

MT Themes by OD&D MT supervisors

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**Theme: Interorganisational collaboration for sustainable last mile logistics:
Exploring the paradox of value creation and value capture in two living labs**

As part of an ongoing NWO-funded research project “Sustainable Supply Chain Management in Healthcare”, students will investigate how a diverse set of partners coordinate and collaborate around sustainable solutions for last-mile logistics. Beyond finding suitable logistical solutions, such collaboration involves organisational questions around strategizing, rethinking business models, understanding stakeholder perspectives, reconsidering governance structures, and creating momentum for change.

OD&D students will be supervised by Michel van Berkel and Luc van de Sande. These OD&D Master thesis projects (to be developed) will be embedded in the multidisciplinary research project (under chair of HAN University of Applied Sciences) described above. The empirical context offered for developing MT’s consists of two so-called *living labs* that serve as experimental spaces to trial possible solutions.

The first one is a campus hub in Nijmegen, consisting of the RU, RUMC and HAN, that aims to develop a blueprint for cost-efficient, consolidated and emission-free last-mile solutions of goods to the campus. It aims to innovate how goods are moved in a city with implications for physical infrastructure, use of robots and service agreements. The second living lab is in Deventer and is about the combination of last-mile solutions in transport and social services for frail citizens in the neighborhood. It aims to innovate how elderly people living at home are connected to supplies and to each other with implications for how different care institutions and service providers orchestrate their efforts.

Both living labs aim to create sustainable solutions and value for their end-users, while also having to ensure value capture and viable earnings for all stakeholders involved. Hence, this practice-oriented research involves a paradox perspective, particularly focusing on the question how actors balance conflicting yet interconnected aims. Challenges that are currently being researched are: different organizational configurations of a potential campus hub, and opportunities for more sustainable purchasing behavior. However, subjects of master thesis research could also include, but are not limited to scaling up small, experimental initiatives to larger partners and more end-users, balancing the need for care, learning and efficiency, negotiating new contractual agreements, engaging the entire organization in the change effort towards sustainability.

Suggested literature:

- Bos-de Vos, M., Liefink, B. & Lauche, K. (2019) How to claim what is mine: Negotiating professional roles in inter-organizational projects. *Journal of Professions and Organization*. doi: 10.1093/jpo/joy004
- Farjoun, M. (2010). Beyond Dualism: Stability and Change as a Duality. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(2), 202-225. doi:Doi 10.5465/Amr.2010.48463331
- Fiol, C. M. (2002). Capitalizing on paradox: The role of language in transforming organizational identities. *Organization Science*, 13(6), 653-666. doi: 10.1287/orsc.13.6.653.502
- Lauche, K. (2019) Insider activists pursuing an agenda for change: Selling the need for collaboration. In Sydow, J. & Berends, H. (eds.) *Managing Inter-organizational Collaborations – Process Views. Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 64, 119-138. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20190000064009>

- Margolis, J. D., & Walsh, J. P. (2003). Misery loves companies: Rethinking social initiatives by business. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 48(2), 268-305. doi:10.2307/3556659
- Reypens, C., A. Lievens and V. Blazevic, (2016), Leveraging value in multi-stakeholder innovation networks: A process framework for value co-creation and capture, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 56, 40-50.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a Theory of Paradox: A Dynamic Equilibrium Model of Organizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 381-403. doi:Doi 10.5465/Amr.2011.59330958

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Theme: Organizational knowledge and social capital in virtual contexts

It is often said that deep crises in society bring about some kind acceleration of processes which already were present although maybe not that dominant. The COVID-19 pandemic made for profound changes in the way we live and work. Most of these changes might still be temporary (as many seem to hope). However, other changes might be here to stay (in an accelerated way). Especially the role internet technology plays in current ‘new normal’ workplace settings and arrangements, is striking. Who would have thought – less than a year ago – that *tools* such as Zoom, MS Teams or Slack are now the mainstream for everyday work activities, social and professional communication and interaction?

The above-described background raises a multitude of potential questions which pertain to existing discussions in the field of organizational knowledge. More specifically, questions can be raised about the idea of social capital fostering processes of knowledge creation and sharing. What does it mean for those processes if social interaction becomes largely dependent on technology and virtual interaction. What does it mean for concepts such as interpersonal trust, a main factor in social capital theory? Or, what does it mean for existing power structures or gender inequalities? Do such virtual contexts make for different (better?) Communities of Practice than ‘old-fashioned’ groups or collectives?

