing many *critique* processes (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Our data collection thus drew a wide net over the organizational relations of the project, orienting towards a selection of its dramatic shifts (Pettigrew, 1990).

An exploratory media analysis duly prepared this research, since the project over the years attracted much criticism, voiced in unrestrained manner by the opposition-owned free Sunday paper. Awareness about major controversies helped us to orient interviews towards critical aspects of coordination. From a common template, interviews were prepared and tailored on the informants ahead of meetings, allowing wide possibilities for different themes and aspects to emerge. Interviews were very open, starting from the historical reconstruction of the personal involvement of informants in the project, but also addressing specific concerns of past, present and anticipated situations. Recurring questions were: What constitutes/ed the major coordination problem? What was done well or do you find valuable about the project, and why? What is your current, daily concern about the project? If you had a magic wand, what would you change in the organization of the project? What do you feel is wrong about how the project was managed? This led us to collect many different critical reflections and intricate patterns of evaluation that actors articulated on their coordination practices.

### 3.3.2 Data analysis

Planning practices revealed, at the level of official documents, interesting macro narratives of remembering, strategically plotting the history of the town in a search for lost space (Petani & Mengis, 2016). A micro analysis of all the implemented and the just attempted changes in the architectural plan signaled also how spatiotemporally representations of change did not keep the pace of the materially unfolding building site activities, struggling to integrate contractually and to construct in practice what remained absent spaces (Petani & Mengis, 2013a, 2013b). These spaces initially emerged as the *unfair* waste, a by-product or non-product of coordination, which stood out as an important sacrifice in the mnemonic reconstructions of interviewed actors. Many informants referred to urban transformations, which *would have made* or could still make a difference in the culture centre and in the whole town (e.g. the rejected project of a tunnel underneath the lake to direct all traffic away from the town centre). Often building site practitioners (architects, engineers, etc.) referred to areas of the culture center that had disappeared from the plans, failing to get implemented, or otherwise substantially ending up as *lost in construction*. These absent spaces



recurred as very controversial sacrificed spaces, embodying an all too *present absence* (Callon & Law, 2004; Crewe, 2011; Hetherington, 2004). Absent spaces materialized the criticizable waste and non-achievement of organizational coordination. As an interviewed actor put it, it represented “the maximum of frustration...the failed objective”. The emerging critical histories of missed compromises and spaces did not criticize unremittingly the unfolding of events, as one might have expected, but rather opened to possibilistic blends of justification, critique and compromise. This suggested the data-inductive method of tracing many conflicting moral histories of absent space to analyze alternative evaluation dilemmas along the EW model, and revealed an unexpected balancing of plots with speculative scenarios on test outcomes (for a rich example, see Table 3.3).

**TABLE 3.3. History of the absent restaurant, told via conflicting/overlapping evaluations by key interviewed actors.**

<b>Absent Restaurant</b>	
<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Narratives articulating actors’ concerns, in retrospective and prospective scenarios</b>
<b>Director of cultural activities</b> 16/5/2012 interview	When I arrived, I said: “Look, we have a problem here”. It was evident. The problem of the square, the square without a restaurant... It was evident. [...] There is a problem also with the private partners... In the sense that... Now they would like a low profile for the square, because the rich homeowners... It’s a problem... They want quiet, so... We’ll have a big problem there, with the catering...
<b>Architect</b> 2/7/2012 Interview	I’m not convinced of the...of the restaurant, not in terms of architecture, but for its function... Whether it’s right to move a restaurant in that position... I am not convinced... I’ve always wanted it on the ground floor. Now it’s up here... ((indicating the upper floor of the culture centre on a plan)) We’ll see...this has to do with managerial expectations...It doesn’t convince me... For me a restaurant should be in the square. [Interviewer: At the architecture level, you...?] No, at the architecture level it’s very beautiful, but... [...] It was planned here... On the groundfloor of the private partners. Yes, yes (confirming our pointing on the plan)...which had the square here in front and the cloister behind and... this was very important for me... we would have had the only restaurant of the city...with two sides...
<b>Architect of private real estate developers</b> 10/9/2012 interview	Small example. In the design contest it was imperative to introduce a restaurant on the groundfloor, to enliven the square, because otherwise you have a big empty square without a soul. Fine, so we start connecting a great restaurant here. Then the city decides to do a restaurant here, near the theatre ((pointing to the upper floor on a drawing)). So we said: ‘If we do two large restaurants, one here and one upstairs, one of the two goes bankrupt, so it makes no sense, because catering is already difficult... It’s not like people will flock there in the millions, but more in the hundreds. So we gave up the idea of the restaurant, and opted for a snack bar, but not two large restaurants.
<b>Councilor responsible for Town Planning and Culture Activities</b> 11/10/2012 interview	However...hmm... in my view the analysis of the architect of the private real estate developers ((see row above))... is a little questionable, because... For instance, what had we said? We had said: “You have to do”... that is... when they bought the hotel in 2004, the truth is that we had said: “You <i>have</i> to do... You, if I ask it, <i>have</i> to do a restaurant on the square”. They never wanted to do it, because they thought: “It’s not profitable”, and perhaps they’re even right... So I am concerned for the restaurant up on the third floor... we never saw them convinced of doing it. It was... It was a kind of moral commitment they had with us, which was not even a formal commitment... The functional destination of these spaces was planned as a restaurant, was it not? Ehm... But they were never very convinced of doing it... Because, for them, for instance the private partner that runs already a rooftop restaurant ((see the architect’s reflections below in

	<p>the last excerpt collected in this table)) says “I see what a struggle it is to make a restaurant like that work”. And so as entrepreneurs they say “A restaurant up there is... It’s difficult”... Having said that, my impression is they took the excuse of saying “but you, you are doing other restaurants...” Actually, we know that you can well place many restaurants together. On the contrary, we could have made it the place where you go out to eat well, you know? If, if you do it well, in a coordinated way, you know? However, we always said that we wanted to do all things in a very coordinated way... So I don’t know if the analysis they give is... It’s <i>their</i> perspective.</p> <p>[Interviewer: is it the requests of <i>other</i> people...(i.e. rich homeowners, see first excerpt in this table)]</p> <p>Our view is slightly different. Then for sure it isn’t easy to make a restaurant work up there.</p>
<p><b>In-house council lawyer and construction contract manager</b> 6/2/2013 interview</p>	<p>Some information was provided and the architect was asked to make some suggestions for the restaurant. In my view, if I can stand up for the architect for once, what was missing from the start was a user of reference. Because you need to tell the architect: “Here’s a thousand square meters. Give me a museum-type restaurant, of European style museums”. Instead, he likely did a tour of museums, looked at magazines, did all his tricks, and then arrived with his suggestion. So... It’s even right that the architect formulates his thought independently from yours, because this way he might adjust your fire, but on the other hand it was necessary in my view that a user could say “I want it like this and like that. Then, dress it up as you please in the form...” but that would have remained... And for me this was lacking a bit, and it was reflected in the design and the contract [...]</p> <p>It’s an inconclusive situation, because in the end you already picture the housewife strolling in and saying “Ah, I could go to the theatre, but where do I go for dinner?” That’s it. You already know she will say: “How stupid they are, they didn’t do the restaurant...” (laughs)</p> <p>And you know this dynamic already, you know that it’s not just forgetfulness. You’d like to reply: “Listen, we did <i>think</i> about it, OK? But this results from all this work here”. It is the maximum of frustration, it’s the failed objective”.</p>
<p><b>Architect</b> 29/1/2014 Interview</p>	<p>The restaurant stays there (groundfloor) until 2007...look at the plans... ((points to detailed reconstruction of successively modified plans from 2000 to 2014, prepared on our request to enable a narrative interview, tracing over time absent or transformed spaces)) [...]</p> <p>[Interviewer: OK, so this (pointing to the rooftop restaurant)... Where does it come from? How do you explain it?]</p> <p>This comes from people who went to Lucern and they saw a restaurant... And they convinced themselves we had to do the restaurant like that... It’s a decision like that...</p> <p>[Interviewer: Taken like that?] Just like that. [...] So, I said that a restaurant up there... My reasons are still valid today... Because all this still holds with the observations made by V ((former director of culture activities, see timeline in Table 3.2)). He followed the museum project at the time and he said, “The upper floor... Let’s not lose it as an exhibition space... Because history teaches us that a theatre/concert hall doesn’t move... It always remains the same... A theatre for 1000 people after 100 years remains a theatre for 1000 people, while museums are always evolving...” [...]</p> <p>In any case, to conclude the story of the restaurant, I say: no architect can say that a restaurant placed up there isn’t beautiful, because it is very beautiful... The view is fantastic... But you need to know how to manage it... We visited several rooftop restaurants and we saw the problems... We were talking 24 employees... And I took Tom (private real estate investor in the hotel project in fictional name) at the council, to meet with those of the steering committee. So he could explain, because he knows about hotels and restaurants... He showed them how bad it was to place the restaurant up there... He explained it to them in financial terms, because in terms of beauty you cannot understand it... It’s beautiful.</p>
<p><b>NOTES:</b> A proper full size restaurant as originally designed was never built before the inauguration of the centre, neither on the upper floor of the culture centre, nor on the original groundfloor of the private partners’ former hotel, where it was originally planned. Just before the inauguration, however, a makeshift removeable improvised café and snack bar was added externally on the square and a groundfloor champagne bar started serving hot food. The architect, met on the square after the centre’s inauguration (September 2015), confirmed he was still studying an alternative solution, as the moveable solution could not remain like that for a long time.</p>	

Table 3.3 illustrates our method of tracing different stories of the absent spaces that could have been and/or still could, and what sacrifices underlined tests along different values. We coded these narratives along many conflicting values (cp. Table 3.1). The *Market* “financial terms” embody “managerial expectations” and concerns over a rooftop restaurant’s “profitability”, despite its high *Inspirational* worth (e.g. “it’s beautiful”, “the view is fantastic”), whose sacrifice is considered. A *Civic* concern anticipates the future critiques of end users/citizens (e.g. “the housewife”). The difficult enforcement of *Domestic*, informal agreements is patent in the councilor’s critical reconstruction of the relation with the private partners, who sacrificed the civic moral commitment towards the council, in favor of the commercial one towards their clients “who want quiet”. The selected narratives also document how decisions were influenced by cases high in the worth of *Fame* (e.g. a rooftop restaurant from a famous culture centre in Lucern and the conclusion, “just like that” of replicating that model). An *Industry*-informed critique by both the architect and the councilor denounces the fact that the plans for the restaurant were not followed, and undeniably sacrificed (e.g. “it was planned here”, “the functional destination of these spaces was planned as a restaurant, was it not?”). Organizational coordination is also criticized in terms of a lack of an inclusive longer-term integration in the process of other organizational end-users, who *could have* directed the process towards more industrially functional objectives (the ‘absent manager of the future restaurant’, who could have oriented the architect by saying “I want it like this and like that”).

Actors however articulated cautious explanations and critiques, often avoiding exclusive justifications, in favor of a compromising, doubtful balancing of views and values. The architect ponders by hypotheses, he is not convinced about the function of a beautiful rooftop restaurant: the space seduces him inspirationally, but he doubts it would pay off market-wise. He speculates about how the situation *would have been*, had the restaurant remained on the groundfloor, overlooking the square, where he had originally planned it. His inspirational justification had aimed for a unique, double-exposed restaurant on the square and on the cloister (e.g. “this was very important for me... we would have had the only restaurant of the city...with two sides...”). The councilor critically regrets that the investment in unwritten moral civic/domestic agreements made with the private partners and real estate developers was sacrificed to a market ideal. In this respect, it helps to consider how the compatible investments and sacrifices of civic and domestic values (respectively, transcending oneself and accepting duties towards a close entourage, in the face of sacrificing particular interests and selfishness) clash with the market investment in an opportunism that sacrifices bonds with each other (see Table 3.1). Considering the entrepreneurial, market-driven evaluation of the competitiveness of many restaurants, the councilor admits the possibility that “perhaps they are even right”, despite also musing hypothetically over the sacrificed opportunity

of building a place reputed for many good places, where you could have gone to eat, through a fame-justified objective that could have been obtained through better coordination (e.g. “we could have made it the place where you go out to eat well, you know? If, if you do it well, in a coordinated way, you know?”). We see how the council lawyer expressed a critique about how the architect was managed, in absence of a clear user of reference to direct him (an organizational lack “reflected in the contract and the plan”). Yet, she also *partly* justifies the alternative inspirational compromising rationale of not constraining the architect (“it’s even right that the architect formulates his thoughts independently from yours, because this way he might adjust your fire”). Actors therefore balanced value-based critique *and* justification, juggling alternative organizational possibilities, weighing sacrifices against benefits in a typical attitude open to compromise, to broker between conflicting possibilities.

We traced other absent spaces (e.g. the park, whose budget was halved; the failed project of a hostel for resident artists at the former convent, which instead gave way to conventional office spaces). Their absence, untold by the materially built center, recurrently emerged from the value assessments of interviewed actors over what *could have been*. The plans allowed us to follow how the built space arose from a paper rubble of conceived plans that never saw the light of day in brick and mortar, despite populating the dreams and nightmares of many actors’ narratives. The emerging theme these recurrently targeted appeared to be “what could have happened” (Nicolini, 2013: 168), usually signalling what *should have been done differently and better*, occasionally identifying the avoided risk of worst scenarios. These hypothesized alternatives articulated not abstract retrospective speculations, but justificatory and critical judgments anchoring to material elements and objects that could “prove” (i.e. test) particular claims. Actors provided traceable evidence of untaken paths. Narratives argued that objective sacrifices had weighed (or were still weighing) on the choices made through plans, conflicting stakes and values (e.g. the “rich homeowners” wanting peace and not really caring about sacrificing a lively inspirational-civic square, for a quiet one “without a soul”).

### 3.3.3 *The methodological dialogue of data and theory*

Our interpretative methodological orientation proceeded first inductively from data (see Table 3.3), and later abductively from a closer dialogue with theory. Our data collection and analysis was consistent from the start with the EW’s methodological position, a *complex pragmatic situationalism* (Diaz-Bone, 2014, 2011), which prescribes “no simple way of explanation in the sense of directed relations between levels of analysis”, but rather “focuses on the co-construction of structures and forms of coordination practices in historical perspective” (Diaz-Bone, 2014: 326). Aware that conventions are deep structures (Gomez & Jones, 2000) continuously reshaped by a compromising historicity (Knoll, 2015), our process-orientation inquired into the role of

compromise over time and space. Provided we found empirical grounding, we traced both materialized forms and the just organizationally aimed for (e.g. implemented vs. just proposed policy strategies; discussed alternative organizational forms, the absence of which was criticized). Initially, data oriented our inductive reasoning “incompletely” (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010), particularly towards how actors themselves justified inductively new ways of doing through analogical or metaphorical reference to prior experience (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010). In these occurrences, actors consistently articulated what *could have happened*.

A critical sensemaking of the organizational coordination led actors to mobilize not only more successful forms employed elsewhere (over space, e.g. the Lucern restaurant), but also deplored the failure to adopt alternative organizational management tools successfully adopted by the city in the past (i.e. over time), but excluded in the present project (e.g. different culture policies adopted). Recursive narrative patterns reconstructed critical aspects of the project as potentially avoidable through alternative conventions that, although well known to be available, the organizational coordination did not adopt, or sacrificed in the EW investment terms. Certain legal forms, for instance the general contractor form of procurement, represented radical innovations in organizational design and business model for the territory’s organizational culture, igniting critique and pragmatic resistance from excluded actors (e.g. local constructors outplayed by the competition of a multinational foreign consortium)<sup>23</sup>. Importantly for our theoretical warranties, these absent forms often denounced an interesting lack of compromise between several orders of worth. In our analysis, we coded and interpreted data along the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) employing the NVivo software to organize disparate empirical material such as stenographical notes from observations of building site and steering committee meetings, verbatim transcribed interviews, council official resolutions and working documents of our interest (e.g. confidential semestral reports, diaries, to-do-lists). Coding unfolded iteratively and developed over time from the triangulation of multiple data sources and a continuous, extended review of literature on the economies of worth (in organization studies and beyond).

Despite initial data-induction, the core of our analysis was largely abductive and interpretative (Hatch & Yanow, 2003; Yanow & Schwartz, 2006), as we explored multiple explanations for our phenomena in a back and forth between data and theory, relying on a theory-data dialogical interpretation. Our theory building proceeded from the construction of mysteries (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). We sought for variations across situations, in search of surprises (Tavory &

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<sup>23</sup> The critique we captured was not only rhetorical, but translated into a pragmatic retaliation and obstruction in response to the perceived injustice. Local building authorities, in the form of associations representing local constructors, deemed to have been hit the most by the general contract form, won by a foreign consortium. Despite being able to release special permissions to work extra hours for construction projects of public interest, these authorities resisted and hindered the project, refusing all such requests, to the annoyance of both general contractor and council for the time and cost losses incurred.

Timmermans 2014; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), or what has been called *intersituational variation* (Tavory & Timmermans, 2013), which seemed compatible with the *complex pragmatic situationalism* of the EW (Diaz-Bone, 2014). We considered the ways actors coordinated through investments in disparate conventions: these emerged as interesting behaviors, in as much as, to our surprise, they did not comply with the EW approach, or with what theory led us to expect, and particularly the mutually exclusive occurrence of tests and compromises.

Our theoretically evolving understanding of compromise, as an intersituational *processual* level of analysis, spanned the conceptualization of the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). Codes like “convention, standard way of establishing equivalence and evaluation” (e.g. general contract, public contest, etc.), or “test” and “order of worth” (e.g. price, competitiveness/market; functionality, efficiency/industry, etc. refer to Table 3.1), were not mobilized *alternatively to*, but often *overlapping with* a plurality of “figures of compromise” (e.g. professional experience and business methods, respectively as industry-domestic and industry-market compromises, see Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 316, 334). Moreover, the absence of forms of compromise (i.e. their sacrifice) seemed to hold a counterintuitive testing power in critiques. In other words, *if the presence of a compromise might theoretically fall short of a full justification, its absence fully constituted enough evidence to justify a relevant critique in practice*. Our informants consistently signaled the absence, within the council’s organizational design, of coordination forms typical of the private sector, a representative point in case being the project’s “business plan” (i.e. a business method). The co-occurrence of tests and compromises represented to us a surprising empirical mystery (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). The compromises observed and analyzed proved very different from the fragile, second-order compositions between (usually two) orders of worth, theorized as “stronger alone” by the EW model. Compromises did not show their expected fragility, as theory led us to expect. Through an abductive stance, we thus considered the possibility of a different rule or warrant (Toulmin, 2003) that agreed with our observations (i.e. compromises as integrating or co-constituting the testing process). In other words, we inferred an explanation that would account for our findings as less surprising (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). The coordination mode of compromise spanned more than two orders of worth and, rather often, different conventions of compromise competed not only with forms of testing (with which they overlapped), but with each other. The “meaning making structure” of a different compromise emerged therefore as a “particularly compelling ‘bottoming out’ process of explanation”, allowing our ethnographical orientation “to trace iteration of actions over time” (Tavory & Timmermans, 2013: 708). In order to systematize our data and analysis, we went back to the theory to compare and contrast the figures of compromise in the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), with the ones emerging from our fieldwork (see Table 3.4).

