Affective Organizational Space

An Ethnographic Study of a Nordic Startup Incubator

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the relationship between space and organizing practices. It argues that developing a better understanding of this relationship requires studying the affective quality of space, namely the potential of space to generate affective responses in the people who encounter it and to increase or decrease people’s bodily capacity to act. Building on an ethnographic study of a Nordic startup incubator, the dissertation focuses on how the affective quality of a collaborative workspace emerges and influences participants’ capacity to engage with the day-to-day practices of the incubator. The findings are reported in four papers.

The first paper lays the groundwork for the empirical chapters by examining the existing literature on organizational space. It shows how authors have recently theorized space as a processual and constitutive part of organizations and organizing. The paper identifies five different process orientations and four key constructs that underpin knowledge creation regarding organizational space.

The second paper develops a concept of affecto-rhythmic order to capture how rhythms and affects interrelate in the flow of spatial organizational practices. The paper demonstrates how incubator participants learn and embody a contextual affecto-rhythmic order of “upbeat” and how this enhances their capacity to engage with the incubator practices.

The third paper explores how the affective quality of a collaborative workspace emerges and develops over a period of three years. It highlights how the affective space creates possibilities to problematize dominant (masculine, controlled, rational) modes of being but also fosters tendencies towards their reproduction. The study highlights how the affective quality of organizational space may produce unintended consequences at any given moment.

The fourth paper studies the types of ethnographic approaches employed in organizational space research. It identifies three types of approaches, shows how they privilege different forms of space, and highlights their tendency towards representational epistemology. Against this background, it illustrates how affective ethnography can help organizational space researchers move towards more-than-representational analysis of space and affect.

The dissertation makes three main contributions to organizational research. It (1) theorizes and empirically shows how the affective quality of organizational space emerges and contributes to power and politics in organizing, (2) demonstrates how different forms of process theorizing can advance the understanding of organizational space, and (3) illustrates and further develops affective ethnography as a research approach to organizational studies.

Keywords organizational space; affect; ethnography; entrepreneurship; incubator

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List of Publications

This doctoral dissertation consists of a summary and of the following publications which are referred to in the text by their numerals


1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed the rapid emergence of startup incubators and accelerators, co-working spaces, hubs, and other collaborative workspaces that support entrepreneurship and innovation. These new organizational spaces are expected to serve as creative and engaging hotspots that “push” people together, facilitate serendipitous encounters, and generate a “positive buzz” that attracts talent and fosters business potential. Specifically, these spaces are designed to appeal to and harness the emotional responses of their (potential) users much more than traditional workspaces. They, in other words, highlight the requirement of bringing the whole individual into the workplace, including the sensory and affective capacities. Consequently, collaborative workspaces problematize the traditional idea of organizational space as a stable, physical container of work activities. Thus, new theoretical and methodological approaches are required to examine and better understand how organizational spaces in general and collaborative workspaces in particular function. In this dissertation, which contributes mainly to the organizational space literature, I seek to respond to these research needs by drawing on a theoretical perspective of affect and building on an ethnographic study of a Nordic startup incubator.

1.1 Context of contribution

Organizational space research is an interdisciplinary area of study that focuses on the spatial aspects of organization (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Dale, Kingma, & Wasserman, 2018; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Ropo, Salovaara, Sauer, & De Paoli, 2015). Specifically, it examines how space, place, region, surroundings, built environment, workspace, territory and other spatial concepts interact with and shape organizations and organizing (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). The recent interest in organizational space is partly fostered by changes in the nature of work, such as increasing reliance on flexible work settings (Moisander, Groß, & Eräranta, 2018; Richardson & McKenna, 2014). In addition, this interest is fueled by theoretical developments that recognize materiality and space as essential elements of organizational life (Carlile, Nicolini, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2013; Orlikowski, 2007). From these developments, we learn that space is both shaped in and shaping of everyday organizational activities (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Sivunen & Putnam, 2019). Scholars have shown, for example, how space influences and is modified in or-
ganizational communication (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013), identity work (Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011), learning (Fahy, Easterby-Smith, & Lervik, 2014), legitimation processes (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014), strategic work (Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015), institutional dynamics (Kellogg, 2009; Siebert, Wilson, & Hamilton, 2017), and creative practices (Beyes & Michels, 2011). These studies demonstrate that space is not a stable or static container; instead, it is a process that both constitutes and is constituted in the practices of organizing.