For your Master Thesis project, you are invited to develop a research proposal along the lines sketched above. Your project can be more theory-oriented or more practice-oriented. The empirical context is not pre-defined, you need to develop one. Analytically, your proposal may either follow a quantitative or qualitative (or maybe mixed-methods) approach.

Suggested literature:

- Baralou, E., & Tsoukas, H. (2015). How is new organizational knowledge created in a virtual context? An ethnographic study. *Organization Studies*, 36(5), 593-620. DOI: 10.1177/0170840614556918
- Bodó, B. (2020, July 4). Mediated trust: A theoretical framework to address the trustworthiness of technological trust mediators. *New Media & Society*, 1-23. DOI: 10.1177/1461444820939922
- Hislop, D., Bosua, R., & Helms, R., (2018). *Knowledge management in organizations: A critical introduction* (4th edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kwon, S., & Adler, P.S. (2014). Social capital: Maturation of a field or research. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(4), 412-422. DOI: 10.5465/amr.2014.0210
- Mayer, R.C., Davis, J.H., & Schoorman, F.D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709-734. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/258792>
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Theme: Gig economy, platforms, sharing economy, multi-level marketing – how do new forms of organizing organize their (ir)responsible behavior?

New forms of organizing rise, such as platform companies (Airbnb, Deliveroo, Uber, Taskrabbit), freelancing and companies mainly working with solo-freelancers (Kforce), franchising (Subway, McDonald's), and multi-level marketing (JuicePlus+, Valentus, Herbalife, Tupperware, IM Academy), often put under the label of the gig economy (Vallas & Schor, 2020; Woodcock & Graham, 2019).

While these new forms of organizing differ in details, platform companies and, as we argue here, other new forms of organizing “represent a distinct type of governance mechanism, different from markets, hierarchies, or networks” (Vallas & Schor, 2020, p. 273). As such, they share common characteristics as well as effects: On the positive side, they have been characterized as money-saving and providing a high level of flexibility for companies and consumers. On the negative side, their way of organizing leads to mainly precarious, underpaid, and patchworked work, increasing societal inequality and dissatisfaction among workers, affecting their families as well as societies (Groß & Vriens, 2019; Kalleberg, 2009; Koutsimpogiorgos, Van Slageren, Herrmann, & Frenken, 2020; Vallas & Schor, 2020; Woodcock & Graham, 2019).

What is less known is how companies that use such new forms of organizing “externalize responsibility and control over economic transactions while still exercising concentrated power” (Vallas & Schor, 2020, p. 273). This lack of knowledge includes the lack of understanding how, in the context of new forms of organizing, conditions can be created that deliver what the Nijmegen School of Management describes in its Mission as “a humane working environment that is economically viable, socially meaningful and sustainable” (NSM, 2021).

In your MA thesis project you will explore one type of company (MLM, platform, freelancing etc.). Your focus will be on the organizational design and how the design influences (positively or negatively) ethical behaviour within and/or by the company (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016; Vriens, Achterbergh, & Gulpers, 2018). With your research you will contribute to the growing literature on these ‘non-standard’ and ‘non-bureaucratic’ forms of organizing, contributing to the Mission of the NSM by researching the “regulatory, incentive and governance mechanisms”; knowledge on these is needed to enable “governments and societal actors to jointly contribute to the general well-being of citizens in a responsible way” (NSM, 2021).

In line with my own expertise, qualitative approaches (interviews, focus groups, documents/social media analysis, participant observation) are the most obvious choice. Students who have a good knowledge base and experience (BA thesis) in quantitative research, are also very welcome.

Non-academic inspiration on multi-level marketing:

- John Oliver's show “Last Week Tonight” from 7 November 2016:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6MwGeOm8iI>

References

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- Woodcock, J., & Graham, M. (2019). The gig economy. *A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.

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Theme 1: Meaningful work and organizational (re)design

Within this theme, the main premises are (1) that the organizational infrastructure may support or frustrate the (experienced) meaningfulness of a job and (2) that people can purposely redesign their work to increase meaningfulness.