**TABLE 3.4. Figures of compromise (as in Boltanski & Thévenot 2006: 293-335, lowercase text) and competing ⇄ forms of compromise observed in our case (uppercase text).**

<i>COMPROMISE</i>	<i>Market</i>	<i>Industrial</i>	<i>Civic</i>	<i>Domestic</i>	<i>Inspired</i>	<i>Fame</i>
<i>Market</i>		Business methods (see 1, 6)	Competitive public service (see 1, 2, 4)	Trust in business (see 7)	Creative market (see 10)	Brand image (see 15)
<i>Industrial</i>	A salable product (see 1)		Workers' rights (see 1, 3)	Professional experience, good habits (see 8)	Creative techniques (see 0)	PR as professional capacity (see 15)
<i>Civic</i>	COMPREHENSIVE BUSINESS PLAN ① FOR THE PUBLIC CULTURE CENTRE PROJECT DIRECT RECRUITMENT OF PUBLIC STAFF ② ⇄ PUBLIC CONTEST ③ ENTREPRENEURIAL COUNCIL POLITICIANS (IN REAL ESTATE AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT) ④ ⇄ PROXY, OR DELEGATION TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS OR PRIVATE PLAYERS ⑤ ONE GENERAL CONTRACT AND CONTRACTOR ⑥			Use good sense in applying rules (see 9)	Workers' dreams. Collective genius (see 13)	Putting one's name at the service of a cause
<i>Domestic</i>	MULTIPLE CONTRACTS WITH TRUSTED LOCAL CONTRACTORS ⑦ ARBITRATION JURY OF TRUSTED EXPERTS ⑧ ⇄ NORMAL LEGAL TRIAL WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES ⑨				Initiation art master and disciple (see 11, 14)	Good contacts: confidence as stabilizer of speculation (see 16)
<i>Inspired</i>	⑩ A BALANCED BUDGET FOR THE SECTOR OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES CHOOSE ONE ART SECTOR TO INVEST AND BECOME COMPETITIVE IN ⑫ THEATRE AND CONCERT HALL SPATIAL COMPROMISE: ⑬ CIVIC SUPPORT OF COUNCIL ART OFFER BESIDE BUDGET ⑪ VALORIZE LOCAL ARTISTS ⑭					Hysteria of fans. Misunderstood genius
<i>Fame</i>	MAKE CITY REPUTABLE AND VISITED FOR FAMOUS ART EXHIBITIONS ⑮ NOTORIOUS FREEMASONRY LODGES AND TIGHT-KNIT CATHOLIC LAY GROUPS OF INTEREST ⑯					

Table 3.4 shows the dialogue between our coded data on compromising conventions and the twofold or binary compromises reported in the EW's founding text *On Justification. The Economies of Worth* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 277-335). The arrows  $\longleftrightarrow$  represent conflicting compromises that actors recursively discussed as alternative conventions during interviews and observed meetings.

The cells spanning more than binary intersections between rows and columns in Table 3.4 represent conventions resulting from the combination of more than two orders of worth. Table 3.4 selects a limited number of forms of compromise salient in our fieldwork. Of interest to our methodological question, some of these forms were omnipresent in organizational *discourse* and even in journalistic critical coverage of the project, without necessarily being present in the project. For instance, nr 1 is the greatly lamented absent “comprehensive business plan for the project”, which spans three orders of worth (industry, market and civic). According to many critiques, this complex convention *should have* embodied the typical market and industry values of a “business method” able to formalize “a salable product”, affording not only the virtues found in market and civic combinations (i.e. “a competitive public service”), but also to blend industrial and civic worths, reflected by the notion of “worker’s rights”. The sacrifice of this form became very concrete during the wage dumping cases (see 2011 in timeline, Table 3.2): the lack of a civic-oriented organizational coordination plan for controlling subcontractors came under fire in the media. Public debates argued that such episodes “could have been” avoided with tighter, codified forms of governance, a symbol for all of which came to be a civic-minded business plan, to invest in for a return of coordination aiming at a stricter civic control of subcontractors’ credentials. The absence or leaving behind of such a coordination mechanism came to represent a proof of mismanagement. Table 3.4 illustrates our abductive method, emerged from coding data in close dialogue with theory: multiple forms of compromise in our case sketched the tensions between adopted or predominant forms of coordination and alternative ones, hypothesized to be better and traced as major concerns in interviews, newspaper accounts, official council documents and everyday building site meetings. Sometimes, coded tensions traced change processes and value conflicts between past and present actors and their policies. For instance, the previously mentioned former director of cultural activities (see V timeline in Table 3.2) had adopted the clearly market and fame-driven strategy of heavily investing in the museum temporary activities to build a reputation for the city’s modern art offer, hosting exhibitions of famous artists (see 12 and 15 in Table 3.4). This contrasted with the later emerging culture policy of civicly putting all the arts (e.g. music, theatre, visual arts) on the same level of inspirational worth, in a sort of arts’ democracy (see 13 in Table 3.4), if perhaps with domestic-fueled compromising exceptions, making local artists (see 14) “more equally” inspiring than others (Orwell, 1945). While we have briefly mentioned here the criticized innovation of the



procurement of construction services at the council (4 and 6 vs. 7 in Table 3.4), we examined elsewhere contradictions observed in opposed recruiting practices (2 vs. 3; cp. Table 3.2) and other intraorganizational coordinating mechanisms of the council (4 vs. 5) (Petani & Mengis, 2014c). The methodological implication of tracing rejected forms of compromise is that it expands an understanding of compromise as defined in the EW. Instead of mostly binary compositions, and squarely opposed to tests, compromises are plural in the orders of worth they blend (more than two) and in their temporal occurrences simultaneously with tests. Empirical evidence of an extended plurality of compromises rests in organizational communication on their absence, which allows critique to draw justification from hypothesized alternative pragmatic scenarios of lower sacrifices, higher returns or both. The theoretical implication for process organization studies of coordination goes beyond the case of compromises. Actors are aware of what they leave behind and keep good accounting records of unachieved organizational possibilities, whether these relate to planned spaces they did not build or to rejected administration forms. Moral absences may persist over time.

The rest of the paper discusses how sacrifices between compromising and testing unfolded practically, during building site meetings, as co-constituents of organizational coordination. We extensively sketched the methodological and theoretical implications of tracing rejected forms of compromise for understanding organizational coordination as a process of tradeoff between conventions of compromising and testing (our first research question); we now dig deeper into the relational interplay between investments in tests and the corresponding sacrifice of the benefits of compromises (our second research question). Building on the emerging methodological importance of absence and on the theoretical insight on the inescapable economy of sacrifice that coordination management imposes, we look into *how* the sacrificing of tests and compromises relate to each other in the practical adjusting of coordination conventions in construction management.

### **3.4 Findings**

The excerpts we analyze in depth in this section come from communication between the managerial staff of the general contractor (i.e. the constructor) and personnel from the town planning council division (i.e. the client). Conversations were stenographically transcribed during real-time observations of building site meetings (held every two weeks) and of steering committee meetings (called more rarely to evaluate and overcome critical issues). They provide a rich illustration (Weick, 2007) of situations in which organizational communication enacted and critically transformed coordination mechanisms in practice, through a particular orienting to absence (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012) that sheds light on compromising and its relation to the investment/sacrifice ratio of tests. It allows to show two important reasons for compromising in

organizational coordination: 1) the uncertainty of value of a certain test in a given situation, and 2) the uncertainty of coordinating across single tests over time, whereby the cost of compromise, but also of past tests and of their unsatisfying outcomes remain open to critique.

We analyze organizational communication around two important conventions in the construction industry:

- 1) The *contractual amendment* is a procedure through which a change to the specifications of the architectural plan and the general contract is suggested by either client or constructor. Once an audit report controls the implications of the change in terms of cost, time and quality (the evaluation trinity of construction management), the contractual amendment is either accepted (and implemented in the construction plan and contract as an addendum), or rejected, maintaining unaltered the original contractually agreed terms of construction.
- 2) The *testing* represents a quality control procedure, which confirms that a built element complies with the required contractual specifications. It includes various objective measurements that identify non-compliances, which then constitute snagging lists, made of items that have to be fixed within a strict delay (e.g. 20 days), before the final delivery and invoicing of construction products and services.

In what follows, we abbreviate the project manager representing the council town planning (i.e. the client) in Town Planning Engineer (TPE) and the main construction manager for the general contractor (i.e. the constructor) in General Contractor Engineer (GCE). Other actors are the architects and engineers of the Town Planning (TP) or of the General Contractor (GC) staff. By plunging in coordinating processes in practice, we show how actors shaped the conventions that structured action in important (more or less critical) organizational situations.

#### *3.4.1 The threatened domino effect of cross-situational costs of not compromising. When radical test justification backfires: the unsustainable hypothesis of a zero-compromise coordination mode.*

##### Excerpt 3.1. Building site meeting of the 8/5/2013 (a Wednesday).

TPE: Now, I have an issue with the execution of the theatre, and particularly with the roof stratigraphy... We had already notified here our impression that you were building a non-approved variation... This behavior constitutes in our view a clear breach of the contract, as you are performing something that isn't in the contract and that we warned you against. For this reason, we here summon you today, and we shall follow up in writing... We summon you to interrupt the work on the roof... We ask how you intend to restore the contractually specified stratigraphy, urging you to answer within Monday next week. Obviously, delays and extra costs generated by this suspension are at your expense, and these services will not be remunerated. Now... I don't know if you want to clarify your stance or what... (5 seconds of charged silence)

GC staff: We already talked about this the other day... We acted like this because the contractual amendment is still open, in the same way that other contractual amendments...

TPE: Absolutely not.

GC staff: ...so we were proceeding according to the change and not the contract.

TPE: Absolutely not. We rejected this contractual amendment on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. On the 29<sup>th</sup> the change was rejected. And we confirmed here during our meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April that the contractual amendment was rejected.

(disapproving hum by GC staff)

GCE: No, no, wait a minute, we even had a meeting to discuss technically of the...

TPE: Yes, yes, but a technical discussion does not mean we approve...

GCE: No, no, we didn't say that. We only said that the problem of the contractual amendment was still open... Now, the rejection of the contractual amendment is only dated 10<sup>th</sup> of April. For sure, we didn't remain still from November to April, so we arranged everything towards the change, this is the issue. The fact that we are continuing according to the change... It cannot be that because you say on the 10<sup>th</sup> April...we can then go back to the originally planned solution. By now, you should know this very well, it's not like I'm saying anything new... We got it. We proceeded according to the solution of the contractual amendment, and we currently believe it is not possible to go back.

TPE: But now I'd like to clarify two things. One: that we rejected the contractual amendment already in November last year...

GCE: That's not true.

TPE (oozing anger): ...LET me finish. The EVIDENCE must go on the table, the EVIDENCE!! You have an audit report that you even attached to your second request on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, in which it is clearly stated, and the audit is dated 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2012, that the request is rejected, and this is on the audit report. In addition, in an email from the same period I wrote to you that the contractual amendment was rejected, and this is dated November 2012. Then on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March you proposed the contractual amendment for the second time, and not even two weeks later, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, we rejected the change. This is the first issue.

The second is that in this building we have an atelier whatever-it's-called area that you built according to the contract, and not in compliance with our contractual amendment, because the change was open but not concluded. So you legitimately followed the contractual solution. We have a wall downstairs, at least two in the museum, which we wanted to move in different positions, and you built following the contract, legitimately not considering our contractual amendment, which was in progress, but not closed. Here we have a contractual amendment, which was no longer open, but rejected and you did not perform the contractual solution, but proceeded according to the variation, at your risk... At your risk! I took note of such reasoning on your part, and at your risk. And when two weeks ago I asked what you were doing, you said you hadn't informed yet... And now we find that you ignored our notice from last week. You ignored the rejected contractual amendment. You didn't inform us. You simply proceeded according to the variation. So now we ask you to stop and to restore the contractual solution.

GCE (angry and loud): We also have the STAGE EQUIPMENT...! Let's do like this then...! If the contractual amendment isn't approved, we do the contractual solution...! (Protests from TP staff) Let's just say the open ones we have, because we cannot... Because otherwise, like hell we'll make May 2014! We'll end up in 2024! So, many things that were open we performed them: contractual amendments opened BY YOU. But if this is the stance, if we are going to be so radical, then we'll do it for everything. Therefore, we shall restore everything as in the contract for the unsigned contractual amendments... (Dispute continues)[...]

TPE: No, we can show all the understanding in the world, but to simply ignore like that...what the client signals and communicates, that's not a constructive attitude. We are ready to work collaboratively, also on the contractual amendments still open, but here, I am sorry, you screwed up.

Excerpt 3.1 illustrates a tense confrontational exchange between client and constructor. The council engineer bluntly criticizes the fact that the outcome of a test (e.g. a rejected contractual amendment involving the theatre's roof) was ignored. Relevant to our interest in refusing to compromise, the excerpt contains a repeated critique of test practices. A specular evidence on potential and already incurred coordination costs or sacrifices is deployed by actors to reconstruct and critically relate situated failures to a general lack of compromising *across situations*.

The first critique takes the form of the uncompromising enforcement of a test outcome. In a very legalistic way, the town planning engineer sanctions formally the single situation at hand (i.e. the disrespect of a particular contractual amendment outcome). The general contractor protests and attempts to water down the tone of the dispute by tactically relating the single situation to a more domestic/industrial, open scenario, where this particular case is not different from many similar cases, discussed in everyday, *oral and informal* professional communication (e.g. “we already talked about this the other day”, “in the same way that other contractual amendments...”, “we even had a meeting to discuss technically”). Such an attitude clashes against a firm denial, attempting an authoritative closure of the dispute “Absolutely not”, accompanied by the invocation of material proofs for the offered arguments. Notice the categorical: “The EVIDENCE must go on the table, the EVIDENCE!!” Several expressions of the town planning engineer (e.g. “we had already notified”, “we here summon you”, “breach of contract”, “we warned you against”, “we shall follow up in writing”) suggest the ceremonious staging of a civic, organizational trial. The concern for traceable *written* communication objects and representations (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009), such as official documents, regulations, audit reports, email and verbalized building site *formal* records, indicate a civic justification (see Table 3.1). Notice the stark contrast between all the precise dates of official communication scrupulously reconstructed in detail by the town planning engineer, and the general contractor's “we already talked about this the other day”.

The second critique seems almost to contrast and contradict the uncompromising enforcement of tests' outcomes of the first critique. The harsh critique for disregarding a test outcome is in fact backed by a critical body of material evidence of past situations of the same testing practice. By recalling the "absent spaces" of the walls that escaped the contractual amendment procedure, the town planning engineer seems to be justifying those cases as *legitimate*. Such formal stance does not hide well a second angry critique for such an inflexible behavior on the part of the general contractor, who took the test to its formal letter, and until formalized, ignored as contingent the client's will to change the project. Refusing to compromise in this way produced a series of legitimate, but no less criticized sacrifices: the spaces and walls the client wanted to change. Compromising would have meant complying with the suggested contractual amendments, even if they were not officially or formally completed. In other words, in Excerpt 3.1 the council's sticking to a harsh enforcement of the contractual amendment outcome does not emerge from an 'unconditional' investment in the test form of the contractual amendment *per se*. On the contrary, and paradoxically, the council town planning engineer indirectly denounces similar radical applications in the counterpart, almost suggesting a tit-for-tat tactic, paying back the general contractor in the same coin for behaving in a non collaborative way, in past situations that are compared albeit differentially to demonstrate how the critique is well founded (see Follett's opening quote). The various missed change opportunities – discursively mobilized in the mentioned walls that "could have been changed" – are attributed by the town planning engineer to a legitimate, but rigid respect of the testing mode by the general contractor. The underlying critique however rebukes a lack of compromising-collaborative skills, or what Follett (1927) suggests as the "principle of integration", serving a collective coordination interest "in the long run". The presence of a contractually alien element (the theatre roof stratigraphy) means that the contractually specified roof has been absented, sacrificed, ruled out. The town planning engineer argues for a punctual reversibility of space, asking to restore the contractually specified stratigraphy. The general contractor instead relates the single test at hand to other past and present unsigned contractual amendments, defending the impossibility at this stage to go back on the stratigraphy, in the greater interest of delivering the culture centre within the common objective of May 2014.

#### *3.4.2 Material absence as relevant evidence of miscoordination across situations*

A general observation has to be made at this point: what is mobilized as a relevant, cross-situational and pragmatic evidence in the long-term coordination costs incurred for refusing to compromise, are the spaces the client did not manage to change (i.e. "the atelier whatever-it's-called area", "a wall downstairs, at least two in the museum"). After inviting to put the evidence on the table, the town planning engineer himself offers "absent spaces" as part of such evidence.

These absent, yet objective spaces count considerably in the coordination of actors. The variously dated documents, the audit report, the email and building site meetings' formal documents and information exchanges do not tell the whole story, because they limit themselves to representations of the single situation at hand, however important it may be (in Excerpt 3.1 the roof stratigraphy of the theatre). The general organizational evidence of the processual sacrifices of coordination are however those absent walls that “could have been, if...”, and which instead, despite being excluded materially, keep bearing discursively on the dispute on a wider scale, across tests, echoing back their criticism from past, undigested situations. Our most basic ethnographic finding is that tests and their relative sacrifices, because they were often procedures, which did not provide the desired closure, lingered across situations. Methodologically, we have claimed, tracing these lingering absences helps us to grasp the coordination process and challenge as a long term, cross-situational trade-off between several values. Absent spaces afford evidence that costs related to test outcomes survive situations and develop coordination debits and credits that live on processually. Sacrifices have a long lifespan, just as the forms invested in to try to avoid them, in the attempt to stabilize relationships (Thévenot, 1984). The “waste” of the coordination process, as some informants defined the ineffective contractual amendments producing micro and macro absent spaces, did not remain neatly in the bin. Trashed spaces ended up again on the table, as critical evidence, and stank of a stratified frustration. The “stratigraphy” of the theatre roof, to use a pun, in Excerpt 3.1 represents the “last straw” in a series of others, giving indication that the unfolding critiques and justifications show a sort of processual path dependence. The same contractual amendment presented *twice* indicates a stubborn resistance against a test's closure that should have excluded material spaces, which are instead imposed in defiance of a test outcome. We analyzed elsewhere how the differential or distance between representations such as the contractual amendment and reality made a great difference in rising costs and creating organizational interdependencies (Petani & Mengis, 2014a, 2014b). Here we dwell on how the effects of such material defaults were managed at the building site. Actors oriented to materiality, and the absence of material objects (e.g. planned spaces) allowed to measure failures or defaults. The tactic of the general contractor engineer is to turn attention to other spaces in danger of being absented in the future (e.g. the stage equipment), if a rigid stance of the test is enforced.

Materiality and tangible results are everything in Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE). All interviewed practitioners confirmed that the impossibility of shaping or implementing material artifacts – which at given points in time are tangibly doable, and even organizationally planned, but later fail the reality test (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) – is what frustrated them the most. When asked what concerned them and what they would change if they had a magic wand, many actors expressed a will to save some of these absent spaces (see Table 3.3).