A particular stream of research has demonstrated that organizational space is intimately connected with the questions of power and politics in organizations. Specifically, scholars have argued that space is constantly produced and reproduced as members of organizations negotiate power relations (Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Taylor & Spicer, 2007). For example, studies have shown how architecture and spatial arrangements assign actors to different places and in ways that facilitate managerial control and surveillance (Baldry, 1999; Sewell & Taskin, 2015). Scholars have further illustrated how designed spaces prescribe particular patterns of movement in the workplace (Dale, 2005; Panayiotou & Kafiris, 2010) and are encoded with certain symbolic and aesthetic meanings, such as bureaucracy (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Siebert et al., 2017) and masculinity (Panayiotou & Kafiris, 2011; Tyler & Cohen, 2010). In contrast, other scholars have demonstrated how space functions as a resource for resistance to managerial control (Courpasson, Dany, & Delbridge, 2017; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Thanem, 2012), the subversion of gendered oppression (Hirst & Schwabenland, 2018; Panayiotou, 2015), and the emergence of creative forms of action beyond organizational norms (Munro & Jordan, 2013; Shortt, 2015; Steyaert, 2010). These studies suggest that space, power, and politics are entangled with each other in organizations and organizing.

In their attempts to theorize how power and politics function through organizational space, scholars have drawn on a range of classic works in sociology, human geography and philosophy (Foucault, 1977; de Certeau, 1984; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In particular, Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1991) has become a major inspiration in organizational space studies (Beyes & Michels, 2011; Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Dale et al., 2018; Fahy et al., 2014; Ford & Harding, 2004; Ropo et al., 2015; Sivunen & Putnam, 2019; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011; Watkins, 2005). In his work, Lefebvre shifts the analytical attention “from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*” (Lefebvre, 1991: 37, emphasis in the original). Lefebvre develops the heuristic tool of a “spatial triad” to examine how the production of space is intertwined with power and politics. According to this view, space is conceived by managers and architects who produce the dominant spatial order through design, architecture, and professional discourses; perceived by space users through their embodied actions, interactions, and practices, which may align or be in conflict with the imposed conceived space; and lived through the subjective experiences, feelings, and emotional responses of the space users (Lefebvre, 1991). For Lefebvre, these three dimensions are constantly shaping each other, and space appears as a contested terrain.
Despite the important contributions of the Lefebvrian studies of space, they do not adequately consider the link between space and affect in the enactment of organizational power and politics. Following the work of Spinoza, and its subsequent elaboration in the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Massumi (2002), affect refers to a force or intensity of relation between bodies, where bodies do not necessarily have to be human. Affect is a passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implies a shift in that body’s capacity to act (Massumi in Deleuze and Guattari 1987: xvii). It differs from emotion as the latter may be named and expressed through language (Massumi, 2002). Affect, in turn, is a “pre-discursive” bodily response that precedes emotion, is experienced prior to significations, and shapes “what bodies can do” (Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015). Affect is what triggers, for example, excitement, attachment, and disgust (Katila, Laine, & Parkkari, 2019; Pullen, Rhodes, & Thanem, 2017). Among other bodies, the materiality of space has the capacity to generate affective responses in the bodies that encounter with(in) it (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Michels & Steyaert, 2017; Reckwitz, 2012; Thrift, 2004). In this dissertation, I argue that examining the affective quality of space is important as it allows us to better the role of space in organizing and to shed new light on organizational power and politics.

Therefore, I begin from the premise that space matters in our efforts of organizing through its capacity to generate affective responses that increase or diminish our capacity to act. Specifically, I suggest that examining the affective quality of space is essential and timely because work is increasingly performed in settings that are designed to generate particular kinds of affective responses in their users, especially those that support the accomplishment of certain entrepreneurial goals. For example, startup incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces, hubs, and other collaborative workspaces are designed to “push” people together, make people be “creative,” and generate an energetic “buzz” that attracts talent and fosters innovative potential (de Vaujany, Dandoy, Grandazzi, & Faure, 2019; Fabbri, 2016; Jakonen, Kivinen, Salovaara, & Hirkman, 2017). In this dissertation, I suggest that these spaces are manipulated to appeal to the senses of their (potential) users much more than traditional workspaces. Specifically, I propose that they highlight the requirement of bringing the whole individual into the workplace, including the sensory and affective capacities. The design of collaborative workspaces is not, however, determinate but affective encounters with(in) them may generate unintended consequences.