In recent years, the topic of meaningful work has gained a lot of attention, mainly from organizational scientists using a positive lens on organizations. Two perspectives dominate the discussion. The first assumes that the meaningfulness of a job is a matter of taste and highly subjective: some people have a calling to work in healthcare, while others have a passion for teaching or for solving organizational issues. If you want a job that is meaningful, you should choose a job that allows you to realise your calling. The second perspective, which is more closely related to the OD&D perspective, assumes that characteristics of the job affect the experienced meaningfulness, for example your ability to solve problems, the opportunities for learning and collaboration at work and stress levels. In this second perspective, researchers want to understand what organizational characteristics can contribute to the experienced meaningfulness of work, what organizational outcomes can be realized by creating meaningful jobs, what the characteristics are of jobs that are experienced as especially meaningful and what activities employees engage in themselves to increase the meaningfulness of their job. From an OD&D perspective, the question how organizational design and redesign (top-down or bottom-up) can increase (or decrease) the experienced meaningfulness of work is relevant.

In your Master Theses, you could explore meaningful work in relation to organizational (re)design. In order to write a thesis on this topic, you will have to decide on:

- The industry (e.g., healthcare, education) and/or job (low status jobs such as cleaning; blue, pink, white or gold collar jobs; jobs with high levels of professional autonomy such as doctors, consultants, scientists) on which you will focus;
- A theoretical perspective on meaningful work (e.g., Baumeister, 1991; Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012);
- A theoretical perspective on organizational structures and (re)design, for example: job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 2010), job crafting (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013), sociotechnical systems theory (De Sitter, 1998).

Literature:

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life*. Guilford Press.

Berg, J. M., Dutton, J. E., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2013). Job crafting and meaningful work. *Purpose and meaning in the workplace*, 81, 104.

De Sitter, L. U. (1998). *Synergetisch produceren*. Uitgeverij Van Gorcum.

Lips-Wiersma, M., & Wright, S. (2012). Measuring the meaning of meaningful work: Development and validation of the Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale (CMWS). *Group & Organization Management*, 37(5), 655-685.

Oldham, G. R., & Hackman, J. R. (2010) Not what it was and not what it will be: The future of job design research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31, 463-479.

Steger, M. F., Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2012). Measuring meaningful work: The work and meaning inventory (WAMI). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20(3), 322-337.

Theme 2: Knowledge processes for online and hybrid education (or in general: knowledge processes in organizations)

I am ambassador for the TLC at Nijmegen School of Management and through research projects I hope to learn more about community development on educational issues at our university.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions had to move their teachings online. The digitalization of education has been an ongoing process for many years and the pandemic sped it up significantly and a lot of knowledge work occurred. Pre-existing networks intensified their efforts to support and expand teachers' knowledge on digital education and to build virtual communities of practice on these topic (e.g., SURF communities). At Radboud University, the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) refocused its efforts from inspiring to supporting teachers and adjusted the focus of its website to digital education. The Teaching Information Points (TIPs) at Radboud University intensified their efforts and expanded their staff in order to deal with an influx of questions from teachers. Tools like Slack, faculty or department wide Brightspace were made available to staff.

Bottom-up initiatives also occurred, including the restart team at the Economics Department which regularly reflects on lessons learned regarding hybrid teaching and the "support team digitization business administration" which aims to help colleagues digitize their teachings and to bring issues in online teaching to the attention of the management team. Simultaneously, individual teachers redesigned their courses to facilitate online learning and implemented self-taught solutions to digitize their teachings and groups of teachers and coordinators working on similar courses or dealing with similar issues (like digital exams) got together, sharing best practices.

All of these initiatives helped to create new knowledge on online teaching and share insights. However, they also expose issues related to knowledge transfer in educational organizations, including the lack of pre-existing, cross-departmental networks; a problematic balance between bridging and bonding social capital; limited use of digital tools to create and sustain communities of practice and to support knowledge processes, a lack of knowledge retention and sharing resulting in re-inventing the wheel, community building which excludes some actors within the university (PhDs, external teachers, students) etc.

In your Master Thesis, you explore such initiatives and developments (at or outside of our university) from a knowledge perspective. Your research may be practice- or theory oriented. What did the knowledge transfer processes regarding online education look like? What lessons can be learned from these processes, what barriers exist? What role did online tools play in knowledge sharing between teachers and across departments? What infrastructure could support the processes of knowledge transfer at our university? In what ways does knowledge retention occur? How are issues of power, in- and exclusion related to knowledge processes on the digitization of education (e.g., are some actors excluded from such processes, how, why and how could that be addressed)? What does participation in online communities on online education look like and how has it changed overtime? **You may decide to focus on another industry than education.**

In order to write your Master Thesis on this topic, you will have to decide: what initiative or development to focus on, which theoretical lens(es) you want to use to study it (e.g., knowledge transfer, (online) communities of practice, in- and exclusion in knowledge processes, IT and knowledge processes, social capital etc.), whether your project will be practice- or theory oriented. If you want to explore knowledge related issue outside of the specific focus on online education, that is also possible.

