MT Themes by OD&D MT supervisors
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Theme 1: Working time regimes
Extra-long working hours, constant availability, as well as a poorly predictable, high-paced workflows have become a salient phenomenon in many firms. The most prevalent examples of such working time regimes are found in professional service firms like consulting agencies. We already know a lot about the negative effects of such working time regimes for work-life balance, health and organizational outcomes. What we do not know, however, is how to best change them and why they are often so persistent once they have become an integral part of everyday organizational life. With respect to these questions, master-theses are invited that analyze an empirical case example in order to explore, for example:

- the practices that lead to the emergence and/or persistence of (detrimental) working time regimes;
- the role of the organization’s design in the emergence and/or persistence of (detrimental) working time regimes;
- the implementation and effectiveness of interventions.

Literature:

Theme 2: New forms of organizing
The rapid diffusion of new organizational forms – like holacratic organizations, multi-sided platforms, agile organizations, open organizations, etc – have significantly altered the practice of organizational design. Design has changed from a one-off, top-down task where top management comes up with a design in a major effort once every couple of years, into a distributed process that engages all employees in the continuous re-creation of the design once every month, sometimes even once a week. And while this new approach to organization design holds the promise of increasing both adaptiveness and efficiency of organizations, it is still only poorly understood and implementation efforts often fail. In this regard master-theses are invited that examine empirically organizational design practices in an organization that already uses or is trying to implement this new design approach. Research questions could, for instance, focus on

- the role of IT in design practices (e.g. how is Glassfrog, Asana, etc used in the design process)
- the resistance that is often met when implementing this new design approach in established organizations

Literature:
Dr. Jan Achterbergh (j.achterbergh@fm.ru.nl; EOS00.231)

Theme 1: Innovations in healthcare
Healthcare organizations in the Netherlands are changing rapidly. Some of these changes are structure-related. Theme 1 is about these changes applied to:
- Networks of healthcare organizations;
- Individual healthcare organizations.
Related questions are:
- Goals of change;
- Types of change;
- Types of change management;
- Innovative character of the goals and types of change and the types of change management.

Theme 2: Intervention methods
Episodic interventions in organizational structures can be supported by different kinds of methods that may have effects on realizing goals on the functional and/or social dimension of an episodic intervention. Theme 2 is about these methods. Related questions are:
- What intervention methods are used for the purpose of redesigning organizational structures?
- How are these methods related to functional and/or social goals?
- Are the most important functional and social goals covered by these methods?
Theme 1: A new approach to public professional accountability – How to design a conditional approach for the health sector?

In the past decades profession(al)s have increasingly been called to account. Several authors have reported that this increased public professional accountability, in the form of showing that professional conduct meets predefined standards or rules, has had severe negative consequences for professionals, their clients and society. Thus, they call for ‘intelligent’ forms of accountability; forms of accountability that may inform a wider public about professional conduct but do not harm it.

Vriens, Vosselman and Groß (2016) propose a form of ‘intelligent’ public professional accountability, fitting the criteria as set by O’Neill (2014). Taking Freidson’s (2001) notion of institutional ethics as a point of departure, they develop a form of accountability that seeks to account for the (goal and infrastructure related) conditions required for professional conduct.

In your master thesis you are invited to explore how this new form of accountability might take shape in the health sector: How can a conditional approach help to understand the current problems in the (mental) health care sector? And how can an accountability system be designed that informs the wider public, creates trust into professionals and takes into account the conditions under which professionals have to work?

As this research is pioneering work, a qualitative research approach seems the obvious choice.

The MA theses will be supervised by Dr. Dirk Vriens and Dr. Claudia Gross together.

Literature:
Drs. Liesbeth Gulpers (l.gulpers@fm.ru.nl; EOS03.756)

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 individual: some people enjoy working in healthcare, while others have a passion for teaching or for solving organizational issues. If you want a job that is meaningful, you should chose 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, service industry, education) and/or job (low profile jobs such as cleaning or 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);
- 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:
Theme 2: Infrastructures supporting (im)moral behavior
What makes people behave (un)ethically in organizations? Main premise: the organizational infrastructure may support or frustrate moral decision making.