Observing architects and engineers working together every day, tracing their daily to-do-lists, going through the concerns they noted down over the years in precise diaries and chronologies of their struggles and challenges (c.p. Petani & Mengis, 2014a, Mengis & Petani, 2016), we learnt that achieving the construction of a wall, in their value scale, is worth more than a thousand well-drafted audit reports. They see bureaucratic paperwork as the necessary but cumbersome means to the end of building the best space possible. Unachieved possibilities sting. ACE professionals are women and men who suffer for their buildings: they design and raise them, almost as their children. Any material defeat is a scar, absent space is “the maximum of frustration, the failed objective” (see Table 3.3). They take it personally, they get attached to or sick of certain spaces, like in bizarre sociomaterial love relationships. They might even become possessively jealous of their designed buildings with the clients and owners... Reminiscing the project for a private home she had worked on, an architect from the council town planning staff confessed only half jockingly that at the final delivery, she almost failed to let go of the doorkeys... This is how much materiality means to these people. Bricks and mortar always win over paper, and often even over people<sup>24</sup>. Talking about compromising *between* human beings and spaces, the architect in charge of the refurbishment of the former convent, after passionately digressing into all the minor discovered “formerly lost” frescos that a careful and respectful coordination with the Heritage Protection authorities had uncovered, explained to us: “The architect *always* pushes for the building’s sake [interviewer: How do you mean...?] For the good of the building... *Never* of the people. *Always* in favour of the building. [interviewer: I see...]. For the good of the building and its spaces. Of course, considering all other economic issues. Obviously, sometimes one has to make choices and to find a compromise, because one cannot... In other words, we must after all meet some parameters...” (Interview with the architect in charge of refurbishing the convent, 23/7/2013). The EW model supports a refined analysis of how human beings *and objects* are qualified and interact (Arjaliès & Friedland, 2015; Conein, Dodier & Thévenot, 1993). In our case, a sensitivity towards materiality was rewarded by many qualifications of natural or built elements: the rain or other ‘acts of God’,

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<sup>24</sup> An excellent film makes this point: *Locke* (2013) tells the story of a night-time solitary car-drive of the construction manager Ivan Locke. While driving from Birmingham to London, he makes and takes a long series of personal and organizational phone calls: during the night he loses his job and his wife tells him not to come back home. Yet, while trying to fix the broken pieces of his life, he desperately tries to make sure that next morning the important construction of *his* building will go well in his absence, even if he has just been fired, and warned against dealing with the business. Trying to motivate the scarcely convinced colleague Donal to work through the night to help him achieve this work task (despite an ungrateful holding company based in Chicago), the dialogue below sums up nicely Locke’s crazy passion for the materiality of construction ventures:

Donal: “You want me to run for those fucking bastards in Chicago, who don’t give a shit if I live or if I die?!”  
 Locke: “No... You do it for the piece of sky we are stealing with our building! You do it for the air that will be displaced! And most of all, you do it for the *fucking concrete*! Because it is as delicate as *blood*!”  
 Donal (laughing): “You really have gone fucking mad, haven’t you? Locke: “That would be a fair assessment, yes...”

as insurance policies qualified them; the construction debris, innovatively discarded into the nearby lake to enrich the ecosystem with the support of biologists; or the saving of ancient frescos, qualified chronologically by art historians and architects. All these material elements came with time and space interdependencies and investments in forms that could qualify them differently according to different orders of worth, each sacrificing the benefits of other tests *and* compromises. Tradeoffs between different qualifications were helpful to grasp organizational coordination, especially since they proceeded from a comparison of qualifications over time and situations. We claim that this tradeoff process is importantly constituted also by a latent materiality of what is kept alive discursively with the qualification of pending sacrifices to be compensated, as in the case of historically lost space to be regained (Petani & Mengis, 2016), or of lessons learnt that allow to recycle even absent materialities. Cases like the gradual disappearance from the construction plan of a whole restaurant bordered on disaster (see Table 3.3), but even the more micro-situated battles captured ethnographically at the building site (e.g. an absent wall) tell a lot about coordinating. Tests and compromises, conventions and plans (rules and representations, see Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) were adapted in practice in a cross-situational accounting of material debits and credits, in a management of absence-presence (Callon & Law, 2004). What was doable depended on the time and money available, but sometimes strong resolutions towards certain material objectives accepted no obstacles. Wanting, for example, to retrofit the design of the culture centre to the incoming, not yet binding/compulsory regulations on the access of disabled people to public buildings, meant that some areas of the centre were actually demolished and built again (Petani & Mengis, 2014a). This allows to interpret the reaction of the general contractor in Excerpt 3.1, and to relate the generalized retaliation prospected to the material absence involved. The general contractor's critique of the rigid enforcement of the contractual amendment outcome seems sarcastically paradoxical, but is instead a dead-serious threat. The hypothetical scenario he outlines about "what could happen" under the radical condition of an indiscriminate, automatic validity of the test, poses a breakdown "domino effect" implication. The general contractor engineer warns that an enlarged uncompromising stance on all unsigned contractual amendments would trigger unsustainable costs. If single situations are not appreciated in the whole stratified relationality of coordinating, with a give and take that allows to move swiftly towards the common objective (i.e. the delivery date of May 2014), he threatens with a disruptive rigidity of the test. When he says: "Let's do like this then...! If the contractual amendment isn't approved, we do the contractual solution...!" it superficially sounds like the reasonable suggestion of getting back to normal, agreeing with what the town planning engineer labeled as "legitimate": the simple respect of the contract in the absence of approved/concluded procedures regulating otherwise seems like a viable proposition. This scenario resembles the purest coordination, as it might naturally occur in ideal



type politics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987): investments in forms (Thévenot, 1984, 1986a) afford their coordination returns, by effectively stabilizing a certain relationship across situations. The nature of reality, however, is *normally more messy* and compromised and does not obey or accept robust argumentations of universal validity for all situations alike (Pedersen, Sehested, & Sørensen, 2011). If this happened, the world would fall apart, and the culture centre would have never been completed. The general contractor *strategically hypothesizes* the pragmatic potential retaliation consequences of *what could happen*: “If this is the stance, if we are going to be so radical, then we’ll do it for everything. Therefore we shall restore everything as in the contract for the unsigned contractual amendments...” This would have entailed in practice the demolition and reconstruction of several already built parts of the center. Such a domino uncompromising effect represents well the coordination impossibility of completely sacrificing compromise in an unconditional enforcement of pure tests in unrelated, isolated situations, one after another, allowing for no exceptions. That would surely impose a consistent rule and test, a perfectly operating convention, but “is it the process most likely to succeed in the long run?” (Follett, 1927: 201, opening quote).

Actors keep accounting records of material absences, by relating single test outcomes to past, present and future controversial situations. The town planning engineer supported retrospectively his protest against the material realization of the theatre roof stratigraphy, denouncing how strict legitimate employments of the contractual amendment as a test had cost the town planning in terms of absent walls and spaces that remained excluded, not going beyond the representation of possible changes. The general contractor engineer responds by raising the stakes. He states that many material possibilities have been and are still being implemented regardless of contractual amendment approval. All these concessions are not however to be taken for granted, since demolition could restore all spaces as contractually agreed, if tests were really taken to the letter, an accusation of doing so that the general constructor returns to the sender.

The extreme reaction of the general contractor engineer should not however minimize the fact that a trespass of a test remains a trespass nonetheless. The critique of the town planning engineer is not simply out of place. Single situations cannot afford losing all their value in a sea of processual undefined compromise, meddling together all pending situations. A trespass calls for sanctions that signal it should not repeat itself. While relationally opening to dialogue in a more cooperative tone for all unresolved matters, the town planning engineer firmly clarifies that disregarding a test is just not on: “We are ready to work collaboratively, also on the contractual amendments still open, but here, I am sorry, you screwed up”. Excerpt 3.1 in general documents not only an attempt of compromising through *ambiguity*, strategically interpreting tests as still open or “not yet closed”,

but it also clarifies how ambiguity and absence need organizing through communication, allowing for test and compromise to be simultaneously present and valid in organizational coordination.

### *3.4.3 When “midway” is not just “something in between”. Compromise as a preparatory or masked form of test*

#### Excerpt 3.2. Building site meeting of the 24/7/2013.

GCE: ...what we are actually doing is presenting the documents as if it was a testing... The purpose is to demonstrate that we provided the material and positioned it according to the contract... So we are actually anticipating the testing of that deliverable... By all means, let's call it technical inspection and not testing, but let's say that both form and activity are those of a testing... Otherwise, we'll end up doing something in between...

TPE: Yes, that is correct ...with the expression “technical inspection”, what we carry out is an inquiry, but this execution and control activity is very similar to a testing... For instance... contractual amendment 116, on the stratigraphy of the museum... We shall verify the moisture level of the concrete and this control allows us to provide clearance for the laying of the orange containers... We carry out this trial midway between the laying of the concrete and the technical inspection to understand if we have reached the quality... Then, if I've already done these trials, I produce the documents and put it on record...

GCE: Therefore, it's typical of a testing...

TPE: Exactly.

Contextualizing Excerpt 3.2 allows us to advance an understanding of the interplay of tests and compromises in the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), by considering empirically the most industrial test of all, apparently the less easily compromised. Testing is a pivotal, recursive convention of coordination in construction project management. It verifies the satisfactory compliance of completed built elements with contractual specifications. After rectifying the faults found by the client and itemized in a snagging list (i.e. a list of defects to be fixed), the constructor can invoice for the delivered product or service. It provides therefore a definite closure.

The accumulated delays and related charges for the general contractor (i.e. delay of over 24 months, for a consolidated loss of 20 million CHF by the end of 2013, as revealed by GCE during a building site meeting and technical inspection on the 18/12/2013) imposed to tackle effectively the coordination challenges on a reduced temporal horizon. By combining inspections and arranging the documents according to the contract ahead of schedule, the general contractor engineer sought to prepare the delicate delivery and testing stage, to achieve overall closure on the project without undesired surprises. Industrial testings are difficult to pass if shortened schedules inevitably line up and concentrate the assessment of a great number of different deliverables in compressed timeframes. Organizational coordination had experienced big problems with the delivery of the

first area of the construction (e.g. the carpark). The carpark testing appeared carefree “on the plans”. In practice, it proved an extremely critical and costly process. An anticipation strategy was thus devised for all areas of the centre to be delivered and tested thereafter (e.g. theatre, museum, hall, park, etc.). The carpark had uncovered many technical problems relating its quality. A long snagging list had required great efforts to rectify many remarked defects, and triggered endless negotiations before final delivery, invoicing and payment, as the built facility had to satisfy both the council and the private real estate developers, who had also bought a floor. That testing process, as explicitly admitted by the general contractor staff in many occasions, represented undoubtedly a situation, from which the general contractor had learnt a lot and raised problems, which it wished to avoid in the future. In a crucial restricted meeting, the general contractor engineer (GCE) exposed the rationale for anticipating the testing through preparatory technical inspections. He explicitly made sense of the past problems of the carpark, and justified his coordination strategy *hypothesizing what could have happened, to conclude what could, and therefore should happen thereafter*. Consider the following passage:

Excerpt 3.3. Building site restricted meeting of the 5/9/2013.

GCE: “...this is the commitment and we try to maintain it where there are warranties, requests of compliance, certificates, records, protocols, plans etc. What’s the purpose? To send all documentation ten days in advance so that you have time to look at it, ask and formulate all comments/integrations so that’s done... The idea is that we do all this before, so when we carry out the inspection, we go to the building site with the spirit level, the meter, the camera and all we need [...] We are no longer going to carry out inspections without understanding what we are inspecting. We’ll all lose less time. To this day, we are still discussing the final payment of the carpark. Probably, if at the time ... we had clarified that... The architect said x, the offer y and the design z, probably we could have settled on the agreement two years ago, instead of ten days ago... We have always thought that the carpark needs to teach us something.

The GCE engages in sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and outlines the future from clear coordination defaults in the past, signaled by critical situations still vivid in organizational memory (i.e. the testing of the carpark). To understand a practice, it is not enough to grasp its real time unfolding as it happens (Schatzki, 2006), but a critical assessment also needs to understand what is not happening and “what could have happened” (Nicolini, 2013: 168) as our methodological tracing of absent spaces and alternative compromises has clarified. This sensemaking process implies narratively enacting a shared memory of past events that are considered particularly instructive exemplars of good or bad situations, for a (re)interpretation of token, recursive circumstances. This is exactly what the engineer’s communication articulates in Excerpt 3.3. He retrospectively hypothesizes and “pragmatically speculates” how a past, critical situation could have been better

managed, to infer and prescribe indications for fixing present and future organizational coordination, preventing the repetition of flaws. He also reflects on the need to align the many representations of space (Petani & Mengis, 2014a) to avoid repeating sorely suffered tests.

Although tests are not violent resolutions of controversies, they scar organizations all the same, often requiring unexpected allocation of time and money to repair unfavorable test outcomes. The sacrifice of time is not negligible in a project, in which every day of delay implied for the constructor a contractual penalty of 30.000 CHFs. This is why, when coordination mechanisms do not perform up to expectations – sometimes even contributing to generate interdependencies (Petani & Mengis, 2014b) – they need to be bent, rendered flexible and agile in face of high cost and time constraints. In addition to the delay-linked penalties, the general contractor incurred in daily extra charges for its 17 full-time employed professionals (i.e. architects, engineers, secretaries and administration staff at the building site offices). Moreover the general contractor had to supervise builders, including subcontractors' workforce, some days reaching peaks of 100 people on site simultaneously, which further gives an idea of the complex and costly coordination challenge. With such an expensive organizational machine in motion, conventions need to be adapted, and mistakes prove opportunities, only if they allow to learn and subsequently *recycle* a bad experience for the common good.

#### *3.4.4 Pragmatic orientation of repairing past flaws with prospective avoidance of sacrifice*

Actors therefore guard themselves from repeating particularly sore experiences, like the testing of the carpark. In the observed managerial strategy, this led to anticipate the testing process. Through a run up to the test, the compromising of the formal moment of testing involved a temporal spread of its industrially planned coordination formalities in mundane, preparatory support activities. David Stark (1996) might call this a domestic “hedging” strategy, in which an exclusive investment in and reliance on the industrial order of worth, and the universal validity of its objective test *par excellence* (i.e. testing), is mitigated by domestic, everyday industrial activities (i.e. technical inspections). Concerns about the testing are partially anticipated in the small-scale, everyday convention of the technical inspection. Technical inspections maintain an industrial, objective and material value (e.g. “the measure of the moisture level of cement”), but gain the temporal, everyday familiarity of the domestic polity; the resulting industry/domestic compromise resembles a trick of the trade, or “a good habit” coming from “professional experience” (see these figures of compromise in Table 3.4).

Excerpts 3.2 and 3.3 summarize the justification of a major coordination strategy introduced by the general contractor: the whole approach towards testings, quality control and delivery of the various areas of the culture centre involved the last quarter of 2013 and all of 2014. We witnessed the emergence of the coordination mechanism of anticipated technical inspections during *ad hoc*

meetings, called by the general contractor in July 2013 (e.g. Excerpt 3.2) to expose how it intended organizing the last delicate phase of the project, by moving ahead of schedule. The new organizational approach took off in a structured way from September 2013 (Excerpt 3.3). A steering committee meeting held in January 2014 positively evaluated the effectiveness of the process: both actors of the excerpts (TPE and GCE) weighed investments and costs, in the presence of all major political representatives and top management involved (i.e. mayor, deputy mayor, town planning director, CEO and other executives of the multinational contractor). As a return on a heavy investment implying important sacrifices – the involvement of several professionals from both the council and the general contractor for two full days every week to carry out together these anticipated controls – the building’s shell structure was “pre-tested” by the end of January 2014, as reported during the steering committee meeting. This represented a clear advantage compared to temporally performing all the testings at the end of the construction, with only 20 days to fix all eventual faults detected, which could prove difficult to implement all at once in a tight temporal interval, while other parts of the building would be tested simultaneously. Instead, the progressive anticipated inspections led to leaner snagging lists and substantial document preparation ahead of final completion and delivery. During the steering committee meeting, the town planning engineer commented on the scale of this complex process and referred to his past “professional experience” (see Table 3.4) in great construction projects to justify the anticipation strategy:

Excerpt 3.4. Steering committee meeting, 22/1/2014

“The testing of a construction of this volume, of this importance, if one wants to do things seriously, is a titanic job<sup>25</sup>. And the only way that achieves the objective is that of anticipating. Which, if you’ll allow me a pearl ((of wisdom)), is absolutely standard convention in the world of tunnels.”

The coordination between the highly experienced GCE, who had worked on many great architectural projects, and the TPE is possible also because of shared conventions and common understandings (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) of the construction industry. The reference to a “professional experience” (see this domestic/industrial compromise in Table 3.4) in the world of tunnel construction is not just a random or negligible detail, especially in Switzerland. Knowledge in Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) for megaprojects in the toughest geophysical environments represents one of Switzerland’s specific excellences: the world of tunnels in particular is arguably carrying out amongst the most complex projects on earth<sup>26</sup>, and represents

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<sup>25</sup> For the sake of putting a quantity that gives an idea of this process, an architect of the general contractor confirmed that testings, “despite the technical inspections, which helped gathering and pre-organizing all documents, summed up to three thousand architectural and engineering plans, plus at least another three thousand certifications of building materials from subcontractors. And, believe me, this is no exaggeration. I counted them” (Interview of 5.12.2015).

<sup>26</sup> For instance the world’s longest and deepest railway tunnel: <https://www.alptransit.ch/en/gotthard/gotthard-base-tunnel/>

therefore a reputed sector of the ACE industry, a very strong (albeit or *because* compromised?) fame/industry justification.

What may appear like a simple anticipation strategy was not however formally regulated, and it did not represent a charted territory to take for granted. On the contrary, this management and organizational strategy of anticipating tests contradicted several conventional norms of the regional Society of Engineers and Architects<sup>27</sup>. Despite not holding legal power, the norms released by this local professional association would have normally been a matter of course in public contracts. In our case, the “best practice” convention (e.g. unaccompanied standard testing at the time of delivery) was sacrificed, or divested from, in favour of an adapted coordination mechanism. Thanks to a shared awareness of the advantages, across situations, of anticipating the testings, and of the risks and costs of going by the rule, the onerous investment towards anticipation did not meet resistance and could produce the hoped-for coordination returns. The compromise worked as a third way, maintaining the formal respect of the planned testings’ dates and formats, yet anticipating most of its concerns through a series of *ad hoc* inspections and control activities. This compromise was however in no way felt as a corruption or invalidation of the standard test (i.e. testing). The pragmatic organizational justification of meeting testings “midway” by tactically preventing some of its challenges to repeat the dreaded scenario of the carpark-testing, turned into an important coordination management strategy.

Tests can be easier to pass if administered in gradual doses. Breaking up tests in simple *customary* tasks provided a way to tame or *domesticate* them, to make the subject matter to be tested more *familiar* to both testers and tested professionals (see values of the domestic world in Table 3.1). Although a pre-test was not a full test, even in this makeshift form, the compromising form of the technical inspection did not renounce to a full normative and probative validity: the civic, formal validity of documents anchored and solidified the compromise as a progressive means to provide the closure of the test, “by degrees” instead of in a single situation. It allowed positioning the “material according to the contract” (see Excerpt 3.2). These activities could even take different labels, as long as their pragmatic, organizational purpose remained clear: to “demonstrate” that the objective conditions of compliance were checked in everyday work, and “put on record”.