1.2 Theoretical perspective

This dissertation draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s and their followers’ (Massumi, 2002; Pullen et al., 2017; Stewart, 2007) work on affect. From this perspective, affect highlights changes in bodily capacities of acting that occur in encounters between humans and materialities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For example, affect is what “hits us” (Fotaki, Kenny, & Vachhani, 2017: 4) when we walk into a meeting room and inexplicably experience a tense, excited or relaxed atmosphere that, in turn, shapes our following interpretations and actions.
(Brennan, 2004). Although the consequences of affective responses are not pre-determined, scholars note that they can be manipulated for example through spatial design and interventions (Thrift, 2004; Michels & Steyaert, 2017).

By drawing on the concept of affect, I connect my work with organizational scholarship on relational ontology, which highlights four central premises (Gherardi, 2016; Kuhn, Ashcraft, & Cooren, 2017; Orlikowski, 2007). First, it suggests that even though social elements such as language are essential in the construction of reality, material elements such as buildings, bodies and material artifacts are fully entangled with social elements. Materiality is not passive or external to humans but rather an active participant with humans (Kuhn et al., 2017). Second, this ontology posits that social and material elements are entangled in processes of organizing (Barad, 2003). This contests the idea of fixed phenomena; instead, it proposes that everything that exists is in ongoing construction (Langley & Tsoukas, 2016). Third, relational ontology emphasizes that our capacity of acting and feeling depends on multiple other actors. Agency, in other words, is hybrid and distributed by nature (Cooren, 2017). Fourth, and finally, this perspective proposes that entities such as organizational space emerge and exist in relationships with each other. When the relationships change, for example when new space users appear, the entity changes.

By adopting a Deleuzian theoretical perspective of affect and embracing relational ontology, this dissertation further aligns the recent strands of scholarship that conceptualize organizational space as processual and performative spacing (Best & Hindmarsh, 2019; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Hirst & Humphreys, 2013; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). In line with the conceptual move from organization to organizing, this shift “entails a rethinking of space as processual and performative, open-ended and multiple, practiced and of the everyday” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 47). Space, thus, does not exist “out there” to be filled with organizational activities; instead, it surfaces as an outcome of different social and material elements entangled in processes of spacing. Therefore, this perspective suggests that organizational space does not pre-exist its formation through specific processes and practices.

1.3 Aim of study

The aim of this dissertation is to examine and better understand how the affective capacity of space emerges and contributes to organizational power and politics especially in the context of collaborative workspaces. In this endeavor, I draw on a Deleuzian perspective on affect and a process view of organizational space. The study contributes to organizational space research (e.g. Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Ropo et al., 2015; Thanem, 2012), and also to the emerging literature on affect in organizations (e.g. Fotaki et al., 2017; Gherardi, 2017, 2018; Pullen et al., 2017; Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015). The findings of the study are reported in four essays. The specific research questions of the essays are the following:

**Essay 1:** “Process studies of organizational space”
• How have management scholars conceptualized space as a process, and how have these approaches interfaced with organizing?

**Essay 2:** “Becoming upbeat: Learning the affecto-rhythmic order of organizational practices”
- How are rhythms and affects connected in organizational practice?
- How do organizational members learn and embody the rhythms and affective attunement of organizational practice?

**Essay 3:** “Space/Gender in becoming: An affective ethnography of an entrepreneurial event hub”
- How do affective potentials emerge (with)in organizing, and how does this contribute to the production of space/gender and difference/othering?

**Essay 4:** “Ethnographic approaches to the study of organizational space: towards affective ethnography”
- What types of ethnographic approaches are employed in organizational space research, and how do they shape the ways in which space as an empirical phenomenon is captured?

Essay 1 lays ground for the empirical chapters by examining the existing literature on organizational space. It first shows how researchers have recently moved towards conceiving space as a process and then identifies five different process orientations and four key constructs that underpin knowledge creation on space and organizing. The essay illustrates how researchers recognizing the affective quality of space embrace a strong, “becoming” process orientation to the study of organizational space. In this view, the affective quality of space emerges as a situated accomplishment through encounters between the materiality of space and the people who engage with it.