Research on ethics in and of organizations focuses on three ‘levels’ of business ethics: the individual, the organizational and the societal. At an individual level, business ethics is concerned with moral decision making by organizational members. It looks at the process of moral decision making and at individual, situational and organizational factors that influence this process. At the organizational level, business ethics is about the responsibility of organizations to further moral behaviour of its employees as well as moral behaviour of organizations as moral actors. The societal level of business ethics is about the responsibility of organizations towards society (CSR), external stakeholders and the influence of society on businesses through laws and ethical standards. These levels interact, and a full theory of business ethics would include all levels.

Business ethics (at all levels) can be normative, i.e., formulating moral standards that individual and organizations should adhere to or focusing on the moral responsibility of individuals, organizations and society. It can also be descriptive. For example, drawing on insights from moral psychology, organizational theory and organizational behaviour, factors that may impact or explain moral behaviour of and in businesses are analysed. Several authors have suggested that these normative and descriptive approaches have to be integrated (e.g., Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe 2008).

Tenbrunsel, Smith-Crowe, & Umphress (2003) introduced the concept of “ethical infrastructures”: the organizational elements that contribute to its ethical effectiveness. This ethical infrastructure consists of the collection of formal and informal organizational systems (such a reward systems, leadership programmes, ethical officers, codes of conduct, ethics training and the use of communication technology) as well as the organization’s ethical climate. The underlying assumption is that various aspects of an organization can – and should – be designed to support moral decision making and to encourage organizational moral behaviour. Research in this field raises several issues.

First, most of the research on moral decision making concerns preventing immoral behaviour rather than encouraging responsible or exemplary behaviour (cf: Zimbardo, 2007). Put differently, it has a negative focus. Recently, a new approach to studying ethics in organizations has surfaced: ‘positive business ethics’ (Sonenshein 2005; Stansbury & Sonenshein 2012). This field of study attempts to explain and encourage exemplary moral conduct in organizations. It appears that the dynamics of encouraging morally right behaviour differ from the dynamics of preventing immoral behaviour. Does the current literature help us to design infrastructures that promote moral responsible behaviour? What methodologies could help us gain insight in organizational processes that encourage moral behaviour?

Second, research on moral decision making has found numerous factors that may influence the various steps of the decision making process and empirical accounts of the nature and direction of this influence differ (Kish-Gephart et al. 2010; Treviño et al. 2006). It is unclear which organizational measures have what impact and under what circumstances. For example, the effect of reward systems on moral behaviour is ambivalent. A reward system can have various
unintended, unethical consequences and its precise outcomes cannot be determined in advance (Jansen & Von Glinow, 1985). What reward systems should organizations employ?

A third, more OD&D specific issue is that few scholars have looked at the design of tasks and how this relates to moral decision making (Ford & Richardson 1994; Treviño et al. 2006). Put differently: there is little research on how moral behaviour can be embedded in everyday tasks and responsibilities (Weaver et al. 1999; Weaver 2006). However, several studies indicate that how tasks are designed and coupled have an important effect on the possibilities for ethical conduct (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2009; Vriens, Achterbergh & Gulpers, 2018; Browning, 1992). Small-scale tasks, extensive hierarchies, ambiguous divisions of responsibility are likely to contribute to lowered feelings of moral responsibility, lowered moral awareness and may result in unethical behaviour.