In other terms, the compromise was not just a random “in between”, but represented proof of a kept promise of quality during the construction process, which the final test now only needed to ratify

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<sup>27</sup> The regional Society of Architects and Engineers is a very influential professional corporation in the construction context we observed. It issues a great many norms and conventions for good practices, which take almost the status of laws. To appreciate its “legal” function, it is useful to turn to their stated purpose (translated verbatim from their anonymized website): “The society’s purpose is to defend and represent the interests of its members with all authorities and competent corporations, in the field of public contracts. Within this scope, the society can take all necessary actions, in particular the filing of petitions and lawsuits.”

formally. The *evidence* of technical inspections represented not much less than testings in disguise, or, as suggested, in small doses.

We notice that the domestic, informal organizational communication of the general contractor observed in Excerpt 3.1 (the “technical meeting”, orally assessing issues “even the other day”), in Excerpts 3.2 and 3.3 transforms into a discourse more attentive to formal demonstrations, “presenting the documents”, committing to “send all documentation” in advance, wherever there are “warranties, requests of compliance, certificates, records, protocols, plans etc.”. Such investment in written forms “put on record” can later prove (i.e. justify, even legally) one’s conduct. Even if labelled differently, the costly investment in the form of the technical inspection accomplished a scaling down in degree of the sanctioning potential and closure aura of testing, by processually and strategically diluting the test into preparatory steps. In a retrospective sensemaking, one of the main architects of the general contractor, confirming such strategy, wished however not to downplay the final testing, as it actually unfolded. With around 20 people between council, general contractor and subcontractors employed every single working day from 8h to 17h, from the end of September 2014 to the end of January 2015, testing was in no way sidestepped. The preparation of all documents ahead of the task proved however effective to familiarize both contractual parties with the examination of the various deliverables.

The excerpts examined present the compromising of an industrial test by organizing its planned temporality in more familiar, domestic and less formal tasks. By suggesting a preparation for testing in instalments, the anticipated compromised testing aimed at smoothening the test through a sort of temporal brokerage (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015).

Among the levels of analysis that the EW offer, the temporal and spatial dimensions provide useful dimensions to analyse the compromising matrix along investment and sacrifice (see Table 3.1). We focused on space, and even absent space, as a way to look at how different evaluations from different polities came to bear on coordination challenges in a construction project for culture. But spaces (and absent spaces) have their temporality. Time is a no less useful entry point to a communication-sensitive spatial analysis (Petani & Mengis, 2016), and a process organizational analysis may have much to gain in not separating time and spatial levels of analysis in its conceptualizations and representations (Petani & Mengis, 2014a). The EW model provides a sophisticated grammar with six spatiotemporal evaluation worlds that remains underdeveloped in process organization studies, with its notions of investment and sacrifice scarcely recognized and deployed to investigate organizational coordination.

The sacrifice of the “long-term planned” time of a Cartesian space (typical of the industrial polity, with tests fixed in a scheduled future of a rigid design, see Table 3.1), evolved in our case into a

compromised/compressed temporality of micro-planned, short-term spatiality, locally anchored in everyday activities. Such a dynamic reflects a compromise between industrial and domestic EW affording a greater spatio-temporal leeway or flexibility in the observed coordination practices.

Compromise, as analyzed, does not seem “a composite arrangement that is not fatally undone by disputes” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 277). On the contrary, our analysis suggests that compromise is a skillful, purposeful case of lateral thinking, a managerial shift across situations and conventions, to reorganize various space and time possibilities for a more effective coordination. The anticipation strategy was explained by the actors as a pre-emptive solution, intended to avoid the repetition of past critical situations (e.g. the delivery and testing of the carpark), but not the entire sidestepping of tests. Compromising in this sense constituted both a more aware preparation for future tests and the outcome of learning from a previous one. The testing process was broken up into intermediary, minor tests. Even if these could not properly be “called” testing, actors coordinated “*as if it was*” an actual testing. This shows very well how justification is more than just a rhetorical process, but is concerned with pragmatic effects of action coordination, with this particular “*hypotheticalizing labor*” respecifying the common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) even of ambiguous third ways.

The hypothetical scenario building and dismantling describes the interesting process, through which coordination management generally unfolded: actors critically dwelled on “what could have happened” in the past, or “could still happen” in the present and future, if certain conditions were (or would be) met. These organizational narratives in our case were populated by evidence of sacrificed spaces and forms of compromise, with a proven track record of success in the past or elsewhere (see Tables 3.3 and 3.4). The pragmatic orientation of such narratives projected their temporality into the future. What had unfortunately or successfully happened once or elsewhere, could happen again, and should be either avoided, or purposefully aimed for. Organizational narratives of coordination are full of expressions like “we don’t want another...” (e.g. carpark, absent restaurant...or other negative token of organizational failure), and also of reflections like “what we need is a...” (e.g. business plan, rooftop restaurant like the one in Lucerne...or other positive proven success or widely acknowledged good practice). In other words, coordination orients against negative and positive benchmarks, with the important specification, which we grounded in absent spaces and rejected forms of compromise, that pragmatic evaluations aim at representing a value-laden, evidence-based “*currency of sacrifice, spendable in the present or future*”. Even the reconstruction of the remote, historical past of places through particular spatiotemporal narratives of continuity acquires organizational interest, if it proves strategic in influencing the values that predominate in planning future spaces (Petani & Mengis, 2016).



Certainly, organizationally selfcritical reconstructions of what could have been managed better are not a mere speculative, void rhetorical exercise of alternate history, made of all the possible “what if” scenarios. On the contrary, these sensemaking processes aim at effectively changing not just the discursive interpretation of the past, but the present common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) and the coordination mechanisms aimed at regulating action in future situations, which loom on the horizon of uncertainty and failure (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006). Paraphrasing the pragmatic summary of the engineer of the general contractor, however we want to call it (testing or technical inspection, test or compromise), let’s not just *do* something in between (sacrificing the benefits of the two modes), but let’s understand how to retain the benefits of both, while reducing the overall, inevitable sacrifices to an effective, practical minimum.

### **3.5 Concluding discussion**

This paper contributed to show empirically how actors coordinate through the articulation of a critical awareness of what could have happened differently in the past, in conjunction with what could still happen in present and future situations. We showed how this assessment of possibilities involved a reshaping of conventions (Gkeredakis, 2014), according to various repertoires of values and investment in forms that framed and stabilized action. These orders of worth helped to overcome controversies, by relying on shared, common understandings (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) of the common good, which provided a pragmatic way to justify or criticize objects, actors and conducts, attributing worth through tests, *and* by suspending disputes in compromises between opposed evaluations. We have presented the economies of worth (EW) framework (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) as a relevant theory to analyze organizational coordination. The approach develops “a political economy of pragmatic coordination focusing on coordination and evaluation problems in situations” (Diaz-Bone, 2014: 346), where coordination is more than the interactive process of integrating interdependent tasks (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) or the timely application of necessary expertise (Faraj & Xiao, 2006). The EW foreground that action coordination presupposes the coordination of the *judgments* on action (Favereau, 2007), and therefore confronts uncertainty about the multiple misaligned *moral* criteria to attribute worth to people and objects in critical situations subject to public scrutiny. Actors overcome ordinary feelings of injustice through competing tests, or by suspending disputes through fragile arrangements between different economies of worth, called compromises. The EW model also defines organizations as devices designed to coordinate by compromising amongst different natures, hence its relevance, and the importance of compromises for the study of organizational coordination.

Contrary to what theory led us to expect (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), the modes of coordination by testing and by compromising, observed in the planning and construction of a great culture centre, were not found to be mutually exclusive, but to co-constitute one another. This corroborated empirical findings and processual insights (Holden & Scerri, 2015; Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015), still scarcely mobilized in organization and management studies, and awaiting further development and integration in the model of the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). As a step in this direction, our study focused on the processual tension between adopted and rejected forms of compromise, analyzed vis-à-vis tests, to study the organizational coordination dynamics of a complex public construction project for culture. By specifically tracing rejected forms of compromise and absent spaces, we claim to have advanced methodologically and theoretically a processual understanding of organizational coordination, extending the tradeoff dynamics of investment and sacrifice of the economies of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). Coordinating activity has been discussed to orient to absences, especially when disappearing coordination mechanisms of the past force actors to replace them with new ones (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012). We contributed to foreground how the retrospective sensemaking (Weick, 1995) of past defaults in coordinating activities, works in practice via the seeming paradox of “speculative *and* pragmatic hypotheses” that discursively reconstruct evidence-based alternative past scenarios, in which organizational possibilities might not have been missed. These “more than rhetorical” narratives represent a sort of pre-emptive warning about opportunities to be grasped and risks to be avoided in the future.

The empirical evidence that *actors mobilize the absence of particular forms of compromise and of planned spaces*, in terms of missed chances and compromise-related managerial defaults, helped us to specify how organizational coordination looms on the horizon of uncertainty and failure (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006). The temporal work of assessing the risks of the road unfolding ahead by retrospectively making sense of past experiences (Weick, 1995), operates as a rearview mirror perspective that sheds light on the present and future from the past.

We claimed that the plurality and complexity of opposed orders of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987; Thévenot, 1989) fruitfully accounts for the actors’ undertheorized awareness of sacrifices incurred when foregoing the benefits of compromising between different orders of worth. Part of the undesired, cross-situational costs of tests is constituted in fact not just by the sacrificed benefits of other tests, reflecting different values, but also by the missed deployment of particular compromises that can be demonstrated to have been available. Critiques suggested that these compromises could have contributed to a long-term *integration* of benefits from different values (in Follett’s sense of integration, see opening quote; cp. also the *integrating* conditions for

coordination of accountability, predictability and common understanding in Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). The possibility of compromise represents a common understanding even for people disagreeing about the pertinent values to assign worth in a controversial situation.

The EW model of situated action describes economies of coordination (Diaz-Bone & Thévenot, 2010), providing an original model for the limited, yet organizationally relevant object of study of the ordinary sense of injustice experienced in public situations, which manifests in critiques aiming for legitimacy and in justifications replying to (or attempting to anticipate) such critiques (Thévenot & Stavo-Debaugue, 2016: 1). In such economies, sacrifice is squarely presented as a matter of choice between six mutually exclusive worlds – equipped with relative tests to attribute worth in controversies to beings recognized to belong to a same nature (Thévenot, 1989) – whereby choosing any single world means sacrificing the benefits enjoyable in the five others. The specific sacrificing of the benefits of compromise however escapes theoretical analysis in the EW model: turning attention to this processual, intersituational and compromise-specific accounting of sacrifice represents the core theoretical contribution of this paper.

We showed how the inescapable uncertainty of action coordination and its conflicting guiding values builds also on critiques related specifically to organizational and managerial *missed* opportunities to compromise. The sacrifices ensuing from investments in mutually exclusive forms of testing, inevitably forego also the plural, sometime conflicting alternative options of compromising. We claim that this relationship between coordinating by testing in single orders of worth and coordinating by compromising is an inextricable organizational process. We have shown how the two modes of coordination do not neatly substitute one another, but instead co-constitute each other in a stratification of situated sacrifices over time, and also in a simultaneous presence of the two coordination modes. Compromises and tests do not alternate in an unrelated succession of different and separated situations, just as critique is not “resolved” with the application of tests, however objective they may seem. Uncertainty and critique perdure well after test outcomes, as actors keep an important accounting of sacrifices across (and during) the management of individual critical situations. Although distinguishable, the coordination modes of testing and compromising are not separable. We demonstrated that compromising is neither inferior, nor superior to, but *part of* the process of testing and viceversa. By focusing on the sacrifices ensuing from investments over time in both coordination modes and their forms (Thévenot, 1984), we foregrounded the theoretically underdeveloped sacrifices of compromise and argued that compromising shapes and permeates practices of testing, just as the benefits of testing are not completely sacrificed in opting for compromise. Our argument followed from a deep processual understanding of coordination as a “reciprocal relating of all the factors of a situation” (Follett, 1932: 291). We claimed that these

factors over time include not only the memory of the outcomes of past situations, but also of the alternative courses of action those outcomes prevented, which actors qualify as once missed and still pertinent opportunities.

At a methodological level, the emerged abductive strategy of selecting telling examples of sacrifices, traced empirically from the actors' discursive and material practices and advancing the notion of absent space, allowed us to develop theoretically "what could have happened" (Nicolini, 2013: 168), and to analyze alternative explanations of why it did not, in terms of what evaluations dominated.

The method of looking at discarded possibilities that still inform a critique of coordination (rejected compromises and absent spaces) promises to contribute to the study of organizational coordination beyond research on compromise inspired by the economies of worth (EW) framework.

We believe that if coordination processes inevitably exclude alternative possibilities, *what is left behind* (or sacrificed) – represented of course not by all non-materialized possibilities, but by selected organizational possibilities that linger in empirically traceable evaluation practices – helps to understand how actors develop over time a critical and constructive awareness about emerging opportunities to reshape conventions.

The level of analysis of the *organizational waste* of planned and never built "absent spaces" (see Table 3.3) helped us to focus in depth on the specific process of compromising in the construction of a new, public culture centre. We can easily imagine that similar processual analyses of different organizational practices may also benefit from a closer understanding of how organizational actors make sense of, compensate for, and aim at winning back or recycling what is left behind, in the form of scraps of ideas for products and services, technological innovations or transformations of conventions beyond the construction industry. We claim that *retaining the wasted or underdeployed richness of what could have happened is a key process of coordination management* in need of further investigation by organization and management studies.

A surprising finding across the large empirical material analyzed is that construction managers assessed the outcomes of tests not against possible coordination benefits that could have followed from tests of other orders of worth (as the EW model would lead to expect), but against the benefits that could have been enjoyed through compromises. Critical questions raised at problematic coordination defaults did not ask, as expected: "Could another test have been more effective in such a situation?" Actors seemed rather more concerned with puzzles like: "Could this particular form of compromise have avoided certain test-drawbacks, or costs across situations?" And, relatedly: "Would it not be helpful to test such a compromise in the future?"

This study developed the EW model by empirically showing how organizations – usefully defined as devices of compromise between different ways of coordinating (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1989, 2006/19; Thévenot, 1989) – invest, for coordination within and between themselves over time, in administrative tools and organizational forms of compromise, and are generally able to reshape underperforming conventions. The absence of flexible forms that can adapt to particular challenges, and the lack of compromising skills in actors, are consequently criticized, because they pose deep problems for organizational coordination across situations. This adds a specific insight on how the critique of single orders of worth can be based on the evidence that tests sacrifice the integration afforded by compromises. Such a strategy of critique allows actors to re-open debates, re-discuss or adapt conventions and negotiate tests themselves. If tests and their multiover sacrifices punctuate coordination controversies, compromises afford a way to reduce losses and to compose or integrate differences between evaluation criteria, in turn sacrificing the benefits that undeniably follow from applying a unique test to assign value unambiguously. Complex organizational coordination processes require to broker between ambiguity and clarity, managing unstable equilibria and disequilibria, agreements and controversies.

Controversies often impose a clear evaluation and a test of worth that allows actors to re-establish order by closure of action-hindering disputes. The managerial challenge remains to deal, across situations, with people and administration forms ‘tried’ by these tests and by the entailing sacrifices that over time have to be managed both by actors negatively affected by test outcomes, and by prevailing actors, who may face reprisals from the former (see opening quote).

We argue that this processual dynamic and unstable equilibrium requires integrating, within a critical capacity (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999), a *compromising capacity*, understood as the *ability to open up value-based judgments to a plurality of less exclusionary alternatives*. This skill acts, via communication, by critically pointing at material evidence of missed opportunities, although partly justifying and making sense of how events unfolded and could have unfolded differently under different conditions. In our case this materialized in the discursive articulation of traceable, failed objectives (see Table 3.3), or in remarking the lack of forms of compromise (e.g. business plan, see Table 3.4), but also in elaborating past failures (e.g. the carpark testing) with a look to the future, to repair past flaws with substantial redesign of organizational coordination mechanisms. This openness, provided by a critical questioning of the convenience of blindly deploying tests (and implementing test outcomes), attempts to reduce the costs of tests across situations, constituting an organizational hedging (Stark, 1996) between conflicting values. The compromising capacity buffers organizational coordination against the risk of committing too narrowly (i.e. blindly) to conventionalized stances that exclude or hinder innovation and development (Stark, 2009).

Tests and orders of worth lose much of their explanatory power inspired by pluralism (Cloutier & Langley, 2013) if they are restricted to critical situations as single, unrelated units of analysis, which was neither in the intention of its authors (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), nor of the rich economic and sociologic literature inspiring the EW, which this paper briefly reviewed.

Although critique and uncertainty remain central, our findings show how, building on previous disputes, compromising can also fruitfully unfold in creatively “anticipating” critical planned moments (see Excerpt 3.2). Organizational coordination is not only “accomplished on the horizon of failure, and in particular of conflict and critique” (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006: 27), but also manages to push back such eventuality (Thévenot & Stavo-Debauge, 2016).

The notion of investment in form (Thévenot, 1984) bridged an economic and a sociologic view as it “related the costly operations of conventional implementation of equivalence (classifications, standards, regulations and laws, but also customary practices) to the *coordination power of actions*, generally distinguishing their ‘qualifications’ according to their *temporality, spatiality and material consolidation*” (Thévenot & Stavo-Debauge, 2016: 2, emphasis added). We developed the conceptual architecture of the EW by introducing a methodological nuance towards a spatiotemporal more-than-rhetoric *absence of materiality*, to explore how organizational coordination consolidates discursively and practically also through critical (and criticized) absences (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012).

We theoretically challenged the equilibrium assumptions of the EW (Thévenot, 1989), which posited that compromise is “not entirely defensible in logical terms” (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 278), by developing tradeoff dynamics based on its own foundational notions of investment in forms and sacrifice (Thévenot, 1984, 1986a, 1989), jointly with a specific focus on how absences are mobilized in hypothesized scenarios. We argued that compromise is so deeply rooted in the organizational dynamics empirically observed through the conceptual architecture of the EW model, that testing processually unfolds with compromising and viceversa. Specifically, we argued for the need to recognize the actors’ capacity to account for the sacrifices incurred in refusing to compromise, when opting to aim unilaterally at an equilibrium or agreement through a test, presupposing beings of the same nature (Thévenot, 1989). Actors recognize that differences and uncertainty remain (with or without tests) and so compromising options suggest themselves more like complementary modes of coordination than alternatives to tests. Such possibilities of compromising, moreover, remain important even when (and *because*) they are not chosen, despite much investment in these forms. Previous organizational research has opened a fruitful path in this direction, showing how organizational failures are importantly explained as a lack of compromising

across orders of worth (Mesny & Mailhot, 2007), which often represents the main challenge, but also the most crucial resource available in complex projects (Holden & Scerri, 2015). Our case of coordination in the construction industry illustrates how the uncertainty and critique of coordination were dealt with (and importantly fueled by) remarks on the absence of compromising skills, strategically aiming at managing or moderating the emerging undesired costs of testing. Perhaps it is correct to conclude by accepting that compromises are “not *entirely* defensible in logical terms”, (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987: 278, emphasis added), specifying that tests also lack an entire logical defensibility. It is difficult to imagine of organizational contexts so pure that coordination could unfold over time with one mode without the other. Each mode presents sacrifices and benefits that actors may manage even with partial, simultaneous integration of compromising and testing.