Literature suggestions

- Alvesson, M. (2014). *Knowledge work and knowledge-intensive firms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blanchard, A. & Horan, T., (2001). Virtual communities and social capital. In E. Lesser (Ed.), *Knowledge and social capital: foundation and applications* (pp.159-178). Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
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- Peñarroja, V., Sánchez, J., Gamero, N., Orengo, V., & Zornoza, A., (2019). The influence of organisational facilitating conditions and technology acceptance factors on the effectiveness of virtual communities of practice. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 38(8), 845-857. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2018.1564070>
- Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of practice and social learning systems: the career of a concept. In C. Blackmore (Ed.), *Social learning systems and communities of practice* (pp.179-198). London, England: Springer. Doi:10.1007/978-1-84996-133-2_11

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Note: If I supervised your BT I will not supervise your MT (This is just to prevent an overdose of 'Lekkerkerk' in your education, so don't take it personal ☺)

Note 2 I only supervise qualitative research projects (or a literature review)

Theme 1: Quality of Work and Organization when implementing 'smart industry 4.0 technology' and other high-tech

Organizational choice refers to the freedom organizations have to make their own choices when developing and/or buying technological systems for their organizational infrastructure. Technological determinism is the competing view, that quality of remaining work after implementing technology can not be influenced.

Additionally, the lesson from ICT and industrial automation projects during the 1980's and '90's is 'first organize, then automate', which can be combined with 'structure follows strategy' (Chandler) to an optimal design order:

strategy > structure > systems

This topic may be the basis for several kinds of projects:

- evaluating a 'less succesful' technology implementation (what design order was used?)
- diagnosing an organizational structure prior to a technology implementation with a big risk of freezing the structure (should we start a structure redesign first?)

Theme 2: Organizing Innovation in 'turbulent orderflow' companies

In turbulent order flows each customer order is unique, and sometimes the result is innovative when the demands are exceeding common practice. Turbulent order flows are found in project-based organizations, knowledge intensive business services, and engineer-to-order (EtO) companies.

Subtheme 2.1 From Engineer-to-Order to Configure-to-Order (EtO > CtO)

Because customers only reluctantly pay the engineering costs in these projects, organizations are looking for ways to reduce this work. One way to do that is to redesign the systems into a modular, scalable design. A bit simplified, engineering work is reduced to choosing the modules needed, and enter a scale-factor in the CAD-system that represents the required capacity. This leads to questions regarding innovation. When you engineered to order, for many customers some innovative solution was needed to meet their specifications. These innovations can then be sold to other customers too. When the change to CtO is made this innovation mechanism doesn't work any longer.

Finding organizations that use CtO now are the research objects, with a question: how do they organize innovation?

Subtheme 2.2 Organizing Innovation in Engineer to Order companies.

As mentioned above, when you engineer to order, for each customer some innovative solution may be needed to meet the specifications. These innovations may later be sold to other customers too. These organizations are in fact mixing their innovation process with their primary process, and may leave innovation to chance, depending on customer requests. What does the innovation structure look like, and how innovative is the company.

Both sub-themes may build on Lekkerkerk's PhD thesis (2012).

Lekkerkerk, L. J. (2012). *Innovatie-en OrganisatieStructuur. Ontwikkeling en test van een functiemodel voor structuuronderzoek en-diagnose*. Nijmegen: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. (free pdf @ Radboud Repository, books still available € 10,=)

Theme 3 Diagnosing/redesigning organization and/or innovation structure

You may come across organizations in need of advice on how to improve their structure, or you may convince an organization that it is very useful to let you do a (preventive) diagnosis of their organizational structure.

To find such an organization, you can look for organizations that published about their efforts to implement self-managing teams, whether successful or not (yet). E.g. Cordaan, an Amsterdam based care organization, ended its self-managing team effort 'on request of their employees'. Finding out why this went wrong from a structure design and change perspective would be interesting (using the 3D-model).

Theme 4 Surprise your supervisor

Do you have an idea for a research that doesn't seem to fit with any of the themes presented by the OD&D-team? Let's talk about it and see whether we can make it work.