Thus, the topic of infrastructures supporting moral behaviour raises several interesting avenues for thesis projects, for example:

- What organizational practices are related to ethics in organizations? What makes these practices (e.g., whistleblowing) more or less effective? What causes politicians or government officials to lose their integrity? What are practices that are especially suitable in one field (e.g. nursery)?
- What is the effect of organizational measures (related to organizational structure, HRM or technology) on moral behaviour, what are their relevance, applicability and side-effects. Which are consequences of implementing such measures to encourage moral behaviour in specific industries or organizations?
- How do organizations design, implement and evaluate programmes to further ethical behaviour? What measures, instruments, approaches do organizations use?
- What is the role of individual, organizational and societal norms and values in the behaviour of, for example, managers? Do they experience conflicts and how do they deal with them?
- Which organizational structures are destructive to moral agency and which structures are supportive, and why? What are the implications for the design of organizations?

In order to write a thesis on this topic, you will have to decide on:

- A specific type of moral problems (e.g., pertaining to the financial sector or in dealing with clients);
- A theoretical perspective on ethics, e.g., virtue ethics, deontology, consequentialism and/or a theoretical perspective on organizational ethics: compliance or integrity approach;
- A particular part of the organizational infrastructure (e.g., structure);
- A research goal and methodology (e.g., diagnosis, theory-testing, theory-building);
- The industry and/or job on which you will focus.

Literature:


Dr. Ir. Hans Lekkerkerk (h.lekkerkerk@fm.ru.nl; EOS03.564)

Theme 1: Organizing Innovation in ‘turbulent orderflow’ companies

In turbulent order flows each customer order is unique. These order flows are, for instance, found in project-based organizations, knowledge intensive business services, and engineer to order companies. Organizing innovation in these contexts likely requires modularization to decrease innovation costs and mixing the innovation process with the primary process. This theme invites master theses that look into innovation in these contexts. Students will diagnose an organization and a joint student/supervisor effort is envisioned to find organizations. Studies may build on Lekkerkerk’s PhD thesis (2012).

Literature:
Dr. Armand Smits (a.smits@fm.ru.nl; EOS03.563)

Theme 1: Diffusion and implementation of new management models and practices - an institutional perspective

In their continuing quest for ‘improvement’, ‘efficiency’, and ‘meaning’ organizations often look outside organizational boundaries and turn to the latest management models and practices that are developed and diffused by the ‘management knowledge community’ (Smits & Heusinkveld, 2017; Abrahamson, 1996), which includes actors like business schools, consultants, standard setting organizations, and (potential) users (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001). Besides technical benefits like ‘efficiency’, implementing new and progressive models and practices can also contribute to an organization’s reputation of being ‘up to date’ (Nijholt, Bezemer, & Reinmoeller, 2016). Management models and practices often promise increased performance, cannot be used ‘off the shelf’ but have to be interpreted and contextualized, and come with catchy names and labels. They can range from rather specific notions like Lean Production (Benders, 1999) to broader movements like the Circular Economy (Ghisellini, Cialani, & Ulgiati, 2016) in the field of CSR.

This theme will focus on the (organizational) change that is related to management models and practices diffusion and implementation. In so doing it draws on an institutional perspective, where an ‘institution’ is a social structure that has received a high degree of resilience (Scott, 1995). It regards new management models and practices as ‘proto-institutions’: models and practices that transcend a particular collaborative relationship and may become new institutions over time (Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002). This theme will specifically focus on the agency and institutional work (Hampel, Lawrence, & Tracey, 2017; Lieftink, Smits, & Lauche, 2018) that is (or is not) executed to further institutionalize new management models and practices. This institutional work can be subdivided into ‘symbolic work’ that uses symbols, including signs, identities, and language; ‘material work’ which draws on the physical elements of the institutional environment; and ‘relational work’ which concerns interactions with others to advance institutional ends.

In individual Master Theses students could explore this institutional work at one of the two following levels:

Micro-institutional work that goes on at the level of the micro-institutional context of established organizations (e.g. Van Dijk et al., 2011; Smits & Heusinkveld, 2017): Introducing new management models and practices in organizations may require significant organizational change in the organizational infrastructure and/or social practices and this may cause resistance. What is the institutional work that is used by change agents within organizations to achieve more acceptance and legitimacy for a new models/practice and the associated re-designs of organizations? For instance how do change agents try to influence medical specialists to support Lean implementation in their hospital?