We methodologically followed how actors discursively articulated hypothetical (yet materially-grounded) scenarios of *what could have happened* (Nicolini, 2013: 168), in managing *what could happen*. Our dialogue between theory and data abductively found that construction managers showed a compromising capacity and an awareness of the costs or sacrifices incurred by refusing to compromise, adopting conventions in automatic ways that with hindsight appear acritical and much improvable. This view widens the analytical scope of the economies of worth by integrating, in its test-driven framework, the exponential plurality of compromises, and their evolving, more or less precarious hybrid sacrifice-defined equilibria, and indeed disequilibria.

We observed over time how critical test outcomes (e.g. the difficult testing of the carpark) suggested a divestment from the coordination affordance of a particular spatiotemporal test dynamic (i.e. the industry-valued convention of testing, temporally planned at delivery of artifacts built according to their Cartesian spatial representations, see Table 3.1). In alternative to following such rule and representation blindly (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009; Petani & Mengis, 2014a), a complementary form emerged to overcome the negative experienced effects of such a test. The technical inspections in our data emerged as local and domestic versions of the industrial construction testing, the preparatory activities of the former aimed at managing better the latter. By devising an organizational intensification and costly investment in a form of compromise that represented an effective third way between domestic, customary everyday controls and industrially planned and defined objective measurements (i.e. technical inspections), the general contractor aimed at “domesticating” the moment of industrial testing in preparatory steps during the building process.

Compromise is an interesting spatiotemporal tradeoff between disparate investments and sacrifices that can greatly refine process organizational analysis of coordination. Inquiring into the

investment/sacrifice ratio of compromises between EW by criss-crossing their plural and conflicting understandings of time and space is a methodological affordance that allows sophisticated analyses of organizational dynamics. By suggesting six conflicting temporalities and their manifold combinational possibilities in complex (more than binary) compromises, which involve a composition of different space and time notions together, the EW potentially offers a rich plurality of coordination possibilities. This paper indicated the multiplying possibilities for analyzing compromises in their full complexity, from the entry point of what did not happen (but could have happened) in time and space. The multiple spatiotemporal levels of analysis of compromises suggest however a wider agenda for developing the full composition matrix of the orders of worth. More specifically, the spatiotemporal sacrifices evident within forms of compromise may help to explain the sources of their relative compatibility or instability, by addressing the internal dynamics of sacrifice between components and the ways in which compromises perform temporarily and locally, according to evolving representations of time and space. This paper leaves this analysis undone. We call for further research into the potential (and unrealized) multiplicity of compromises between EW. Further studies could inquire into hybrid, unequal degrees of legitimacy (i.e. higher in one component order than in another) and for arrangements, in which one logic may appear to weigh more on some accounts (e.g. its representation of valuable space) and another logic on other aspects (e.g. its representation of valuable time).

This paper argued that the two coordination modes of test and compromise are not mutually exclusive, but rather seem to complement one another in variously evolving relations of conflict and coalition (Henn, 2013), processually attributing worth via multiple values by degrees and constructively learning from critical instructive situations. In this compromise-test relationship, compromise, despite what has been considered a weak moral legitimacy (Reinecke, Spicer & von Bommel, 2015) or a not entirely defensible nature (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006/1991) definitely also showed high scope in organizational coordination (Reinecke, Spicer & von Bommel, 2015). The main construction engineer of the general contractor decided to reshape the convention of testing, to draw the best from the harsh lesson learnt from the past failure of the carpark testing.

What could happen differently in the future emerged by hypothesizing a different scenario that might have avoided costs incurred in unfavorable tests of the past (“probably we could have settled on the agreement two years ago, instead of ten days ago ...”). A process model of coordination (see Figure 3.1) illustrates this interesting hypothesizing work within tradeoff dynamics between investment and sacrifice, in the face of uncertainty and critique. The boxes of Figure 3.1 do not identify discrete, separate containers, or rigid temporal sequences (Petani & Mengis, 2014a). We

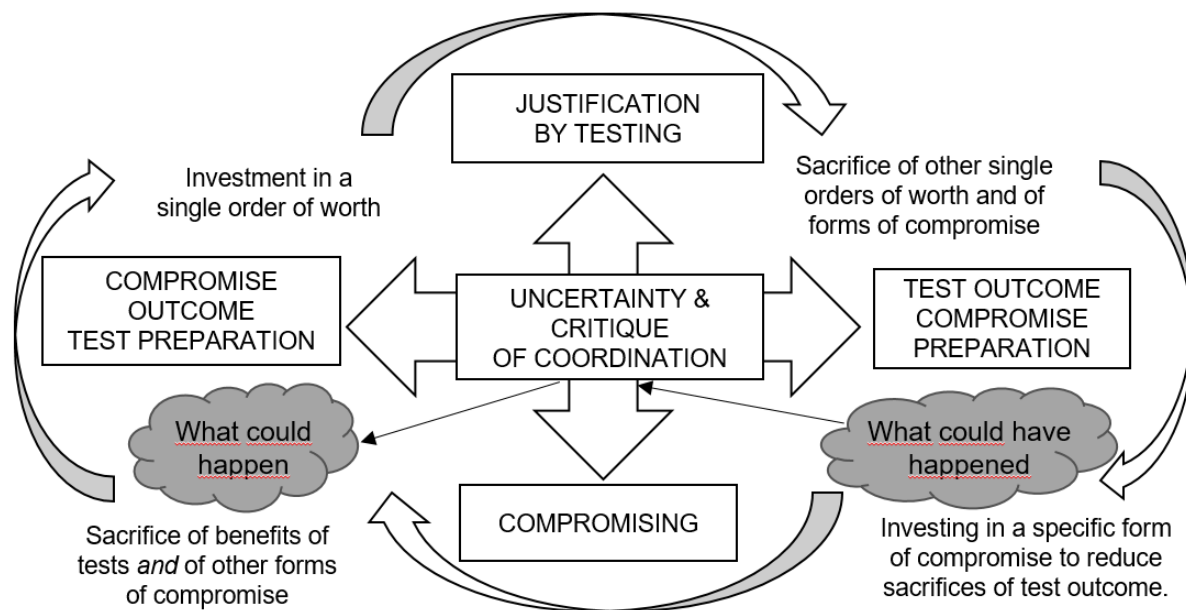


have in fact argued for the simultaneity of compromise and test, which we contend can together allow a holistic appreciation of coordination, with strategies unfolding around the emerging elements of uncertainty and critique, which remain central and unavoidable across situations. A processual inclination privileges a stress on arrows, so the model graphically is intended as a sketch of the relationship of tests and compromises over time, in evolving situations of uncertain and critical coordination. Uncertainty and critique of coordination centrifugally inform the framing of action not *either* through justification and testing *or* through compromising but through *both one and the other* mode. Uncertainty influences the preparation of the two coordination modes, and the management of their outcomes attempts to reduce critique related to emerging outcomes. Of course past outcomes may influence future investments and divestments, with a growing awareness of sacrifices as undesired or unexpected costs incurred, but compromising and testing do not necessarily identify successive or separate times, since uncertainty simultaneously pushes these processes. The cloud carrying the actors' retrospective awareness about unrealized possibilities (e.g. "what could have happened" in Figure 3.1) influences the uncertainty and critique that produce a prospective elaboration of "what could happen" better next. The clouds occupy the position they do in Figure 3.1 as they reflect the coordination management process we analyzed in the findings, with the general contractor engineer, who moved from a harsh text outcome (i.e. the carpark testing), to a compromising strategy of technical inspections that aimed to prepare to future tests. Such a creative evaluation of sacrifices, in the sense that the engineer speculated about alternative lower costs for past situations by imagining investments in entirely different organizational forms, informed the divestment from the construction convention of testing balanced by preparatory activities. In the empirical eventuality of a poorly performing form of compromise, the clouds of the hypothetical scenario building could move to the upper half of the model of Figure 3.1. The idea is that actors retain awareness of undue sacrifices, whether these are incurred in justification or in compromising between multiple logics, and this awareness influences their investments (see the curved arrows overarching the boxes of Figure 3.1).

The methodological contribution of focusing on what could have happened in the face of what could happen illustrates in Figure 3.1 how the temporally interrelated clouds underlie and even shape the uncertainty and critique of coordination. Sensemaking by retrospective and projected hypothetical scenarios accompanies the coordination management of actors, who operate a "reciprocal relating of all the factors of a situation" (Follett, 1932: 291). These often include speculations about the organizational sacrifices that possibly could have been avoided, and could potentially still be avoided by alternative courses of action in future situations.

The model therefore draws attention to one overarching aspect of our study: sacrifices from investments in various forms retain an agency over time and across situations. Actors perceive some sacrifices to be undue or avoidable and this conviction fuels their critiques and justifications and contributes to the disruption, or adaptative maintenance of coordination conventions.

Drawing from a view of coordination that considers both local adjustment of tasks and larger scale convention-based integration efforts, our study advances processual insights on the “versatility of switching between coordination modes, which entails ongoing shifts in experience and fundamental transformations in the way a situation is engaged” (Gkeredakis, 2014: 1498).



**Figure 3.1 Process model of the relationship between compromising and justifying.**

By considering how actors test, compromise, open up and adapt, and even create conventions (McInerney, 2008) across critical and less critical situations, we may understand how organizations mold coordination practices, a molding, which is the essence of management. Creating a fruitful balance across frustrations for unattained objectives (see Table 3.3), sacrificed goods and inconclusive investments into ineffective forms of coordination, represents in fact a key attribute of managerial activity. Managers and organizational actors coordinate by alternating, or even simultaneously cultivating testing and compromising, closing disputes and opening to frictions, learning through a skillful balance between exploiting and exploring (March, 1991). Previous research has looked into how managers morally frame makeshift or compromised solutions as exceptional suspensions of conventional tests, which ideally remain the rules to go by (Petani & Mengis, 2014c). The present study has rather focused on how compromises are imbricated in the tests of the EW model, and on how tests can therefore be compromised in organizationally justified

ways (see Excerpt 3.2), and compromises themselves may also be assessed, criticized and tested against the evidence from alternative forms of compromise (see Table 3.4). Tests and compromises rest on particular conventional forms that adapt, or fail to adapt to the challenges met across situations. Opposed economies of worth coexist indeed in a very complex coordination equilibrium (Thévenot, 1989), constellated by many evolving and unstable disequilibria.

This raises an important limitation of our study, which however signals a promising path for further organizational research on compromises. The present study sketched, but did not focus specifically on the equilibria, disequilibria and related sacrifices of conventions of compromise. Empirical evidence allowed us to challenge the ideal assumptions of the fragile and temporary equilibrium of compromises, whereby sacrifices and returns on investments are equally distributed amongst the EW composing the compromise. Assemblages of compromise in urban regeneration projects have been argued, as reviewed, to merely mask predominant orders of worth (Fuller, 2012). In other words, an important question that remains unanswered is: “Are compromises composed by orders of worth undergoing comparable sacrifices, or are there compromises dominated by predominating EW?” This important issue calls for further empirical research to address other theoretically relevant questions, such as: “Are the different economies of worth *equally incompatible*, or are there compromises that historically recur more often or gain over time more legitimacy?” Answers to this very open and general question have been sought across industries and historical times (Boltanski & Chiappello, 2005), or comparing locations (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000), but our development on the sacrifice of compromise could support these efforts. Similar compromise-specific inquiries suggest a comparative agenda for organizational research that could fruitfully integrate the growing literature we reviewed. Promising organizational literature already started comparing different conventions across cultural borders (O’Reilly et al., 2013; Pernkopf-Konhäusner & Brandl, 2010; Pernkopf-Konhäusner, Lazarova, & Maryhofer 2015), and could further focus on how “sacrificed compromises” are perceived differently in different cultures or by the same cultures at different historical times.

Privileging depth over breadth of analysis, we observed only a few forms of compromise to dig into the trade-off processes of organizing and managing a great construction project over time, empirically enlarging the binary matrix of compromise discussed by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006/1991), to compromises between three and more EW (see Table 3.4). We deployed the explanatory scope of complex figures of compromise by methodologically tracing forms and spaces of compromise that actors denounced as missing in organizational coordination, paying attention to how critiques over time reshaped coordinating mechanisms (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012).

In particular, our analysis explored what the simultaneous exploitation of multiple orders of worth meant in blending together incompatible assumptions on spatiality and temporality. We captured the managerial strategy of anticipating the long-term planned industrial temporality of the industrial test on a Cartesian ‘finished’ space, through an industrial/domestic distributed testing temporality made of everyday, customized preparatory technical inspections on ‘locally anchored’ spaces of the building (see Table 3.1). An already acknowledged limitation of this paper relates to the theoretical development of the full matrix of spatiotemporal tradeoff between the six orders of worth. In proposing ways for organization studies to approach such a vast project, creative imaginations and empirical investigations could look for brokerage descriptors of time (Reinecke & Ansari, 2014) *and* space between several conflicting or complementary value-laden representations (Petani & Mengis, 2014a). Taking a step further into the disequilibria of worth between components of compromises, researchers could ask: “How do the spaces and times of ‘Business methods’ differ from those of ‘business Methods’?” Such investigations could empirically investigate the unequal balance of worth in forms of compromise, theorizing on ambiguities tending more towards the market and alternative ambiguities tending towards an industrial logic.

The organizational coordination we observed hedged (Stark, 1996) across selected incompatible orders of worth. A strategic balancing of sacrifices and investments in alternative common understandings, accountability and predictability of the common good (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009), develop a workable, integrated (Follett, 1927) processual *third way* not just between opposed orders of worth, but also between testing and compromising.

Evidence on how managers coordinate complexities made of multiple natures (Thévenot, 1989) adds a processual perspective on how professionals confront moral expectations (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2000), not just through agreements about the common good and how to test it, but also through an awareness about *common sacrifices* that conflicting parties agree to avoid through compromise.

Even while disagreeing about a clear, ideal common good to prioritize in coordination to assign worth to a situation, actors may agree to disagree in ambiguous ways that pragmatically restore action towards common interests, however these may be unequally evaluated. This happens, despite an ambiguity about what values should count the most in defining the common good, because of a clear awareness of the cost that a protracted controversy implies. Compromise seems to draw strength not in articulating a benefit to pursue according to a clear value system, but in affording a strategy to avoid common disadvantages in protracted disputes.

Our focus on compromising does not minimally subtract from the importance of the test. Methodologically privileging the search for intersituational variation (Tavory & Timmermans, 2013), we accounted for how not all sidestepping of tests is tolerated. Ambiguous, devious behavior that did not target a *common* interest, met with an “Absolutely not”. Avoiding conventional tests, although tactically judged most convenient in a particular situation, conflicted with the idea of the common good of one of the two interacting managers, who sanctioned the situation quite unambiguously to the other: “here, I am sorry, you screwed up”.

If conflict is not the only source of compromising, we found that a lack of compromising may itself be the source of critique and conflict. Our data analysis foregrounded how organizational actors often relate costs or sacrifices of coordination to a lack of compromising skills, or to an excessive, radical testing, that cuts out some of the alternative possibilities afforded across situations by compromising. In so doing, our study may also help to explain indirectly how and why actors may refrain from exacting, through tests, the maximum return from their investments, in view of the cross-situational coordination costs they may face later on. The full deployment of a test in a blind, radical way resembles the imposition of a will that risks not paying off “in the long run” (see again the opening quote by Mary Parker Follett).

Critique did not only target the technical validity of the test *per se*, as punctually performed (which it certainly did, see Excerpt 3.1), but drew attention also towards the intersituational costs of tests, supported by hypothetical yet never abstract alternatives that might have proven more effective, or less costly. These scenarios were not just speculative “what if” wonderings: actors showed evidence and pointed to the forms that were materially available, or adopted in the past, but rejected in the case at hand. We found cases, for example, of incompatible culture policies, like a view open to a civic/inspired “democratic cultivation of all arts as equally valuable”, instead of investing in one art sector, narrowly profiling a sort of inspirational market share. Market and fame “industrially-mediated” strong investments in one single art suggested a strategy of becoming more attractive and reputed (see Table 3.4) by excelling in one sector, instead of failing to excel in all.

Our unconventional extended paper on conventions experimented ways for organization and management theory to engage in depth with one relevant sociologic theoretical framework in its own right, *without* engaging widely with other mainstream bodies of literature largely concerned with similar topics, but contributing nonetheless to the thematic literature on organizational coordination (Follett, 1932; Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012; Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). By revisiting in greater depth than usual the theoretical warrants of our claims, we sketched a review of the vast theoretical tradition of the EW in order to build theory from within that framework.

Such a research design, despite thoroughly reviewing organization research interested in the EW, comes with the unavoidable limitation of not putting the EW framework in dialogue with *other* germane organizational theories (e.g. institutional logics). We trust however that other excellent studies are already advancing this “institutional” dialogue (Arjalies & Friedland, 2015; Cloutier & Langley, 2007; Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Dansou & Langley, 2012; Daudigeos & Valiorgue, 2010; Gond & Leca, 2012-2015).

We addressed our first research question from within the EW framework, arguing for the methodological affordance of looking at rejected forms of compromise to deepen our understanding of organizational coordination. Our warrants and data, following an extended abductive dialogue, allow us to reach some general insights and claims that remain valid beyond the theoretical tradition mobilized.

First, our processual interpretation of the EW, although implying an endogenous critique of some of its theoretical assumptions (e.g. the range of sacrifice in the test-governed equilibrium of the EW), further contributes to show how a radical focus on process and dynamism over substance and structure can challenge even theories found to be process-friendly (Jagd, 2011). Our data collection and analysis followed the traces of a moving object, rather than the structures of its ontology, and even a theory so open to plurality like the EW (Cloutier & Langley, 2007, 2013; Dansou & Langley, 2012) was used as a springboard to elaborate further on the relevance of a moral multiplexity (Reinecke, Spicer, Van Bommel, 2015) in organizational coordination.

To this end, we reviewed and built on the rich and growing empirical evidence from organization and management literature on compromises and concluded that, taken together, these studies allow us to expand the model of the EW *itself*, instead of integrating bits and pieces into *other* organizational theories. A focus on the organizational compromise-driven management of costs, across tests and compromises, has taken strength from the unsettled disequilibria of absent forms and from the latent investments in them. We conclude that a complex universe with multiple, conflicting economies (Thévenot, 1989) cannot fail to recognize as key *the organizational and managerial capacity to account for the drawbacks of not compromising*. This implies positing neither tests nor compromises as superior forms of coordination, turning attention to how their relationality is managed over time. In this respect, a focus on the internal sacrifice dynamics of compromises, through their rich spatiotemporal combinatory possibilities, indicates as mentioned above a promising agenda for more analyses of organizational coordination processes. Our methodological contribution in this relationality of compromise is to have foregrounded the importance of not chosen alternatives as powerful means to understand how critique of tests and compromises originates and how organizational learning emerges from critical situations.

Secondly, our abductive and interpretivist stance neither generalized the validity of our claims, nor established causal relationships to be tested. We claim, however, to have identified and foregrounded a core process of organizational coordination: *the creation of traceable and discursively mobilized alternative possibilities*. Such general process sheds light on the hypothetical *and* pragmatic strategies discursively enacted to create compromises both in micro-interactions, and in long-term transformations of conventions. In simple terms, organizational critiques cannot limit themselves to a sterile demolition of situations. Consequently, the fictional hypothesizing of alternatives, in order to be of organizational worth, has to constitute a pragmatic *pars construens* in a critical analysis of the drawbacks of situations, ideally suggesting alternative ways of coordinating that apply in many recurring situations in the future (e.g. the technical inspection-mediated testing applied to the spaces still to be delivered and tested).