Dr. Nora Lohmeyer (nora.lohmeyer@ru.nl)

Theme: Exploring new ways to improve labor standards in global supply chains

Concerns over labor rights violations in global supply chains reach from low wages via excessive overtime to various forms of physical and psychological abuse. Given these concerns, much scholarly attention has been paid to how these conditions could be improved. Most of this work has focused on interventions on the production site (i.e., factories downstream in the supply chains). While this makes sense as it is here that labor rights violations are occurring, more recently scholars have pointed to the fact that many of the causes of labor rights violations are lying in policies and practices of Western lead firms, operating upstream in the supply chain (Locke and Samel, 2018). For instance, lead firms' purchasing practices, especially frequent changes of order volumes and low purchasing prices, are seen as key drivers of poor working conditions in garment factories.

However, making sure that policies and practices in lead firms support labor rights compliance in suppliers is a complex issue. Studies have pointed out issues such as lead firms providing contradicting incentives to suppliers, such as requesting compliance while at the same time increasing orders for non-compliant firms (Amengual et al., 2020) or pressuring suppliers to cut prices (Anner et al., 2013). Others point to intraorganizational tensions between corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments and core business practices such as purchasing as hindering effective implementation of standards (e.g., Locke et al., 2009). Here, extant studies show that CSR managers – who are usually accountable for responsible sourcing policies and practices – have difficulties developing leverage within firms (Wickert and De Bakker, 2018) or remain marginalized (Daudigeos, 2013).

Given these complexities, it is interesting to better understand the intricate relationship between CSR and other departments and managers in lead firms in implementing responsibility into core business practices. Students embarking on this project could conduct research on Dutch firms from various industries that are in the process of revising their core business practices towards becoming more responsible (e.g., introducing responsible purchasing practices). This could involve, inter alia:

- understanding and potentially explaining why CSR and purchasing practices and policies are frequently decoupled,
- unraveling intraorganizational tensions and power dynamics between CSR and purchasing managers to better understand, and potentially overcome, difficulties in the 'responsibilization' of core business practices, or
- digging deeper into processes and mechanisms that CSR managers employ to increase their leverage vis-à-vis other managers or departments,
- analyzing enablers/allies and pushbacks/opponents of CSR manager's efforts from within as well as outside the organization.

References

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- Anner, M., Bair, J., & Blasi, J. (2013). Toward joint liability in global supply chains: Addressing the root causes of labor violations in international subcontracting networks. *Comp. Lab. L. & Pol'y J.*, 35, 1–43.

- Daudigeos, T. (2013). In their profession's service: how staff professionals exert influence in their organization. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(5), 722–749.
- Locke, R. M., & Samel, H. (2018). Beyond the workplace: “Upstream” business practices and labor standards in the global electronics industry. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 53(1), 1–24.
- Locke, R., Amengual, M., & Mangla, A. (2009). Virtue out of necessity? Compliance, commitment, and the improvement of labor conditions in global supply chains. *Politics & Society*, 37(3), 319–351.
- Wickert, C., & De Bakker, F. G. (2018). Pitching for social change: Toward a relational approach to selling and buying social issues. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 4(1), 50–73.

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Theme: Sociotechnical design: structural diagnosis and redesign.

Sociotechnical design thinking has relevance to multiple organizational contexts. In this theme the conceptual foundation of sociotechnical systems design (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010; De Sitter, 2000; Kuipers, Van Amelsvoort & Kramer, 2018) will be central to both diagnosing and redesigning organizations. In a diagnosis, the main aim is to determine to what extent organizational problems can be related to structural conditions. For example, previous MT projects aimed at diagnosing healthcare contexts, technical production facilities and a department within the Air Force. A main aim of such a diagnosis is also to create starting points for developing structural interventions. By means of participative methods such as a 'focus group', sociotechnical concepts can be used to delve into the dynamics and challenges of structural change in organizations.

This theme is suitable for a wide variety of organizational contexts such as healthcare, production organizations, consulting firms, service organizations etc. Although the focus of this theme seems to be on the more practical side of Business Administration, its theoretical foundation opens up many possibilities to formulate theoretical contributions. At the one hand such theoretical contributions may be oriented towards organization science in a more general sense or, on the other hand, relative to the contextual field that is chosen.