Essay 2 addresses the research aim by focusing on the relationship between rhythms and affects in the flow of spatial organizational practices. Building on an ethnographic study, it theorizes that this relationship is entangled and suggests an integrative concept of affecto-rhythmic order. The paper demonstrates how participants learn and embody a contextual affecto-rhythmic upbeat order, and how this shapes their capacity to act. In this study, the affective quality of space contributes to organizational power and politics by creating either strong attachment to or detachment from fast-paced practices of organizing.

Essay 3 addresses the aim of the dissertation by focusing on how the affective capacity of a particular collaborative workspace emerges and develops over a period of three years. It shows that although the space was designed to support inclusion and openness it ended up privileging masculine modes of being. The study further highlights how potential for becoming outside conventional gender orders might emerge in affective encounters with(in) organizational space. This essay thus illustrates how the affective quality of space may produce unintended consequences at any given moment.
Finally, Essay 4 addresses the research aim by showing how affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2018; Stewart, 2007) as a research approach can help scholars in developing sensitivity towards the affective quality of space. This paper suggests that examining and writing about this quality entails moving beyond representational epistemology, which underpins much of the existing ethnographic studies of space in organizational literature. In affective ethnography, space emerges as an outcome of entangled relationships between various bodies and their affective qualities. This approach suggests that the affective quality of space contributes to power and politics by producing bodily responses that frame the array of activities potentially enactable within organizational settings.

1.4 Ethnographic approach

Empirically, this dissertation builds on a three-year ethnographic study (2014–2017) of a Nordic startup incubator, Helsinki Think Company (ThinkCo). The stated goal of ThinkCo is to promote entrepreneurship and firm creation, especially among higher education students, researchers, and graduates. ThinkCo is sponsored by the University of Helsinki and the City of Helsinki, and it operates through specific incubator and accelerator programs. ThinkCo further hosts four coworking spaces at the campuses of the University of Helsinki. ThinkCo is an interesting example of affective collaborative workspaces for various reasons. For example, the ThinkCo coworking spaces are deliberately designed to attract entrepreneurial talents, enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration, and foster venture creation. Furthermore, because all participation in ThinkCo activities relies on voluntary involvement, managers of ThinkCo seek to build an “engaging community” of “like-minded individuals.”

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of this introduction and four essays. In the following sections, I will first offer a brief overview of the ways in which space has been approached and conceptualized in existing organizational and management literature. Then, in the third section, I will discuss the affect theoretical approach. In section four, I will describe the ethnographic case and materials used in the empirical essays. Section five offers a summary of the key findings of the essays. Finally, in section six, I will discuss the significance of the dissertation in relation to previous studies and offer some conclusions.
2. Organizational Space

Management scholars have for long recognized that space plays an important role in organizational processes and practices, such as learning, motivation, and knowledge sharing. For example, in the principles of scientific management, Taylor (1911) acknowledged the importance of optimized physical arrangements for maximized productivity and work efficiency. In this work, space was approached as a measurable, physical resource that could and should be rationalized to support the accomplishment of particular organizational goals. The Hawthorne studies, in contrast, suggested that while the physical aspects of space play an important role in organizational processes, social aspects such as personal relationships may be even more important (Roethlisberger & William, 1939). More recently, researchers have developed particular approaches to examine how and why space matters in the efforts of organizing. In the following, I will offer a brief overview of the main approaches to organizational space: objective, subjective, critical, and process.

2.1 Objective approach

The objective or post-positivist approach treats organizational space as a relatively stable, physical container of work activities (Davis, 1984; Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Sundstrom & Sundstrom, 1986). Researchers embracing this view have focused, among other things, on the design and arrangement of physical objects and machinery as well as types of lighting and air quality that people encounter in organizations. Studies have shown, for example, that organizations’ physical environment can increase and decrease employee performance and satisfaction as well as enable and restrict certain behaviors (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Hua, Loftness, Kraut, & Powell, 2010). A particular interest in these studies has been placed on the effects of office designs such as open-plan layouts on employee performance. While some studies propose that open-plan layouts can create more flexible workplaces, enhance collaboration, and foster creativity (Allen & Gerstberger, 1973; Duffy, 1997), other studies show that they decrease interactions at work and are harmful for motivation and job satisfaction (Hatch, 1987; Oldham & Brass, 1979; Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Overall, the objective approach examines space as a stable, structural element of organizational life and perceives organization as a bounded, discrete entity. In their review, Taylor and
Spicer (2007) suggest that this is “[p]erhaps the most widespread approach to understanding space in organization and management studies” (p. 327).