Our second research question constituted a further digging into the coordination dynamic raised by the first, which we addressed mainly in the method section. Our paper articulated most explicitly, in developing the EW model, how the overlapping of compromises and tests indicates the strong explanatory power that a long-term, historical and processual perspective may provide, beyond the critical situation as empirical entry point and basic unit of analysis. Building on the characteristic strengths of plurality and historicity of the EW model (Diaz-Bone, 2011, 2014; Knoll, 2015), we pushed further its assumptions of plurality. A focus on sacrifices expanded the plurality of the EW by accounting for intersituational test- *and* compromise-related costs (see Figure 3.1).

We specified and contextualized how the unavoidable uncertainty and critique that permeate coordination processes emerge from the discursive and (im)material traces left by missed opportunities and their narrative or technical representations. These micro-historical organizational traces harbour possible alternatives, and such latent, sunk possibilities underlie actors' organizational and managerial strategies beyond individual situations.

Uncertainty and critique continuously stratify in the organizational memory of actors, who elaborate on particularly salient benchmark sacrifices, in the attempt of avoiding the threats looming on the horizon (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006). Some risks of failure are known because they have been already experienced. Even the *experience of absence*, to adopt a volatile expression, takes on a much more tangible, material dimension in the context of space planning and construction. A number of spaces that should have been there are sorely missed and intensely longed for by organizational actors, who often remain the only ones to know how and why that absence happened (e.g. see the frustration of the council in-house lawyer in Table 3.3). A methodological focus on rejected forms of compromise and on absent spaces helped our processual understanding of organizational coordination as a legitimation and maintenance of justification and

testing mechanisms through a plurality of sacrifices linked to investments in (and divestments from) complementary forms of test and compromise adapted to the most critical situations encountered.

Compromise may help to manage the unsatisfying outcomes of tests, or to shape a more “compromised test”, mitigating or gradually reorienting the undesired effects of dispute closure. If part of our findings foregrounded material absences that emerged in open conflict (see the implementation of the non-contractual stratigraphy of the theatre in Excerpt 3.1), other data showed how failures and disputes were also managed in a prospective, pragmatic and constructive avoidance of known sacrifices in future situations (see the carpark testing in Excerpt 3.3).

Our findings corroborate organizational research on the “compromising historicity of conventions” (Knoll, 2015), and on the versatility of coordination conventions and mechanisms (Gkeredakis, 2014; Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012). Developing the insight that justification and critique mutually and reciprocally depend on the compromises reached (Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015) *and* unachieved, we provided empirical evidence on how actors pass materially and discursively from the logic of justifying to that of compromising (Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2009).

In conclusion, we contend that this processual co-constitution of the two logics of test and compromise stands at the forefront of what organization and management studies analyze. Organizational research has argued for the specific value of compromise, which may result not only superior to the individual worth, but even potentially *more* valuable than the summed values of its components (Stark, 2009), as constructive conflict (Follett, 1927) can increase exponentially the resulting composed value.

Compromises may however also fail to achieve their intended organizational objectives of combining, collapsing, coupling or connecting justifications and evaluation practices (Nyberg & Wright, 2012). We conclude that compromises are neither superior nor inferior theoretical and practical devices of coordination compared to tests: we claim that the two are interdependent, because the costs or sacrifices they both generate over time stratify historically across situations.

Coordination requires a constant adjustment and adaptation of conventions, mechanisms and material objects (Gkeredakis, 2014; Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012; Mailhot et al., 2014; Oldenhof, Postma & Putters, 2014) to enhance accountability, predictability and common understanding (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). A focus on alternative directions, pondered and then rejected in coordination efforts, obeys a methodological processual commitment to account for how intentionality grapples with a continuously changing uncertainty and with a manifold of possibilities constructed as risks or opportunities. Managers attempt to channel the sources of



justification and critique, through a recursive series of investments and through an evaluation of sacrifices, which jointly reshape conventions by balancing opposed possibilities.

Although the EW deal with non-violent, political ways of sorting disputes, we found that a radical rejection of compromise connected with a strict enforcement of tests represents in many ways a sort of organizational moral violence (or, if one prefers, a unilateral unpoliteness). Refusing to compromise contradicts the plurality and the common humanity principle at the base of the EW politics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). Compromising underlies a complementary logic to that of testing in the sense that if the single economy of worth applies a test to maximize particular types of coordination returns on some costly investments, we observed that *the economy of compromise prefers reducing the systemic costs linked to the overall sacrifices incurred in testing over time*. Coordinating implies an open, lateral recognition of alternative evaluation criteria.

The paradoxical tension and dilemma of how coordination can be effective in the presence of a plurality of universally valid (and therefore mutually exclusive) evaluation principles, finds a compelling explanation in organizational and managerial third ways, or compromises. The third way is what Mary Parker Follett calls integration (see opening quote), and that here we proposed as a way to view tests and compromises together, as part of the same process of organizational coordination. Differently from Follett's (1927) view, which echoes the interpretation of compromise in the EW, as a second-order mode of coordination, in which loss is always the outcome, we however similarly conclude by advocating a principle of integration.

In our case study, integration is the joint, processual assessment of tests and compromises in the long-term, which provides a symmetrical insight respect to a loss-defined compromise: that loss may in turn result also from a lack of compromising. Our extended understanding of compromises and tests contends that neither of the two coordination modes can be always beneficial or harmful *per se* or over the other, but that over time both are co-constitutive of each other. A balanced assessment of critical situations considers also what organizational coordination failed to achieve, or what better paths it prevented. In this sense organizational coordination tries to relate all the factors of a situation (Follett, 1932), including as pertinent also the unoccurred possibilities in other situations. Compromising and testing seem to have the task of reducing each other's coordination costs by overcoming not only the interdependencies inherent in the activities they coordinate, but also the ones they contribute to introduce (Petani & Mengis, 2014b).

To strike an effective balance in complex interorganizational coordination situations as the one we considered involves a complex moral evaluation management, where third ways multiply in mediating more than two alternatives, compromising between a panoply of justification criteria, and drawing also from the reshapable past of unchosen paths.



#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND OPENINGS<sup>28</sup>

This thesis has attempted to show empirically, to explore methodologically, and to argue theoretically, that not everything that actors “leave behind” in organizational space planning and construction stops counting. Not all that is organizationally experienced as lost, unachieved or underperformed necessarily remains so forever, or at any rate stops playing important discursive, moral *and* material roles in processes of organizational coordination. This seems to be the case well beyond the studied setting of urban planning and construction management. For several years, I have studied closely the planning and construction of a cultural architecture project, fascinated by the web of socio-material sacrifices discursively mobilized as sunk costs of the construction project and of the wider cultural and economic development policies of the city. I conclude that actors remain attached to, or retain a selection of what their collective coordination rejects. What we leave behind has the organizational importance of signaling burnt possibilities, and of measuring what we used to have and now lack and miss, and could do a lot better with. In the organizational historical venture of constructing a culture centre, the focus on how space comes into being from multiple possibilities and evaluations has allowed me to trace the full sociomaterial importance of what we leave behind. What we leave behind is especially important when it comes to spaces and places, as it poses delicate moral and political matters, where multiple misaligned values and representations clash. What is left behind is not a pacific, common understanding, universally accepted. It is contested turf. The planned and never built spaces, or the places we once used to have but that we historically lost and forgot, point to different places with many conflicting meanings reverberating in opposed stories of loss, regret, critique and justification. In such context, space seems always a sort of processual compromise, and my interest in understanding how a great architectural project was planned, and how space became and was organized according or despite many conflicting plans, representations and narratives oriented me towards the presence of absence. Not everything that organizational coordination rejects remains rejected. Actors retain a selection of this rejection to make sense of the organizational process. In the mids of prevailing values and spaces, and differently from the utterly vanquished, vanished and forgotten spaces and projects, others resist disposal (Hetherington, 2004). The presence of this absence in organizational communication appeared to me a way actors had of reckoning the scale of sacrifice and loss incurred, in order to stem, contain or avoid the repeated losing of what they deemed most valuable.

My research encountered empirically very “concrete” disappearances and emergences, whereby plans to build a restaurant or insert a lift never materialized, or an extra floor was added, and

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<sup>28</sup> This is not an original heading. I take it in inverted order from Henri Lefebvre’s “Openings and conclusions” (1991/1974: 400)

demolitions gave way to last minute, unplanned adaptations of the emerging building to cater for disabled people. My focus on “leaving behind” therefore led me to capture a related contested retention. In the organizational case of the change favouring disabled people, the aim to retain the full potentiality (and fairness) of public space fruition, played against many spatiotemporal and socio-material constraints, which importantly tried to retain the minimum requirements of security that such adaptation risked sacrificing.

Not following through with the original plans during the construction implied dropping old solutions, which not everyone perceived to be unfair or impractical, and implementing new options, not unanimously considered beyond critique or better than the dropped spaces. In the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974), this rejection/retention dialectic clearly makes a material difference in the long term, visible built environment, but such political process of exclusion/inclusion of competing possibilities is common to most production sectors in controversial organizational situations. The built environment obscures the many alternative, concrete possibilities that in this thesis found a voice. Organizational histories of how cities produce space through great urban projects are rarely told. A sensitivity towards the organizational communication practices underlying such process is at the origin of this work. A focus on space and process led me to theorize on communication aspects of how we organize what we leave behind in space planning and construction management, and this revealed wider organizational implications. The concepts of lost space and absent space contributed testify of my attempts to capture some latent level of organizational life, which emerged as important not just for a process analysis of observed phenomena, but because actors and their mechanisms, stories, complaints and achievements seemed to have a lot to do with this retaining of something. Spaces, places, plans, values, stories, memories, technical and sketched representations, and strange sociomaterial mixtures, hybrids and compromises between these left behind a lingering trail of sacrifice and significance that just would not wane away. It reverberated from many documents, even from the yellowed ones that had not become anything at all but scraps of paper to archive for the record. Yes, that may sound vague, but the attachment to these left behinds documented in so many data sources, and the organizational relevance of retaining a fraction of the unachieved potential of various projects, dreams and failures connected with my object of study finally stuck and never left me either. So many people invested so many years and energies in some of these possibilities that did not occur that I set out to trace some of the most theoretically intriguing ones. I believe I found something. I understand that claiming to have found absence is not an easy sell, but let me explain.

Organizations lose battles and witness the radical transformation and disappearance of their plans. Reality at key moments tests their strategies and imposes a self-critical questioning of the ideal or

abstract representations of objectives, measured against their resources and the effectiveness of the conventional procedures in place to pursue them. Those abandoned plans, and even the drafts of plans that rarely surface at the empirical level of organizational analysis, in this work became the counterintuitive *ubi consistam* of theorizing.

Organizational actors often need to compromise between the desirable and the achievable. Investments in strongly held values and codified conventions to justify controversial situations do not always perform as wished. Organizations revise and often trash old plans and organizational forms for new, unexpected makeshift arrangements, because their representations fail to procure the expected coordination returns in stabilizing uncertainty. Simply put, organizations change idea, as they learn to reconsider their guiding values based on experience. However, the process of rejecting does not transform rejected plans into non-existent entities, nor are all these plans inconsequential for the future. I have suggested in this thesis that a selection of these representations and convictions remain crucial constituents of a collective retrospective and prospective sensemaking (Weick, 1979) despite, or, better, *because* they are rejected and unachieved.

In my case study of urban planning and construction management, what was left behind was space, in the various phases, in which it was planned, narrated, evaluated, built or demolished in the organizational context of a historically important urban renovation project in a small city. The effort of my ethnography has partly been to capture the tension between a struggle to defend (i.e. not to leave behind) the intended distinctive features of the planned project, and an alertness to grasp (i.e. not to leave behind) the opportunity of implementing the many changes emerged as necessary, desirable and still possible during the construction process. Such a dialectic rescuing, or retention of possibilities that constantly risk being left behind, I here conclude, is a fundamental mechanism of urban planning and construction in particular, and of organization and management more generally.

The texts collected herein trace collectively different aspects of the process of leaving behind and retaining, assessing such methodological focus for organizational analysis. I found that processes of “leaving behind *space*” unfolded both materially by physical demolition, and socially/morally by remembering to forget (Anteby & Molnár, 2012) or prioritizing some spaces and times over others. Spatial change and production required various evaluations by means of multiple organizational representations (council resolutions, contractual amendments, drawings, audit reports, technical inspections etc.). I found that these organizational communication tools made a difference in the many coordination practices of change management I observed in retracing many different processes of leaving behind. What different actors mobilized differently as left behind, *selected for retention a particular kind of rejected or lost possibilities*. The rejected possibilities

selected for retention had in fact the particular agential characteristic of concretely hypothesizing ways to pragmatically impact on present and future situations, allowing actors to narratively reshape the past and future scenarios according to the significant, revelatory moments of exclusion that they imaginatively reconstructed in pursuit of their aims. I observed how manipulations of historical narratives strategically articulated stories of regained space, which allowed stretching from the commemoration of determinate successful places of a remote past, to wished-for places of the future. All this largely ignoring, or purposefully omitting, reference to times and events much closer and seemingly more pertinent to the present, which however did not agree with the pragmatic moral to be drawn from their story. We chose what we retain. Not always is this the case, with our memories inadvertently forgetting information we would rather recall. In this thesis, what we choose to retain, out of what is left behind, is not a random occurrence. It has an organizational relevance. Which does not mean that we purposefully leave behind what we do. Sadly, this still occurs, through blind reliance on static representations and conventions. Yet organizational actors develop an awareness about a selection of sacrificed possibilities, and planned but unrealized projects (in my case largely spaces).

One may legitimately wonder what the purpose is of studying a construction project on the basis of what is not constructed. The intuition emerged importantly from data on the concerns of actors and from planning documents and building site activities: from the majority of rejected designs of the architectural contest, to the unchosen offers of the call for tenders, and the many rejected contractual amendments during construction, but also from the demolished places of the past commemorated in official public resolutions. Taken all together, this recurring empirical pattern of unrealized prospects but evoked invisible spaces, permeating actors' pragmatic retrospective and prospective reflections, inspired the guiding focus of this thesis.

I was attracted towards what did not happen by the realization that “[o]nce completed, buildings hide the many possibilities that did not get built, as they bury the interests, politics, and power that shaped the one design that did.” (Gieryn, 2002, 38-39, emphasis added). I like to think of my methodological approach as contributing an interesting way to unearth those interests, politics and power. A search for possibilities that failed to occur but kept discursively resurfacing oriented my whole approach to data collection and analysis. An ethnographic pursuit of what “could have happened” soon alerted me against taking for granted what actors and documents expressed at face value, learning to read between the lines. I started searching, in various informal communication reconstructions, for what was missing about the organizational processes of spatial change and organizational coordination I was piecing together. I began asking myself, grounding this reasoning on many interviews and documents, how certain processes could be evaluated differently, through

a parallel story of why certain possibilities lost their chance of materializing. I decided to do this through the collection of strange empirical puzzle pieces that never composed the final picture. I discovered that these scraps mattered.

My quest started, as extensively explained in the introduction, by raising the following question:

*“How can I know what I retain and value until I see what I leave behind?”*

The answers to the more specific questions I raised in this collection of papers provided several insights into how actors discursively rehabilitated for retention a selection of what was left behind, of what they variously considered as undue production waste or missed opportunities. I attempt below to summarize key contributions by paper, outlining the answers that the papers offer to the question above and their individual limitations. I sketch how the different insights build upon and reinforce each other, while opening new directions for organizational analysis.

### *Paper 1*

Firstly, I have argued that a discursive retention can articulate historical narratives, strategically remembering, or remembering to forget (Anteby & Molnar, 2012), and then rewriting the history of past spaces and times to construct a plot agreeing with present plans and representations of the future in need of justification. I introduced the concept of lost space, inspired by Proust’s search of lost time, to signify more the outcome of a voluntary, rather than of Proust’s involuntary memory, symbolized by the casual, unhopd for discovery of the *madeleine* that grants an unexpected access to times gone by. The notion of lost space instead clarified the specific organizational and strategic manipulation of historic spaces and places of the past with clear objectives in mind. The intentionally constructed narrative of a happy space of the past to be regained, exploits the memorial strength (Boltanski & Esquerre, 2014) of past spaces and places to plan future authentic ones (Massey, 1995) on solid, material bases (Decker, 2014; De Vaujany & Vaast, 2013). This spatiotemporal dynamic resembled a remembering of the future (Weick, 2006). The organizational relevant and space-specific questions in this case were:

- *What is the organizational role of remembering and history in the planning of space?*
- *How can a focus on remembering help us to develop a more processual understanding of the interplay between the moments of Lefebvre’s spatial framework?*

The role of history and remembering in space planning narrative practices, contributed to the rich organizational literature on space drawing mostly from Henri Lefebvre’s spatial theory (1991/1974). I drew on Lefebvre’s (1970, 1975) scarcely mobilized work on history and

temporality and on his theory of moments. Moment – defined as “*the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility*” (Lefebvre, 2002/1961: 348, emphasis in original) – introduced the possible into organizational/historical methodology, and advanced a consistent processual interest of mine on frustrated efforts of realization, or never realized possibilities and on the “testing moments” that objectively materialize some spaces, *and not others*.

I attempted to clarify how the reshaping of history to recreate a continuity with a desired objective, is a process that cannot disregard the socio-materiality of the remembered spaces and places. To a certain degree, I argued that these spaces must be perceived and lived as missed and having undergone a certain loss in order to articulate the regaining and compensation affordances I charged “lost space” with. In accounting for the enabling conditions of remembering happy spaces of the past to articulate effectively a desire to regain, repeat, or compensate for such loss led me, unsurprisingly, to conclude that this appeal to historical places is a contested process of power. The writing and rewriting of history, however carefully crafted around affective places, is not just open to anyone, but lost space is a spatiotemporal product of remembering that powerful institutional actors manipulated, despite deeply opposed reconstructions and reinterpretation of the past. In retracing the history of how space is conceived (Mitev & De Vaujany, 2013: 327) I intended to complement the growing organizational literature on how corporate space is transformed or produced by the evolving practices that inhabit corporate spaces after construction. It seemed relevant to look at what happens in the steps before, gaining insights into organizational dynamics of “space planning *proper*” that finished buildings no longer allow in the same way (Gieryn, 2002). Lost space also attempted to bridge the spatial (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Dale & Burrell, 2008), and historical turns of organization studies (Bucheli & Wadhvani, 2014; Rowlinson, Hassard & Decker, 2014). An integrated spatiotemporal and socio-material analysis aimed for an account of the non-linearity of space and time in the discursive organizational practice of remembering.

Mnemonic narratives of lost space enact a historical genre that manages politically the uncertainty of the unfolding present and attempts to organize the unknown future. By anchoring official *macro-temporal* narratives of urban planning to safe spatiotemporal harbours of golden pasts, convenient continuities were woven into the future from distant times and places of the past. Paper 1 clearly shows how the strategic narrative manipulation of a prestigious former hotel, which was built during the heroic age of political independence of the mid XIX century, and thrived for all the first half of the XX as the symbol of a rich tourist sector, reached forward for a prospected XXI century of comparable glory. In so doing, the unhappy, recent couple of decades of decadence and political responsibility – a late XX century in which the place risked burning down to the ground while remaining under the political care of the same administrators engaging in the remembering – was



purposefully forgotten (Anteby & Molnar, 2012). A critical view on archival data of documents, newspaper coverage and retrospective views of main actors shows how not just storytelling, but history writing allows to frame what we leave behind as a natural progression towards a regaining and retaining in the future of the lost values and assets of the past and of collective identity.