Macro-institutional work that goes on at the level of the macro-institutional context of the ‘management knowledge community’ (e.g. David & Strang, 2006; Lieftink, Smits, & Lauche, 2018): What is the institutional work that members of this community, like consultants, use to achieve more acceptance for new models/practices? For instance, how do consultants, more
generally, try to influence the acceptance of Lean Production adoption by new target groups like financial service organizations?

Literature:
Theme 1: Challenges of interoperability in health care settings: implications for organizational change and design.

Health care providers such as hospitals, GPs, but also related parties such as laboratories, care homes or therapists nowadays more than ever have to collaborate to provide the best possible care in an efficient way. In order for these collaborations to succeed, information exchange (e.g. patient data) is crucial (Nictiz, n.d.). These collaborations require attunement on different levels between organizations: on the level of strategic decisions, between health care processes, regarding the structure and content of information, how applications should be connected and regarding ICT infrastructures (ibid). For example, the strategic decision of a hospital board to collaborate with satellite labs often turns out not to be simply a matter of adopting one standard information system by which information is exchanged. ICT literature refers to this phenomenon as the lack of interoperability. “Interoperability is the ability of different information and communications technology systems and software applications to communicate, to exchange data accurately, effectively, and consistently, and to use the information that has been exchanged” (Iroju et al., 2013, p. 263). For example, patient information from a referred patient from one hospital is manually added to another hospitals’ data base, because different software applications cannot be aligned due to different licenses that hospitals have. In this theme the topic interoperability is approached from both an organizational change (part 1) and an organization design perspective (part 2).

Part 1
Although interoperability is a topic much debated in ICT literature, less is known about the organizational and managerial aspects that are related to lack of interoperability. When organizations decide to collaborate, their work practices have to be aligned. In the process of tying routines together, (temporary) workarounds are created to deal with unexpected setbacks when setting up collaborative practices. This requires alignment of strategic decisions regarding collaborations with organizational and healthcare processes all the way down to operational ICT decisions. Research questions from a change perspective in this context that might be interesting to investigate are:

- How is alignment between organizations’ routines negotiated to establish interoperability among different actors? (interorganizational decision making, strategic level)

- How are intra-organizational alignment of routines (e.g., between ICT and healthcare processes) established to improve interoperability? (tactical level change management processes)

- How do Chief Medical Information Officers (CMIOs) span boundaries between different knowledge areas and work practices?

- How do ICT workers decide when to fix a temporary workaround as a routine? (which criteria do they use, how is decision making supported, how do they deal with resistance and setbacks regarding what cannot be fixed with ICT?)
Part 2
For part 2 see dr. Matthijs Moorkamp’s topic description.

Theme 2: ‘Spreadsheet fundamentalists’ versus professionals? Controlling professional practices by accounting for time and quality

Management in organizations have long been focused on time, especially how to effectively use time, with ‘faster’ being a synonym nowadays for ‘cheaper’ or more efficient work practices (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). Time can be regarded in many different ways, be it as an objective standard time orientation in which time is represented as linear and sequential and which is regarded as independent from man (Zerubavel, 1976) or a more subjective perspective on time, depending on how people experience the passing of events. This so called ‘event time’, in contrast, is conceived as “qualitative time—heterogeneous, discontinuous, and inequivalent when different time periods are compared” (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; p. 689). In this view, time is in the events, and these events are both created by people and – at the same time – structures time. This distinction between objective and subjective (event) time, also described in Greek mythology as ‘Chronos’ (God of time) and ‘Kairos’ (God of ‘the right/experienced moment’) (Hermsen, 2009) which reflects the same underlying objective-subjective dichotomy. Other scholars (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Evans, Kunda & Barley, 2004) suggest that only focusing on either objective or subjective perspectives of time fails to make us understand how temporal structures emerge from and are embedded in ongoing work practices in organizations and how such temporal structures shape those practices.