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Theme 1: Designing a game for understanding the effects of structural designs

Designing a proper structure for organizations is a difficult task. Sociotechnical design theory gives clues for doing so – but explaining to managers, consultants (and also students) that, why and how sociotechnical structures (which revolve around self-organization) actually work is not without problems. For instance, explaining to managers why low values of some design parameters e.g. functional concentration or separation have a positive effect on the effectiveness of quality of work is not an easy job and takes quite some time. It gets even more complicated if the joint effect of specific values on design parameters should be understood. One way of explaining the effect of sociotechnical structures is by means of a simulation game in which participants experience the effect of a design. By working in a simulated work-environment (in which for instance networks of tasks have high or low values on design parameters) participants can better appreciate the effect of certain structures. Some games are already available, but it remains to be seen if these games are any good.

In this theme we invite students to do their master's thesis about such design-games. In the ideal situation this entails:

- (1) setting up criteria for a proper 'design game';
- (2) evaluating existing games based on these criteria, and
- (3) making and testing a proper design game.

Theme 2: Effective structures and self-managing teams in (elderly) care

Scholarly work has pointed to the benefits of a customer-centred organisational model for care (Loe and Moore, 2012; Verbeek et al., 2009), a 'caring' model increasingly to be found in private, non-for-profit and public care organisations, where a 'homelike' care environment allows residents to live a life closely resembling their previous everyday life (Lopez, 2006). In this new 'caring' model care workers have become physically and emotionally more attached to residents (Vermeerbergen et al., 2020). The worker-customer relationship is a special one. It consists of a mix of worker 'duties' covering both the job and 'moral' responsibilities involved in catering to residents' physical and emotional needs (Verbeek et al., 2009).

Many organisations aim to realise this customer-centred model of care by changing the way how tasks are divided across workers, teams and departments (i.e. their organizational structure). Often self-managing teams and sociotechnical designs are outlined as the summon of organizational design because it potentially facilitates a homelike environment for residents. However, in practice care organisations often fail in realizing a proper structure or in implementing self-managing teams. Therefore they are also not able to realise a homelike environment for residents.

In this master's thesis, the student will use insights from sociotechnical design theory to examine which structures lead to this more 'homelike' model of care and what the implications are for both the residents and the workers. Another important part of this thesis topic is to examine which infrastructural conditions facilitate or hinder an effective sociotechnical structure.

More specifically, we see the following research questions as highly relevant:

1. How would an effective and proper organizational design look like in (elderly) care organisations?
2. What is the impact of the organizational design on workers and patients in care organisations?
3. What are infrastructural conditions (a.o. HRM/Technological/cultural) that lead to a succesfull or a pseudo implementation of sociotechnical designs/self-managing teams?

Data collection can be both qualitative and quantitative. A systematic review of existing studies is also one of the possible research avenues.

This topic is highly relevant for practice. In the last months we have developed close partnerships with 'Kalorama' and 'De Waalboog' (two nursing homes in Nijmegen). As a master student you would be able to participate in the research projects that are being conducted there. You can also bring your own empirical cases.

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Theme 1: Governing hate speech at social and traditional media organizations

The digital transformation has led to the emergence of Internet media platforms of social and traditional media organizations, which - under optimal conditions - can facilitate freedom of speech, public discourse, and active participation in democracy. However, the challenges of such technological developments with regards to threats to individual liberties and societal peace have also become apparent. For example, the often under-regulated or uncontrolled diffusion of Internet hate speech, i.e. norm-transgressing communication that may derogate and defame individuals or targeted social groups, can be regarded as one of these new governance challenges (Rieger, Schmitt, & Frischlich, 2018).

While today hate speech governance is largely left to social and traditional media organizations' discretions (Napoli, 2019), we need to know more about whether and how these organizations actually perform this task and what drives them to do so. More specifically, we need to gain further insights about how organizations address emerging issues that involve conflicting moral values, such as the ideal of free speech on the one hand and the protection of human dignity on the other in the governance of hate speech. Social media organizations, in contrast to traditional media organizations, may find it particularly difficult to manage legitimacy in the context of governing Internet hate speech, data privacy, etc. as they are dependent on generating revenue from accumulated user data; hence, restricting content on their platforms may threaten their business model (Zuboff, 2015).

Students can draw on insights from the strategic issue management (Bansal, 2003), communication-based governance (Dryzek & Pickering, 2017) and legitimacy management (Suchman, 1995) literatures.