Paper 1 presents limitations connected to its wide-ranging focus on urban planning narratives. This allowed to raise questions that however remain unanswered about how planners may intentionally be demolishing and otherwise losing space with long-term twofold speculation schemes. Using the space made available by the demolition or loss itself, and later “mnemonically recycling” the spaces as lost in practices of remembering that help them to plan and justify spaces to replace the longed for demolished spaces. For future research, this delicate political issue suggests a comparative agenda that may study *how what is left behind is mobilized to bring forward future urban plans*.

The study of different cities and development contexts may fruitfully heed the particularly sensitive political disposal (Hetherington, 2004) of places for culture for other spaces, and the successive filling of perceived “produced voids” of the past with new regaining projects. Urban planning values are importantly revealed in the long term by what we open the door to, via the leaving behind of certain spaces. If it seems fair to conclude critically that it is qualitatively and politically different to displace an old theatre with a casino (instead of a school, a hospital, or other private buildings), the process can fruitfully be traced in the historical and remembering narratives that aim for the retention of the lost theatre. A comparison of how similar displacements unfold in different urban contexts, and how they are narratively justified, would enlarge further the wide angle Paper 1 meant to open.

The macro perspective on organizational discourses around the project as a whole, developed over ten years in official documents, prevented Paper 1 from carrying out a micro analysis of the everyday administrative tools, representations and politics, which produced and transformed particular fragments of the overall “conceived space” (Lefebvre, 1991/1974) into brick and mortar. This well introduces the contributions of Paper 2.

### *Paper 2*

I provide a second insight into how the retaining and evaluating of left behind spaces unfolds, through a close theoretical and organizational analysis of how planned spaces change during the construction phase, a process with very different spatiotemporal constraints from those of urban planning narratives. The challenges of organizational representation inform, in Paper 2, a theory-charged illustration of the ontological assumptions of space and time underlying particular change management tools in the construction industry. I make the case for the theoretical lack of spatial

awareness in time-driven, process-based organization studies. While distinguishing and discussing the organizational affordances of different practical representations of space and time, I call for the need to understand how these alternative tools perform complementary, but opposed functions in representing space. Partly recuperating an early theoretical process organizational tradition attentive to space, relational, representational dynamics and underlying assumptions (Cooper, 2005, 2007, 2016/1992; Tsoukas, 1992, 1998), and turning to key reference authors in process and pragmatist philosophy, Paper 2 introduces insights by spatial theorists and explores what certain conceptualizations, assumptions and representations of space mean and do in theory and practice. The relevant process organizational and space-specific questions asked are:

- *Is space time's blind spot?*
- *How may process organization studies advance a time-sensitive, but space-aware theorizing of organizational representation?*

While appreciating the replacing of representational, non-processual theoretical vocabularies with non-representational processual ones (Beyes & Steyeart, 2012), I argue for an in depth theoretical review of both, in light of what they achieve (Lee, 1998) in practice (Barad, 2007). Starting from theoretical debates on space and time – reviewed alternating insights from Bergson, Deleuze, James, Whitehead, Lefebvre and Massey – the paper attempts to clarify how the problem of theorizing space has long been discussed as one of representation and language. I empirically ground the practical and theoretical drawbacks of not representing space both “*as process and in process* (that is space and time combined in becoming)” (Crang & Thrift, 2000, p. 3, emphasis in original). Paper 2 argues for a processual, spatiotemporal theorizing of space, claiming that “spatialization” and “simple location” – mostly discussed in relation to the inappropriate topographic, reductive representations of time – potentially harm also the representations of space, whereby space is confused with its topographic a-temporal representation. Representing and thinking of space and time as separate, unrelated containers in practice has important costs and negative effects in construction management practices, despite also performing important organizational roles. Starting from the consideration that many organizational representations of space, not differently from many theoretical, even process-friendly conceptualizations, risk reproducing a separation between time and space that misses out on, or leaves behind, many relational and processual aspects of space becoming, I show what this means, by examining the performances of many change management representations during construction.

I present empirically, under many contrasting views and representations, how a particular spatial change was “rescued from not emerging”, and how actors perceived this change process over time. The successful planning and practical implementation of a new access to the theatre for disabled

people clearly intended avoiding a politically-charged leaving behind (i.e. the rights of disabled people). Rich qualitative data on how the culture centre under construction was adapted for disabled persons, at the cost of demolishing and redesigning already built elements, illustrate how abstract conceptualizations of space, time and change translate in the lived, concrete practices of Architecture Construction and Engineering (ACE). The complex and lengthy management of entangled material and social forces, revealed important lived dimensions of space planning in the multiple (not linear and successive, but simultaneous and misaligned) temporality of design and construction. The last minute retention of a space that risked being left behind did not come about discretely, or in a unitary manner, as the organizational representations of this change may reductively and deceptively communicate. The spatial change involved instead many concurrent evaluation processes, whereby space-and-time entanglement reflected a rich, relational plurality of spatial extensions, temporal durations and the intense emotional investment of practitioners, in constructing hypothetical scenarios of the use of space under different conditions.

Paper 2 intentionally avoids arguing *against* any particular representational mode *per se*, to argue instead *for* a critical awareness of the limitations of different types of representations of space and time, in the light of what they achieve (or fail to achieve). I tackle many map-territory differentials, or the various gaps between organizational representations and the world. A focus on what representations of spatial change accomplish, and what instead remains unaccounted for, empirically examines some of the negative effects on the construction management process in terms of costs, delays and ability to implement multiple changes represented as discrete single modifications of single atemporal spaces. Necessary for organizing in general, and for construction management practices in particular, different representational approaches to space and time demonstrate diverse pragmatic affordances and limitations in their practical performance. A theory and practice dialogue compares different assumptions and ontologies of space, and examines how they influence the management of change over time, depending on what they reject or retain.

Paper 2, assessing a theoretical lack of space-awareness in a time-driven process organizational research, suggests therefore a performativity approach (Barad, 2007) to what theoretical assumptions of spatiality and temporality *do* (Helin, J., Hernes, T., Hjorth, D. & Holt, 2014: 1-16).

Examining the never given and stable nature of space through a *micro-temporal* analysis of how actors represented, implemented and interpreted (in different ways at various points in time) an important change of planned space, the study explores how different understandings of the complex time-and-space processual relationship achieve very different tasks and purposes. Space may not *be a simple container*, but it *does* organizationally *spatialize, contain and constrain* multiple, simultaneous durations, extensions and affections, as illustrated through many construction

management practices of representing spatial change. Assuming space and time as linear, unitary and separate dimensions carries out a certain number of important economical leaving behind of information that reduces change problems to doable discrete tasks. It however also exposes to particularly relevant blind spots, which Paper 2 discusses with the intention of opening a performativity-sensitive, space-aware process organizational agenda.

The in depth approach of Paper 2, while elaborating further the processual insights of Paper 1 on the (graphical and representational) relation between space and time, presents limitations linked to the vastness of the theoretical insights reviewed, and to the particular dialogue with data suggested. On the first account, the review of complex conceptual problems, approached from a process and relational view (Cooper, 2005, 2007) is only a first, incomplete step to regain a strong time *and space* theorization of organizational representations, aware of how map and territory differ (Tsoukas, 1998), but also of how misrepresentations organize by abbreviation and displacement (Cooper, 2016/1992). On account of the empirical choice of focusing on a single change over time, a limitation has been to have restricted the search to changes *formally* represented as a change (i.e. a contractual amendment), finally settling for an approved contractual change, despite signalling the important temporal dimension occupied also by the changes that failed to be approved and implemented. The aim was to show how even a successful regaining of a spatial possibility that risked never materializing (i.e. an access to the theatre more favourable for disabled people), was enacted through an idealized spatial representation (i.e. unrestricted access of disabled people in every theatre seat). This abstract conceived space (Lefebvre, 1991/1974) risked jeopardising important security requirements because of temporally conflicting conceived spaces, projected by duly *hypothesizing future scenarios of time-constrained spatial practices* (i.e. how to quickly evacuate a theatre in case of fire when every row would be obstructed by the wheelchairs of disabled people).

The contribution of showing how a processual view on representations of spatial change may benefit from an integration of temporal scenarios, and from grasping space as a simultaneity of multiple durations (Massey, 2005) sketches how irreconcilable representations may profit from opening to trade-offs, compromising between radically opposed views to integrate their complementary performative affordances. The detailed discussion of one *single* change, while showing that change is hardly *simply located* and constitutes a rich sociomaterial and relational multiplicity, also illustrates how, perhaps against processual expectations of a world in a continuous flux, planned space resisted rejection, through strongly held views and unchanging emotions. Actors enacted fierce organizational justification of their values, by narrating the untold history of how the planning of space was lived. The strenuous ethical defence of spaces, resulting from years

of efforts and complex negotiations, captures the lived organizational dimension of space planning, reflecting the micro, practitioner's view about his own work in face of institutional seemingly unreasonable constraints (i.e. the architect disapproving of the new abstract norm on disabled people's fruition of public spaces).

The limitation of Paper 2's engagement in broad theoretical issues of space and time representations and ontologies, grounded in micro practices of representing change in and around a building site, left uncovered the issue of how institutionally established rules and representations, or conventions are relied upon or reshaped in face of critical situations of controversy. The clash of evaluation criteria hinders organizational coordination. The need to compose differences at a meso level, leads managers to adjust and transform conventions. An issue that Paper 3 addresses.

### *Paper 3*

A third approach, through which this thesis shows how actors select and retain elements of the past to imagine and engineer future coordination tactics and reshape conventions and mechanisms, is the economies of worth (EW) framework (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). The theoretical approach allowed me to study organizational coordination, by showing empirically that conventional moral rules are not only there to be broken, but also to be repaired and recomposed through a working together of conflicting values. An in depth analysis of how coordination conventions in construction management were adapted in the horizon of critique and costly tests, showed how managers learnt from past critical situations. I have addressed the punctual inter-organizational management of controversies, observed in tense coordination moments, such as building site meetings between the constructor and the town planning staff on contested changes denounced as illegitimate. I have also documented the purposeful organizational re-design of coordination conventions, showing how unsuccessfully managed situations within the project's own temporality were critically reinterpreted, and narratively "fixed" by *hypothesizing alternative past scenarios that could guide to avoid the future repetition of known damaging moments*.

The EW model (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) presents consistent polities related to alternative public justification possibilities according to market, industry, civic, domestic, inspired and fame values. Each of these orders of worth privileges certain space and time formations (over the ones favoured by the others), attributes worth to human beings and objects according to specific qualifications and employs value-based tests, usually invoked to overcome uncertain situations of critique according to competing principles (e.g. price, efficiency, solidarity, loyalty, originality and celebrity). The model allows for the composition of more than one logic, calling these arrangements compromises, although it illustrates this option as a second order choice of conflict suspension, and offers mostly examples of binary combinations that are relied upon for coordination purposes (e.g.

market-industry formations like “business methods”, or market-civic hybrid notions of a “competitive public service”). Our empirical material has contributed with an inquiry into extended compromises, for instance presenting an absent threefold compromise of market-industry-civic values, identified by many critics in the “comprehensive business plan for the public cultural centre project” as a proof or evidence of mismanagement and therefore source of critique.

An important finding of Paper 3 is that a refusal to compromise in single situations importantly faces prospects of retaliatory, cross-situational (and unsustainable) systemic organizational costs. The management of the observed construction project involved many inter-organizational coordination defaults, where *absent spaces* constituted clear, performative ‘left behinds’ in terms of concrete missed objectives (e.g. the disappearance from the plans of a restaurant). A plurality of values proposed many universally valid and mutually exclusive evaluation criteria and conventions (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), but trade-offs between these orders of worth were also found to play a special role of reducing coordination transaction costs. The empirical abundant evidence in our case of multiple competing forms of compromise, presented by practitioners as alternatives that could have overcome the sacrifices relative to unilateral value-based ways of overcoming controversies, supports in Paper 3 a challenge of the theoretical position that compromises are logically inferior to single economies of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987).

Tense moments and difficult decisions required harsh tests, with daily battles at the building site for what could still be done to pending problems, and what just had to be dropped for the sake of more important common objectives. I documented how this process implied a relational cross-situational questioning of past failures in order to hypothesize conditions under which things “could have turned out better”, paving paths to avoid similar occurrences thereafter. This particular spatiotemporal pendulum of possibilities, between *what could have been* and *what could still be*, paralleled the need to find reliable tests that could however on occasion blend with the opposite coordination mode of compromising. Makeshift third ways sacrificed the benefits of pure tests, or the unilateral justification of situations through single exclusive values, but appeared to retain a processual, long-term sustainability of coordination across tests. This finding argues for a certain path dependence across situations, and suggests that the EW model (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987) – and its translation in organization studies – may fruitfully account for inter-situational costs. I have found that actors themselves are aware of such balancing or compensating accounting of costs and benefits across situations, and therefore the possible alternatives of coordination often envisaged compromises instead of competing EW. A creative managerial coordination between single logics and forms of compromise accounts empirically for the attempt to integrate the benefits of the values composing the compromise, while aiming to reduce the relative costs of the values taken individually.

The collapsing of tests and compromises in this dissertation attempts to show that, rather than opposed coordination alternatives, as the EW model tends to depict them (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), these modes may operate simultaneously in co-constitutive, complementary and *processual* ways. Such finding appreciates managerial activity as a continuous balancing of unstable equilibria, coordinating activities towards shifting objectives that hedge between logics to buffer core organizational activities against harsh conflicts that paralyze action.

At a *meso-temporal* level of analysis, drawing from existing research on compromises (Holden & Scerri, 2015; Holden, Scerri & Esfahani, 2015), I conclude that exclusionary tests and inclusive compensating compromises co-constitute each other.

A longitudinal stratification of critical situations contributes in the medium term to a situated “moral multiplexity” of coordination (Reinecke, Spicer Van Bommel, 2015) requiring an organizational hedging between conflicting values (Stark, 1996).

Justification values and conventions embody highly accepted, widespread rationales and morals for framing action subject to public scrutiny, as typical in organizations. Conventions are value-based maps of equivalence, but they often prove different from the territory (to echo insights from Paper 2). Managerial activity neither drives “blind”, without any plan, convention or representation, nor adheres to these maps to the letter, following them equally blindly, like a sacred rulebook. Managing instead implies a continuous adapting and reacting to the obstacles encountered along the way. The EW model defines organizations themselves as devices designed to compromise between different natures (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1989, 2006/1987; Thévenot, 1989), which signals the study of these trade-off dynamics as particularly relevant for the study of organizational coordination.

An important finding emerging from the communication and sensemaking practices observed is that rear view retrospective mirrors appear to show managers what they leave behind, allowing them to imagine a different route from the one taken in order to fix the road ahead, as if making progress by looking at the past and advancing in reverse gear. Profiting from a historically stratified experience of lost opportunities and defaults, which I observed at the level of an intra-project medium temporality, managers devised “third ways” between well-structured, textbook exclusionary tests, and adjusted conventions or compromises between opposed values, which helped them to avoid the repetition of costs incurred during previous, taken-for-granted (“blindish”) adoptions of tests and conventions.

A methodologically-driven tracing of absent spaces “lost in construction” and of sacrificed forms of compromise, engaged with a sophisticated model of organizational coordination that integrates both humans and objects, tests (of exclusion) and compromises, and, importantly, space and time

formations as reflecting different *moral* framings of action (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987). Paper 3, foregrounds extensively that leaving behind is a matter of investment in moral forms of coordination and sacrifice of alternative possibilities. Compromises appear to draw their justification specifically from a logic of reducing the costs of sacrificed values, retaining the potential returns of sunk investments. Such an integrating, continuous “reciprocal relating of all the factors of a situation”, as Mary Parker Follett relationally and processually defined co-ordination (1932: 291), seems to include lessons learnt from past disagreements, and signals compromise as a general systemic attitude, constituting a key common understanding necessary for organizational coordination (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). That is to say, if mutually exclusive stances are generally accepted as ways of coordinating action, non-violent resolutions of controversies must either allow for a balanced alternation between different values, or for arrangements in which conflict is suspended by compromises that compose (i.e. integrate) these differences.

The evaluation criteria of the EW (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), rely on six consistent value-defined polities to justify or critique public situations of controversy. These understand coordination sacrifices in a relational way, in the sense that choosing one economy, over the others, restricts the leaving behind to the rejection of the other five available paradigms. My data, rich in both present and absent compromises, account, amongst the costs and sacrifices, not only for the rejection of the benefits that could have been enjoyed in the five competing orders of worth, but also for the benefits of trade-off coordination options reconciling conflicting value systems.

The discursive practices, analyzed across a wide spectrum of data sources, allowed me to document the construction of “moral histories of absent spaces”, and “constructive conflict” (Follett, 1927) based on a pragmatic speculation on past alternative unchosen paths of coordination. What the actors interpreted as “what could have happened” served the purpose of reshaping conventional forms of test and compromise through strategic promotions of common understandings (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) based on ambiguity/dissonance management (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011; Stark, 2009), leveraging on the compromising historicity of conventions (Knoll, 2015). Importantly for the case of space planning, the material absence of previously planned spaces (e.g. the restaurant), and the failure to deploy available forms of compromise (e.g. a civic business plan), equipped actors with evidence of mismanagement that fuelled critiques based on a lack of compromising skills.

Our relational and processual development of the EW model (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006/1987), contributed to the organizational research on compromises, suggesting a sacrifice-driven way to exploit fully the model’s explanatory power of the rejection/retention tension in coordination. The theoretical/methodological implication of tracing rejected forms of compromise provided the



processual insight that organizations and managers have a compromising capacity that registers alternative, forlorn possibilities, to assess what is convenient to retain or reject in the future.

The notion of “absent space” indicated a recurring interesting “evidence of defaults” in the translation from planning to construction. Absent space further developed the knowledge that coordinating activities orient to absence (Jarzabkowski, Lê & Feldman, 2012), while maintaining critique and uncertainty central in understanding coordination as a precarious stabilization of a complex universe of multiple values (Thévenot, 1986, 1989; Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2006).

Paper 3 presents promising limitations, in the sense that they point to an organizational research agenda of great potential. The discussion merely touched upon a finer spatiotemporal analysis of how compromises compose values unequally amongst its components, and suggested to look at disequilibria or unequal worth of components in compromises. An inquiry into compromises with unequally balanced orders of worth, could theorize about how compromises may be enacting predominant economies of worth “in disguise”. Moreover, the possibility for certain organizational forms of compromise to split *and* compose spatial and temporal axes of evaluation at different degrees of legitimacy in conflicting logics, suggests the potential of even more refined analyses of a multiple and morally characterised multiplying plurality of spatiotemporal arrangements.

At this point it is fair to conclude that such a development prospect, though very attractive for organization and management studies, may risk subtracting from the simplicity of the model, already criticized in face of leaner frameworks, with less technical vocabulary weighing on the full understanding of its tenets. This dissertation has the limited merit of advancing a processual understanding of testing and compromising as complementary and co-constitutive modes of coordination, adding to organizational studies a specific discussion on the relation between investment in forms and sacrifice (Thévenot, 1984), a founding element to understand the EW as a model of public action coordination. Future organizational research on organizational coordination may further appreciate the contribution of an *enlarged economy of sacrificed worth and leaving behind in general, and an economy of sacrificed compromise in particular*.