Professionals nowadays more and more have to account for how they spend their time, for example the management consultant who has to report what (s)he did during a day and which hours are billable (Karreman & Alvesson, 2009). However, time schedules and control mechanisms relying on calculable (objective) time are used as well and shape professionals’ practices. For example, the general practitioner who can only spend ten minutes on a patient: if the patient has more (non-related) complaints, an additional (often sequential) slot needs to be booked in order to be able to account for the doctor’s practices to insurance companies. Or think of academics who – for their teaching practices – ‘receive’ a certain amount of hours per course and per activity within that course, in order for management to distribute time (costs), but which is often perceived to be ill related to the actual time needed to perform such a task. Often, this balancing between management control mechanisms captured in time schedules, time tables, rosters and spreadsheets on the one hand, and performative professional practices on the other (you could say ‘matching objective with subjective time) creates stress for employees. This might
also affect how they conduct their work. Not only do time schedules prescribe within what time frame professionals have to conduct their work, guidelines or protocols are used as well as they promise great improvement in the quality and cost of whatever professional service is offered (Woolf et al., 1999 in Adler & Kwon, 2013) which supports the growing pressures of hierarchical accountability (Muzio, Ackroyd & Chanlat, 2008). But the question remains whether and how these protocols and guidelines affect professionals’ practices in micro-contexts, and vice versa. What is actually done by professionals in practice often deviates from strong evidence-based guidelines (Adler & Kwon, 2013; McGivern & Dopson, 2010) and even varies while being diffused (Ansari, Fiss & Zajac, 2010). Some studies even indicated that field-level policies may produce mechanisms which frustrate the adoption of guidelines on practice-level (Swan et al., 2010). The central themes for theses on this topic evolve around how guidelines and protocols are perceived by professionals, how they are diffused, applied or ignored by practitioners, or how they (can) support, disrupt or align with professionals’ practices.

Suggested literature for theme 2:
- All authors mentioned in the text above.
Theme 1: ‘Fluid’ organizational forms and operational challenges: a network and temporary organization perspective

Fluid organizational forms, such as temporary organizations and network organizations are often depicted as having highly adaptable and dynamic properties (e.g., Kenis & Cambré, 2009; Miles & Snow, 1992). As Schreyögg and Sydow (2010) remark, notions of ‘structure’ are often seen as conflicting with the very nature of the concept ‘fluid organization’ itself. They stress however, that fluid organizational forms cannot exist without any form of structure. Based on insights developed by Luhmann, Schreyögg and Sydow argue that, at a more abstract level, any system is characterized by some structural characteristics because without this property the system would be as complex as its environment, which would mean that the organization as such would dissolve and cease to exist. Furthermore, by means of Giddens’ structuration theory, which points to the duality of human agency and structural system characteristics, Schreyögg and Sydow emphasize that understanding and studying fluid organizational forms cannot go without acknowledging the interplay between system structure and self-organizing operational action into account.

In this theme, the intertwined relationship between ‘structure’ and operational outcomes is explored in two organizational contexts: network organizations and temporary organizations.

1. Network organizations and structure: more and more the notion of ‘network organization’ is regarded as relevant, both at the inter and intra-organizational level. For example, at the one hand, Sydow and Windeler (1998) explicitly theorize on the relationships between structural characteristics and effects at the inter organizational level. Kuipers et al. (2018), on the other hand, focus on the intra-firm level and theorize on the possibilities to change structural forms in such a way that transforms existing bureaucracies to network organizations.

2. Temporary organizations are related but not entirely similar as the topic of network organizations (see also: Moorkamp, 2018). Modig (2007) has developed a typology for temporary organizations and highlights that temporary organizational forms are used in many different industries. For example, she highlights the military context, event management and film production. Also, temporary organizational forms are used in contexts such as construction and crisis management. Insight into the influence of structural design characteristics on the operations of temporary organizations is however, underdeveloped (see: Miterev, 2017).