Theme 2: Governing social issues in global supply chains

The process of globalization has not only provided ample opportunities for the global exchange of goods and services, but also has contributed to the emergence of massive social and environmental problems of transnational scope. Students building their Master Thesis on this theme shall focus on a prominent social issue, e.g. corruption, poor labor standards or human rights violations, in the global supply chains of multinational companies (MNCs) such as Shell, Philipps, NXP, Siemens, Nike or Volkswagen. A focus on small and medium-sized enterprises with foreign supply chain partners is also possible (Wickert, 2016).

As the power and knowledge of single actors like national governments to address such massive social problems is eroding, scholars and practitioners increasingly expect multinational companies to play an active role in helping solve these problems together with a variety of public and private actors (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). While research has long focused on whether or not MNCs comply with existing regulation, more recent research has acknowledged the limits of a universal compliance approach focused on the MNCs (Schembera & Scherer, 2017), and instead promotes a variety of rules and value based approaches that include the supply chain partners of MNCs, among other actors, and are continuously (re)negotiated to cope with the complex and dynamic context of governing social problems such as corruption (Dryzek & Pickering, 2017). Consequently, students may study questions such as: What is the role of communicative interaction in embedding reflexivity and adaptation in MNCs' (or SME's) global supply chain governance approach? How can MNCs (or: SMEs) ensure sustained motivation and engagement of involved policy makers and adopters?

Both themes seem to be best studied by means of a qualitative empirical approach, although students are also free to follow a quantitative approach.

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Theme 1: Building Communities: a next step in self-organization

Recent developments in healthcare show that more and more healthcare organizations, especially in the care for people with intellectual disabilities, home care and care for the elderly, are working towards building communities (e.g. Adler & Heckscher, 2006; Block, 2018; Kolbjørnsrud, 2018; Staal & Wagenaar, 2019). This means that the boundaries of organizations are blurring, knowledge sharing is becoming easier through technological applications and organizations are looking for connections. This calls for new ways of working together.

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of "new" organizational forms that focus on collaboration, such as holacracy (Robertson, 2015), bazaar (Demil & Lecocq, 2006), meta organizations (Gulati, Puranam & Tushman, 2012) and integrated ecosystems (Mohr & Dessers, 2019). What these organizational forms have in common is that, on the one hand, they focus on the need for greater collaboration and teamwork and, on the other hand, they explicitly name the dangers of losing employee loyalty and commitment (Kolbjørnsrud, 2018). The rise of the phenomenon of 'community' seems to be becoming increasingly important in this respect (Vermeulen & Liese-Happel, 2021).

In this project there are two main issues to be explored. First, an exploration of the community as an organisational form. An organizational form that, in physical or virtual form, produces goods and services. But this new form of organisation also requires a different infrastructure: focused on fluid, informal boundaries on the basis of membership, where voluntary work may be involved, and information and knowledge sharing are an important output. Second, since communities require a different way of working this can have consequences for competencies of employees and the behaviour of employees.

The focus on communities as an organizational form is still in its early stages. This calls for an exploratory approach (with all uncertainties attached to it). Both conceptual and empirical studies are possible in this topic.

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Theme 2: Organization design in municipalities

In response to challenges of increasingly complex local services, increasing participation in dynamic networks, and a general drive towards efficiency, in the past decades, Dutch municipalities have reconsidered the design of their municipal organization. In current literature on design theory, two approaches can be found that both claim to support the design of effective and efficient organization structures: (1) the *economies of flow approach* and (2) the *economies of scale approach*.

Both approaches have similar *goals* as they both claim to contribute to effective and efficient performance of organizations. However, each approach starts from different *design principles* that lead to opposing ideal typical *structural configurations*. Given their goals, design principles and resulting configurations, the two approaches are *competing* approaches: by means of their design principles, they construct *different* causal relations between the design of an organization (independent variable) and organizational performance (dependent variable).

In the *economies of flow approach* (e.g. Lean (Womack & Jones 2003), Agile (Rigby et al. 2018), Modern Sociotechnical Design (De Sitter 1998), organizational *performance* is defined in terms of: (1) the organizations capacity to realize and adapt its societal contribution in a flow- or output efficient way, (2) quality of work, and (3) quality of working relations. Its *design principle* is to minimize the probability of disturbances caused by the organizational structure and optimize possibilities to deal with remaining disturbances.