#### *Lost space, absent spaces, and sacrificed compromises as contributions to larger debates*

I theorize on the disappearance of existing places and on the rejection of concrete plans in terms of lost space and absent space. I started distinguishing the two concepts from the introduction when clarifying that by leaving behind I meant both something that had materially existed (e.g. a building), and something existed only as a traceable unoccurred possibility (e.g. the plan for a never built building). But as discussed in this work, lost space and absent space acquired deeper communication and process organizational significance.

Lost space is a happy, no longer existing place of the past introduced to articulate a desire to regain, compensate or make up for its disappearance, and is therefore a positive benchmark, usually drawn from historical places whose remembered success is less likely to meet any resistance in the present. Absent space is a planned space that could have materialized, and is discursively mobilized to intend that it should have, but was never implemented, a kind of by-product of space planning that got lost in construction; signaling a wasted or sacrificed possibility, absent space represents therefore a negative benchmark. Spatial planning and construction was permeated by lost and absent spaces, both being important spatiotemporal constructions in the evaluation practices observed over time. Another interesting construction, parallel to absent space, was that of sacrificed compromise, where the rejection of available alternative forms of compromise was also strategically mobilized to express a negative assessment of missed organizational opportunities.

The core of my wider argument is that organizing in general, and space planning in particular, are processes that importantly coordinate by evaluating spaces and present situations on the basis of past occurrences *and nonoccurrences*. By specifically qualifying a selection of past occurrences in terms of sorely missed happy times, or nonoccurrences as sacrifices, narrative reconstructions pragmatically outline either the repetition of happy past moments by re-launching historical spatial assets, or the search for returns on past investments and sunk costs, or, at a minimum, the avoidance of repeating the same sacrifices of the past.

A communication-sensitive focus on what was said to be no longer there, led me to theorize not only starting from narratives that evoked absent (and variously missed) spaces, times and organizational forms, but also, methodologically, starting from an attention about “*what could have been*” done and said differently. What was not articulated in official organizational communication surfaced empirically as a latent organizational discourse, a kind of building site “backstage mood”. The frustration of practitioners seemed to stem from their awareness about alternative solutions at hand for better spatial and organizational design. Their informal everyday communication talked about a failure to retain the many advantageous possibilities at hand. Yet this communication testified for their attempt to rescue a selection of what they left behind.

Grand ideas like space and time, process, compromise and test, representation and performativity, justification and critique, investment and sacrifice, forced me to stand on the shoulders of giants. A continuous reference to a set of organizational scholars, who developed similar gigantic themes, often building on the same giant authors, helps to draw the boundaries of my contributions, identifying precise niches in organization studies. It is perhaps also useful to visualize what this dissertation could have been expected to do, but for particular reasons chose not to (see Table 4).

**TABLE 4. Summary of reference literature, contributions and omissions of this thesis.**

REFERENCE LITERATURE	SPATIAL THEORY	PROCESS PHILOSOPHY	PRAGMATIC SOCIOLOGY
<b>GIANT AUTHORS</b>	Lefebvre, Massey, Bachelard, Ingold	Bergson, Deleuze, Barad, James, Whitehead	Thévenot, Boltanski
<b>THEMES</b>	Space production	Time and performativity	Action coordination
<b>ORGANIZATION SCHOLARS</b>	Burrell, Clegg, Dale, Yanow, Spicer, Beyes, Steyaert, Kornberger DeVaujany, Decker, Schatzki	Cooper, Weick, Langley, Tsoukas, Chia, Hernes, Schatzki, Lorino, Nicolini, Jarzabkowski, Orlikowski, Beyes, Steyaert, Yanow, Reinecke	Follett, Jagd, Stark, Langley, Cloutier, Patriotta, Gond, Nyberg, Wright, Reinecke, Van Bommel, Spicer, Bechky, Okhuysen, Jarzabkowski
<b>KEY CONTRIBUTION OF THIS THESIS</b>	<p><b>Notion of lost space.</b></p> <p>Focus on narratives of organizational space planning. Review and process view of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, integrating his work on temporality and history in literature on organizational space.</p> <p>Spatiotemporal and sociomaterial analyses of the productive and mnemonic force of destruction.</p> <p>Communication strategy of <b>remembering the future.</b></p>	<p>Review of theoretical debates on space and time representation, in empirical dialogue with the performativity of different spatial representations observed in construction management practices.</p> <p><b>Assumptions of space and time as separate containers</b> identify a spatial blind spot in time-driven process organization studies. Communication accent on practical <b>affordances and limitations (performativity) of space representations.</b></p>	<p>Extension of the notion of sacrifice to include compromises, as theorized in the economies of worth (EW) model. Review of organizational literature on EW compromises.</p> <p><b>Methodological focus on what could have been. Notions of absent space, sacrificed compromise.</b></p> <p>Communication mechanism of hypothesizing possible alternatives to <b>fix a faulty past</b> and pragmatically apply justified new visions in future situations.</p>
<b>WHAT THIS THESIS CHOSE NOT TO DO [AND WHY]</b>	<p>Look at how space was used after construction.</p> <p>[A focus on planning and construction deliberately complemented existing literature on the topic of space use (after construction)].</p>	<p>Suggest <i>new</i> definitions and representations of space and time.</p> <p>[A focus on performativity privileged attention on what existing representations and definitions did (or failed to do) in organizational practices.]</p>	<p>Compare the EW with Institutional Logics.</p> <p>[An in depth focus on a theoretical gap internal to the EW aimed at theory-building on organizational coordination within a single conceptual model.]</p>

*Why should leaving behind matter in organization studies?*

Leaving behind identifies the organizational, discursive and material process of selecting for retention some sacrifices (i.e. never realized spaces, materially demolished places, organizational forms, administrative conventions and unchosen compromises), and transforming them from past occurrences or mere possibilities to elements pertinent to the management of medium or long-term present controversial situations in organizational coordination. Narratives of what is left behind allow to produce and retain a selected past, to bring it forward as a token of what should be aimed for or avoided in the future.

What we leave behind matters as it is a generative aspect of organizational communication in its constitution of organization (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). The awareness about missed opportunities, about what is lost, and about what particular representations missed out on, is not universal or self-evident. The controversial nature about what counts, even amongst nonoccurred possibilities, invokes communicative operations that evaluate and, indeed, organize a search of evidence to frame past experience as relevant for the present. I charge this leaving behind with a specific communicative and process organizational significance. The *saliency of absence*, which I have argued for in this dissertation, would scarcely make any sense if communication was not posited as an organizing process, one in which over time many material and social constructs play a role. Evidence on missed opportunities rested on interesting “solid absences”. These possibilities were not only mobilized discursively, but pointed at, seen and touched, plans in hand, as if the actors remarked: “This possibility is not a dream of mine, look at this plan, it took the work of many people to produce it, and in the end nothing came of it”.

What we leave behind communicates and organizes in the sense that it puts in common and relates a selection of unresolved, unachieved or still unexploited past events with present plans that aim at fixing, recuperating or compensating for the still unaccomplished possibilities, narrated as objectives to pursue for the common good.

This thesis addressed the ensemble of what we leave behind in terms of lost spaces, absent spaces, and sacrificed compromises, evaluated and represented through monetary and other moral currencies (e.g. civic democracy of spatial access to public spaces for disabled people). The papers collected here framed missed opportunities as “unduly left-behinds”, in the sense that such a loss, however narrated sometimes as resulting *naturally* as the *necessary* by-product of different production processes or of history, was often experienced and interpreted by actors as a waste of invested resources. Many different narratives argued that this avoidable sunk investment could and *should* be converted into a “return”, in the wider sense of a repetition of known benefits, beyond

financial ones, including the recovery of a place's past glory and identity. In order for this clear framing to emerge, actors communicatively foregrounded such sacrifices as a lack of common good, characterizing past organizational experiences, in an intentional selection, retention and transformation of positive and negative benchmarks into plans to foster or obstruct their reiteration. Action is more easily motivated and justified when it tackles a problem, fills in a void, or produces remedies for recognizable shortcomings. Communication about left behinds links therefore retrospective and prospective sensemaking, creating a void to be filled, an objective to strive towards, and a pragmatic evaluation equipped with solid evidence. Uncertainty is perhaps less worrying if it finds examples from the past that allow actors to coordinate by drawing comparisons, establishing equivalences and outlining history's sense (of direction) (Lefebvre, 1970).

In my ethnography on the justification and critique of historical failures and achievements, an awareness remained about decisive moments in which things could have gone differently, for better or for worse. This dissertation has focused primarily on the former (i.e. the options perceived as better), as organizational coordination was observed to be pragmatically fuelled more by better missed prospects than by luckily avoided risks. An opening for future research in organization studies could account also for all that could have gone differently for the worse, recognizing that in "business as usual patterns", much organizational and managerial efforts go into avoiding, often successfully, harmful scenarios. This everyday work is not theorized as much as the purposeful management and change of already occurred damage (e.g. the testing of the carpark in this study).

Organizational actors coordinated referring to both predominant values, and to significantly losing, lost or temporarily defeated logics, attached to salient critical situations they selected as snags. Defeats and failures assigned a particularly pragmatic aura of "lesson-learned" to values and forms ineffectively deployed to justify particular courses of action. Failed tests offered the opportunity to redesign organizational conventions, framing such changes as the managerial avoidance of a repetition of known mistakes. So what we leave behind matters as an element of organizational learning. The focus of this thesis has taken a different direction, but the process of selecting and retaining left behind elements or possibilities, especially in Paper 3, may interest scholars of organizational learning. We know what to retain and value by learning from what we leave behind.

Multiple evaluation processes enacted an exclusionary "leaving behind" through narrative and visual representations, conventions and compromises, which promoted a relational, processual view of space as an unescapable "enactment of boundaries – that always entails *constitutive exclusions*" (Barad, 2003: 803, emphasis added). I argued, counter-intuitively, that built spaces emerge from a manifold of alternative, mutually exclusive possibilities. Such spatial possibilities

stratify, not inertly, in the “real past”, and even in the just “really imagined” one (i.e. lost and absent spaces respectively, cp. Soja, 1996). Much as a photograph is developed from its negatives, space stratifies and emerges historically out of many “constitutive exclusions” (Barad, 2003: 803; cp. Petani & Mengis, 2013a). To use another metaphor, the process of spatial production I concerned myself with resembles karst phenomena (imagine a cave with stalactites and stalagmites): what is left behind (e.g. what type of rock has dissolved) helps to explain the space (e.g. the stalactite). We shape the process of what spaces we leave behind, and tracing these is relevant for organizational aspects of urban planning, scarcely investigated by process organization studies.

The particular both/and logic embraced in these papers passed through an empirical grounding of what was the case, towards a theoretical, empirically-induced construct of what this being the case had left behind (what other possibilities it prevented). At a minimum, my methodological approach gave an account of a selection of episodes that *importantly* did not happen, or happened because actors perceived the risk, unfairness or inappropriateness of something not occurring (e.g. the adaptation of the theatre for disabled people). This approach could open interdisciplinary agendas on urban space, for organizational studies to research the organizational planning of cities, for urban sociology and urban studies to ground their debates on revealing alternate histories of development, and even for an economic geographical accounting of prevented investments.

I clarified at length that particularly retained hypothetical spaces and what-if scenarios never indicated “all possible alternatives”, foregrounding the actors’ awareness only about particular, selected nonoccurrences of space. I empirically traced and discussed the importance of untaken paths in many plans and representations (e.g. contractual amendments, sketches etc.). My intention was to show that some of these never-built spaces – labelled *absent spaces* here and elsewhere (Petani & Mengis, 2013a, 2013b) – *remain discursively present* in organizing activities, and allow us to grasp dynamics that would otherwise remain obscured, indeed absented. Space planning does not usually account for this organizational resistance of planned space beyond its materiality.

Space is neither completely solid and given, not even once it is constructed, nor is it definitely dealt with after demolition, historical spaces remaining open for critical re-interpretations and malleable to work as mnemonic placeholders, or symbols for identity strongholds. In concise terms, space’s times are not linear or stable, so planning involves managing strategically the dynamic and evolving nature of many pasts. This dissertation does not attempt to establish a solid definition for space. I advocated a processual sensitivity towards how we may think about space and its values in more open ways. This certainly does not imply ignoring the closures or exclusions that space implies, as amply discussed. All spaces come with determinate values, *and not others*, and sacrificed values over time may play interesting roles in how we plan and produce other spaces, aware of past losses.

*Remind me again, what was the question? Two short answers and final remarks.*

In their sensemaking, the actors of this case study did not only retro-fit reality as a logical unfolding of spatiotemporal consequences. They also recognized when they retained the wrong things (values, spaces...etc.) Actors realized when they were getting it wrong, and chose alternative solutions to the problems at hand. The question: “*How can I know what I retain and value until I see what I leave behind?*” therefore found interesting answers in two organizational mechanisms observed in the data:

- 1) By remembering a golden (and lost) historical age, anchoring freely to a convenient past, without necessarily obeying a temporal narrative linearity (i.e. selectively cutting out, or remembering to forget, undesirable stages), actors retain an ideal spatiotemporal *ubi consistam*. Robust points of reference in the past allow actors to exert strategic leverage towards the future. In such prospective scenarios, actors use the springboard of a solid past, so one short answer sounds like: “*I know what I want to retain because I know the valuables I left in the past. As I am still missing them, I want them back.*” Hence, narratives of regaining a space’s (in our case a whole city’s) identity may draw an inspirational force to frame present and future plans as the coherent pursuit of a particular past, ignoring and erasing the other closer pasts which produced the lacking present. This dynamic resembles a relevant “*remembering the future*” in space planning practices.
- 2) Differently from above, actors get to know what they retain and value not only through imagining a better future, “remembering” it from a happier past, but also by imagining or hypothesizing a better possible past, acknowledging and treasuring past mistakes. That is, instead of cutting out the most uncomfortable pasts, another organizational strategy is to select precisely that past to criticize it, taking full blame for whatever went wrong, but re-imagining ways in which it could have gone better. Let us call this *fixing a faulty past*. Such a view is not a mere theoretical exercise of wondering *what if* in a sterile manner. Instead, the pragmatic intent is to fix the present and future by representing or re-engineering a different past scenario that could have avoided the harsh tests and losses incurred along the way, and leading to an unsatisfactory present. The pragmatic speculation about *what could have happened* better aims at applying such knowledge on the present and future. So the corresponding short answer sounds like:

*“I know what I want to retain, thanks to what I know I did wrong in the past. In retaining negative past examples, I can adjust my behavior to avoid repeating the same errors”.*

From the above two short answers, illustrated by the first and third papers respectively, we can conclude that there are different ways of constructing, reconstructing, practically and theoretically,

both the spaces and the times of the past, and the histories and the futures of places. We observed these macro and micro mechanisms respectively, 1) in official, historical urban planning documents, whose stories fished back from the depths of the city's 150 years of history in search for long-missed *lost spaces*, and 2) in everyday, tense debates at the building site, where space battles featured a more project-driven temporal relationality. This implied mostly referring to pertinent past events of the same project, and evidence about failed achievements took the material form of *absent spaces*. Those planned spaces got lost in construction or fell off the map because of what actors perceived to be misrepresentations and misinterpretations that could still be corrected for the rest of the project. I foregrounded how compromising was found to be a crucial managerial skill in this critical comparing of different spatiotemporal situations. While not resisting the justification of the spaces and organizational forms as they unfolded, critique pointed to the sacrifice of alternative organizational and managerial forms (policies, attitudes, conventions, etc.).

This dissertation also engages with the misalignment of the morals of narratives in opposed reconstructions of time and space. Histories of hope clashed against tales of guilt. Rhetorical nostalgia denounced an unfixable past, made of construction speculations that repeated themselves into the present and future, with shameful ghosts of decaying hotels overshadowing an ancient church (and the memory of a theatre). Opposed interpretations symmetrically claimed the public regaining of the former hotel building as a beacon of confidence: reaching out for a continuity with the remote prosperous past of the historical ghosts who had erected the building, its physical preservation was politically waved as a success, even just after the council had sold it to private developers. These wide-angle historical archeologies of urban places and their meanings, gave way to an analysis also of the rage and fury of day-to-day turf battles and fierce confrontations at the building site, where each change re-wrote the spatial story of the new construction. Undesired spatial changes or spaces that failed to change sanctioned the disappearance of planned places, in what we called absent space, but might have as well called the consumption and disposal of space production. The adaptation of representational designs and contract management tools just could not run at the same speed as the rising centre. The finest spatial details initially appeared to be so utterly fixed into a complete plan, that any change appeared unconceivable. The construction process blew away this paperwork representation into a hundred and fifty odd fragile fragments of large and small changes, half of which in turn failed to survive although taking ten times more than scheduled to live or die. The representation of space and time fuelled this discussion, as also the lived, multiple and entangled level of both dimensions, that escape some representations while pervading others.



I have argued that theoretical and practical language, made of technical terms, categories, objective measures and schemes are all but useless in representing the ecology of how the professionals of space coordinate around a fiercely contested and dynamic object of work like the construction of a complex cultural centre. I hope I have driven home a general sense of these actors' admirable capacity to give and take, to revise their views towards a better result. Actors hedged between opposed values, concocted strategic third ways, which sought and found an organizational consistency in remembering past unhappy and happy turns, in order to change this world for the best with a new awareness, and new strategies to retain the best possible space.

A simplification of the important findings of this thesis relates to how organizational actors learn from what has been left behind in the past and how they communicatively reconstruct such insight. At any rate, I observed in their documents and everyday rows a will to recycle the past as a repository of useful mnemonic material. This led to the narrative attempt of reshaping a whole city's identity, in the good omen wishes of a mayor, or in the bold organizational restructuring and temporal redesigning of a whole testing procedure, in the compromising strategies of a construction manager. The two communication processes of "remembering the future" and "fixing a faulty past" are relevant organizational mechanisms, and not only for processual accounts of space.

This thesis concludes by reiterating that the organizational importance of what we leave behind is far from suggesting that nothing gets lost (to the exotical extreme that not even what has not occurred is not really sacrificed). Coordination and left behinds more generally do not unfold by open flows of unstructured eternal returns. Overwhelming evidence to the contrary inspires quite different final critical remarks. The answer to the "So what?" question is that we can decide at least what we *want* to leave behind, and try not to forget, not to accept sacrifices too easily, making them bear on future situations. It is over when we say it is over. We can always choose when and if to drop our battles for better places and organizations. Our struggles will not always prevail, but they will be sure to fail if we chose to forget, or keep our memories of mistakes and losses to ourselves, or fail to denounce the economies of sacrifice lurking behind seedy compromises and justifications. Some of the places and spaces we care and aim for are doomed never to come back or come true, despite our efforts. We have the choice, and run the risk, of forgetting about what we regretfully leave behind. As hard as it can be to remember and talk about the joys and sorrows suffered in or because of those real and imagined places (Soja, 1996), remembering avoids leaving behind some of the hard lessons we learn. The tough sacrifices we endured should count beyond decisive turns, they can be used to resist against or fight for better urban plans and organizations. For lost and absent spaces to stand a chance of making our cities better, I believe that actively remembering these places is not only everyone's right, but a civic obligation towards future generations.

“There are places I remember  
All my life though some have changed  
Some forever, not for better  
Some have gone and some remain”

(The Beatles, 1965)

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