Literature:


**Theme 2 (together with dr. Berber Pas): Challenges of interoperability in health care settings: implications for organizational change and design.**

Health care providers such as hospitals, GPs, but also related parties such as laboratories, care homes or therapists nowadays more than ever have to collaborate to provide the best possible care in an efficient way. In order for these collaborations to succeed, information exchange (e.g. patient data) is crucial (Nictiz, n.d.). These collaborations require attunement on different levels between organizations: on the level of strategic decisions, between health care processes, regarding the structure and content of information, how applications should be connected and regarding ICT infrastructures (ibid). For example, the strategic decision of a hospital board to collaborate with satellite labs often turns out not to be simply a matter of adopting one standard information system by which information is exchanged. ICT literature refers to this phenomenon as the lack of interoperability. “Interoperability is the ability of different information and communications technology systems and software applications to communicate, to exchange data accurately, effectively, and consistently, and to use the information that has been exchanged” (Iroju et al., 2013, p. 263). For example, patient information from a referred patient from one hospital is manually added to another hospitals’ data base, because different software applications cannot be aligned due to different licenses that hospitals have. In this theme the topic interoperability is approached from both an organizational change (part 1) and an organization design perspective (part 2).

**Part 1 (Berber)**

Although interoperability is a topic much debated in ICT literature, less is known about the organizational and managerial aspects that are related to lack of interoperability. When organizations decide to collaborate, their work practices have to be aligned. In the process of tying routines together, (temporary) workarounds are created to deal with unexpected setbacks when setting up collaborative practices. Aligning strategic decisions regarding collaborations with organizational and healthcare processes all the way down to operational ICT alignment decisions. Research questions from a change perspective in this context that might be interesting to investigate are:

- How is alignment between organizations’ routines to establish interoperability negotiated among different actors? (interorganizational decision making, strategic level)

- How are intra-organizational alignment of routines (e.g., between ICT and healthcare processes) established to improve interoperability? (tactical level change management processes)

- How do Chief Medical Information Officers (CMIOs) span boundaries between different knowledge areas and work practices?
- How do ICT workers decide when to fix a temporary workaround as a routine? (which criteria do they use, how is decision making supported, how do they deal with resistance and setbacks regarding what cannot be fixed with ICT?)

Part 2 (Matthijs)

Next to an organizational change perspective, this theme is approached from an organization design perspective. Interoperability and its issues are quite often related to (internal) organizational complexity (e.g., Bouamrane, Tao & Sarkar, 2015). From an organization design perspective, internal organizational complexity is often associated with characteristics of division of labor, captured by the organizational structure concept (De Sitter, 1998; Kuipers et al., 2018). Research also shows that many healthcare organizations seem to be confronted with substantial structural design problems, that – amongst other things – challenge controllability of costs (see: Christensen, Grossman & Hwang, 2009). This theme therefore also aims to explore the influence of structural design characteristics on 1) the type and amount of interoperability issues and 2) ways in which medical staff can deal with such issues. Furthermore, next to a more explanatory and diagnostic perspective, this theme challenges master students to develop design related interventions. More in particular, it is argued that sociotechnical insights may be of added value to dealing with the issues and challenges associated with the concept of interoperability. Possible research questions that tap into a design related perspective on interoperability may look like this:

1. How do structural design characteristics influence the type and amount of interoperability issues.

2. How do structural design characteristics influence the way medical staff can deal with challenges of interoperability?

3. How can a structural design intervention contribute to tackling challenges of interoperability?

Literature for part 2:
Dr. Raphael Smals (raphael@rsmals.nl)

Theme 1: Designing cultural organizations of the future

 Organizations often have to respond to multiple institutional demands and different external stakeholders. This plurality in the institutional context manifests itself in challenges to align internal organizational design elements. An emerging perspective on the prevalence and implications of incorporating multiple institutional demands in organizations heavily draws on the concept of institutional logics, defined as a socially constructed set of materials, practices, assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape cognition and behavior (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012). Currently we have only little knowledge on how organizational design elements that are rooted in different institutional logics are productively combined in organizational configurations (Basharov and Smith, 2014). This will be the focus of this thesis project.