In the *economies of scale approach* (e.g. theory of the Multidimensional Organization (Galbraith, 1973; Strikwerda 2010), Shared Service Centre Theory (Janssen & Joha 2006), organizational *performance* is defined in terms of: (1) effectiveness and quality, (2) resource efficiency, i.e. efficiency per activity of human or machine resources, (3) opportunities for learning. Its *design principle* is to structure organizations in a way that minimizes costs per activity of human or machine resources (resource efficiency).

In practice, we can now observe a broad array of distinct municipal organization designs in which economies of flow and economies of scale approaches can be discerned: Some municipal organizations introduced flow-like structures. Others started to outsource activities or concentrated them in shared service centers. Yet others introduced mixed designs based on both approaches. However, this strategic reorientation of the design of municipal organizations has not yet attracted systematic scientific attention in either local government studies or business administration studies. The proposed research aims to fill this gap by providing empirical insight in the design of municipalities and their capacity to realize and adapt their strategic goals. By means of qualitative research, a diagnosis of the organizational infrastructure will be empirically conducted. The results of the project are expected to contribute to the quality of the design of municipal organization, which is of utmost importance as municipal organizations have a vital impact on the quality of life in Dutch society.

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My current research focuses primarily on the diffusion, adoption and implementation of management ideas and practices (e.g. Lean, Scrum, Agile, Big Data, Value-Based Healthcare, New Ways of Working etc. etc.) with a special interest in studying the role of professions and occupations, management consultancies, management gurus, and the business media. You can find my prior research on these topics (and suggestions for future research!) in journals such as *British Journal of Management*, *Human Relations*, *Information & Management*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Management Learning*, and *Organization Studies* as well as in books published by Oxford University Press and Cambridge University press.

Core theme - The diffusion, translation and implementation of management concepts:

- How are management concepts produced, commodified and legitimated?
- How do management concepts diffuse in a business community and how does their prevalence evolve over time?
- How are management concepts implemented and how do they impact management and organizational practice?

Examples of recently supervised theses (at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

- The role of crises in the implementation of management concepts – role of the COVID-19 crisis in the implementation of VBH in Dutch Hospitals
- Identity work and the translation of managerial ideas: Agile coaches working in bank firms
- # Agile: The Dissemination of a Management Fashion via Social Media
- Role variation in the implementation process of new management ideas: A line manager's perspective

Relevant references:

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Theme: The ‘Benefit Corporation’ as governance mechanism for change in the corporate world?

In response to societal developments, firms are increasingly turning to sustainability-oriented organizational change and (re-)designs (Schaltegger et al., 2016; Soderstrom & Weber, 2020). And for governing these transitions, many firms have recently engaged with external standards and certification systems, which can bring valuable contacts, expertise, guidelines, and legitimacy (Smits et al., 2020; Boiral, 2007; Moroz & Gamble, 2021).

One of these is the ‘Benefit corporation’ certification system, which is currently getting traction (Kirst et al., 2021). Certified benefit corporations (B Corps) are firms that are committed, beyond profit, to leveraging positive environmental and social impact. The driving force behind this so-called ‘B movement’ is B Lab, a nonprofit organization that promotes stakeholder capitalism instead of shareholder capitalism. B Lab administers the certification system relying on a firm’s verified BIA performance that assesses a firm’s sustainability impact (see also <https://bcorporation.eu/>).

While the B movement has grown and there are now almost 4,000 certified firms from 74 countries, – including about 75 firms in the Netherlands, like Tony’s Chocolonely, Dopper, and Triodos Bank – the vast majority of these firms are smaller, private firms (Kirst et al., 2021). The uptake of the certification system by multinational corporations that are listed at the stock exchange has been very limited. Arguably an underlying reason for this is a lesser fit between these firms and the certification system: stock-listed firms are owned by shareholders and therefore have orientations and ideologies that are further removed from the B Lab ideal than most private firms (Wickert et al., 2019). At the same time, shareholders too have become more sensitive to sustainability arguments over time (Ioannou & Serafeim, 2015).

One of the ways in which the B movement and stock-listed firms cross paths, is when a stock-listed firm acquires a B Corp. *The main aim of this project is to investigate under which conditions the acquisition of a B Corp by a stock-listed firm leads to a further implementation of the Benefit corporation certification systems and embedding the associated practices in the organizational structure, and therefore further engagement with the B movement, in this firm over time.* The outcome of a study like this can, among others, inform movements and certification systems when they wish to increase impact. The specific theoretical perspective is still open, but the method in this project will most likely include a comparison between polar cases (Eisenhardt, 2021), based on several archival data sources, combined with qualitative interviews.

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