Empirically, this project is situated in the cultural sector (e.g. museum, orchestra, theaters). Cultural organizations provide a suitable context for this thesis project because these organizations are often hybrid organizations in the sense that they are confronted with multiple institutional logics and none of them clearly dominating. Specifically after the reduction of government spending from 2011 onwards. Generally, cultural organizations have to reconcile a professional/state logic with a market logic to attract funds and remain viable. In short, the professional/state logic refers to cultural preservation and education and broad societal access, reflected in values such as discovery and the intrinsic worth of cultural resources, and quality assessment by peers; market logic refers to efficiency, economic value, customer orientation, competition and performance measurement.

Generally, there are different perspectives on the reconciliation of different logics in organizations, like the integration or differentiation of logics within and between organizational members, structures, routines, identities, and business models (Basharov and Smith, 2012; Ocasio and Radoynovska (2016). The aim the thesis project is assess how the integration and/or differentiation of logics in individual organizational elements work together in organizational configurations and assess the effects of these configurations.

Literature
Theme 1: organizational design of entrepreneurial opportunity identification

In recent years entrepreneurship has gotten plenty of attention as the key engine for innovation and economic growth. At its simplified core, entrepreneurship simply consists of two stages or two main activities.

In the first stage the proverbial “gap in the market” must be identified (opportunity recognition/discovery/identification) while the second stage is all about scraping together the necessary resources in order to start up the exploitation of this newly discovered business opportunity (opportunity realization). In this theme we will skip the discussion when and how a start-up becomes a “regular business”, instead we will focus primarily on the first stage; identifying new business opportunities. This core concept, new business opportunities, may be described in many ways, however for our purpose, the definition would be something along the following broad strokes; an idea for a product or service that solves a problem in the sense that it fulfils a specific market need that is still not addressed by any other product and/or service, and which is based on specific and unique core knowledge of an individual or organization. In the common taxonomy of innovation, a new business opportunity would be labeled as a radical disruptive innovation rather than an incremental innovation.

In entrepreneurship research two perspectives on opportunity identification have emerged. In this theme we want to slightly depart from the dominant and classic perspective of the hero-like individualistic entrepreneur who discovers in a flash of ingenuity latent business opportunities which exist in the external environment. Instead, we wish to explore also in depth the more recently developed perspective in which the identification of new business opportunities is seen as a long term process of development rather than a eureka like moment of recognition. In this process it is not the single individual who takes center stage but rather a collective of individuals who in continuous changing combinations and roles collaborate to develop an opportunity. On a more abstract and philosophical level, opportunities in the first perspective are simply “out there” in the market place, waiting to be discovered by an entrepreneur who is in a perpetual state of searching. A such the only measure of control in identifying opportunities is to search as broad as possible. In the second perspective however, instead of discovering this existing latent opportunities, opportunities are created in an iterative process over which, despite its sluggishness, there seems to be a sense of control.

Following this “creation perspective” it is a small leap into the domain of organizational design and development. Following the reasoning that new business opportunities are developed by multiple collaborating individuals in several over time changing combinations, it seems no more than logically that certain organizational characteristics, practices, structures, infrastructures etc. are more suited for the identification of opportunities than other such organizational designs. The main premise of this theme is therefore that there is a relationship between organizational design and successful opportunity identification. It is up to the student to approach the study of this relationship from a preferred angle. Some suggestions are presented, but other approaches within the realm of OD&D may be suitable as well:
• a classic “Mintzbergian” structure approach,
• a socio-technical look on the matter,
• a fresh marketing - R&D interface perspective,
• a modern temporal and network organizational forms point of view,
• a closer look at the different roles different individuals in the process may take,
• ….

Full disclosure; this theme is primarily based on the supervisor’s PhD-study. The results suggest a relationship between successful identification of new business opportunities and certain specific organizational designs, however, these have not been explored in full depth. The master theses participating in this theme may be seen as the follow up studies of this PhD work. Because the study of entrepreneurship and specifically the identification of opportunities in the context of OD&D is relative new with a strong explorative nature it seems appropriate to expect qualitative research approaches and due to the limited scope in time and resources it is recommended to restrict ourselves to medium sized firms (~15 to 150 employees).

Literature:
Wilfred Knol MSc. (Wilfred.knol@han.nl)

Theme 1: developing a lean organization

In order to develop a lean organisation it is important to find a balance between the ‘implementation’ of lean structures and the performance of improvement routines. Lean structures consists of for example a limit on work-in-progress. Improvement routines regard employees to for example think of, initiate and implement experiment-based improvements. We know a lot about lean structures, that is what a lean organisation looks like. We do not know how the performances of improvement routines are linked to developing a lean organisation. Master theses are invited that explore for example:

- interventions that successful cases did to develop a lean organisation;
- configurations of lean practices that are linked to substantive operational performance;
- success factors that are critical to perform improvement routines;
- the relative importance of performance indicators (quality, delivery, costs) to focus improvements on;

*Both existing data and sources for new data are abundantly present. Students will be expected to work independently as well as with peers. And an emphasis in our thesis circle sessions will be on the introduction and use of diverse research methodologies.*

Literature:
Theme 1: Introduction and use of new technology/smart technology in relation to the development and organisation of work cells.

The variety of products of an organisation largely determines the way how the production is organised: Is there a limited number of different products, or is each product unique with a high variety in customer demand? Also, the size of the possible batches is a major factor. Is it possible to produce a lot of similar products or changes the process after each product?

In production environments with a High Variety of possible products and Low production Volumes per product (HVLV), the needed processes, routings and so on are very unpredictable (Asby: a lot of disturbances). This, of course, has effects on the appropriate way of organizing this production organization (to provide the corresponding set of regulation possibilities). Usually work cells (in different ways) are an appropriate way of organizing processes.

The use of (Smart) technology can support planning, preparation and implementation of work in HVLV organizations. For example, the use of Augmented Reality (AR) to quickly learn new procedures, or people with few skills to perform a particular task, the use of Big Data (BD) for flexible planning, artificial intelligence to make choices and opportunities to use robotics to, directly in addition to human labour etc. Yet, there are also possible restrictions: how to automate if work standards are difficult to developed due to the high variety? People are perhaps better equipped to deal with changes and continuous improvement than machines: How does this work as (smart) technology is introduced. And of course, with a major emphasis on (specialized) technology, how is the division between preparatory and support functions in relation with the workplace, or are there separate specialized functions?

From the ’50 years of the last century there has been a lot of research on the relationship between technology and human in work organisations. However, when using smart technology like AR, BD and human centred automation, the influence in the workplace can be different than present research suggests. New research is needed to provide a basis for choices in the organization of labour, division and separation between tasks that are carried out by man and by technology etc. questions arise like: Can the use of Smart technology support an improvement of labour? Can smart technology support the flexibility in work and planning? Can smart technology make work cells more autonomous? And so on.

For the Master thesis, the student will pick one (or more) topics and from a socio technical look for instance:

- Labour supported by Augmented Reality in relation to learning and flexibility,
- Cooperation between technology and labour within a work cell instead vs technology is always leading,
- The deployment of the use of technology and labour is based on choices not on laws of nature,
• How to use AR or robotica in the design of workcells, with the purpose of the organization leading to this design
• Effects of Smart technology on control need vs control capacity, to support labour in workcells.
• etc.

Of course, if the student wishes to formulate a problem that is not mentioned, but related, this is open for discussion. It is possible that one or more of the master Thesis projects will be part of present research projects of the HAN Lean/WCP research group.