2.2 Subjective approach

The subjective approach moves away from privileging organizations’ physical environment towards treating space as socially produced (Ropo et al., 2015; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010; Watkins, 2005). Emerging mainly from organizational symbolism and aesthetics research (Gagliardi, 1990; Strati, 1999), this view suggests that space matters to organizations as a carrier of meaning as well as through its capacity to evoke subjective experiences and emotional responses (Dale & Burrell, 2008). Researchers working from this approach have examined how employees experience and interpret workspaces and, in turn, how these responses shape organizational processes and practices (Ropo et al., 2015; Van Marrewijk, 2011). Researchers have shown, for example, that architecture, spatial design, and construction materials communicate organizational norms, values, and beliefs (Yanow, 1998) that, in turn, contribute to organizational legitimacy (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014) and maintenance of institutions (Siebert et al., 2017). These studies have further emphasized that even a single organizational space may generate a range of different experiences and interpretations, thus making space a multiple and complex phenomenon (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Consequently, even the most carefully designed and managed spaces can produce unintended experiences and interpretations (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). Overall, the subjective approach shifts attention to the social quality of organizational space.

2.3 Critical approach

Recognizing space as both physical and social, the critical approach suggests that space materializes organizational power relations (Baldry, 1999; Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008). Emerging from classics in sociology and philosophy (Foucault, 1977; Harvey, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991), this approach proposes that corporate buildings, decorations, and office layouts contribute to the establishment and maintenance of unequal social relations. Specifically, Dale and Burrell (2008) have highlighted three mechanisms through which space materializes power relations. For them, space (1) emplaces by assigning actors to different places; (2) enchants through encoded meanings; and (3) enacts by prescribing certain patterns of movement. To illustrate, several scholars have shown how workspace design emplaces people into different social groups, such as managers and employees (Zhang & Spicer, 2014) and women and men (Panayiotou & Kafiris, 2010). In so doing, the workspace design also facilitates managerial control and surveillance (Baldry, 1999; Dale, 2005). Perhaps the most well-known spatial arrangement through which managerial control is exercised is Bentham’s panopticon, where workers are placed in the central core of an office or factory surrounded by managers’ offices “with windows facing inwards enabling constant visual contact” with the workers (Halford, 2004)
Scholars who embrace the critical approach have further illustrated how organizational space enchants people through encoded meanings that are designed to reinforce dominant power relations (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Fleming & Spicer, 2004). For example, the decoration, furniture, artifacts, and other elements of workspace are often designed to communicate “what kind of social activity is appropriate” (Baldry, 1997: 368), who are the legitimate space users, and who are or are not in powerful positions (Panayiotou & Kafiris, 2010; Thanem, 2012). These studies also highlight how workspaces materialize gender norms and reproduce unequal gender relations (Hirst & Schwabenland, 2018; Panayiotou, 2015; Tyler & Cohen, 2010). Finally, critical studies have shown that organizational space is central to the establishment and maintenance of power relations, as it enacts or regulates the embodied activities and practices of organizational members (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Riach & Wilson, 2014; Zhang & Spicer, 2014). For example, open-plan offices are often used to enhance collaboration and spontaneous encounters among organizational members (Jakonen et al., 2017).

2.4 Process approach

Recently, several scholars have argued that organizational studies tend to treat space as a stable construct and neglect its dynamicity (Best & Hindmarsh, 2019; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Mengis, Nicolini, & Gorli, 2018; Munro & Jordan, 2013). In particular, scholars have noted that studies often embrace a kind of spatial determinism and view space as somehow “separate” or “objective” in relation to organization (Best & Hindmarsh, 2019). Consequently, many studies of space have overlooked the active, living bodies by representing space as a site of “dead bodies, lacking in enactment, incorporations and liveliness” (Edenius & Yakhlef, 2007: 197). Recent empirical studies have echoed these critiques, showing, for example, that teleworkers and flex-workers do not simply have stable “home” and “work” spaces, but they engage, through their embodied practices, in constant ordering and re-ordering of these spaces to meet their daily needs (Richardson & McKenna, 2014; Sewell & Taskin, 2015).

To respond to these shortcomings, scholars have increasingly turned towards process and practice-based approaches to space and organizing (Best & Hindmarsh, 2019; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Hirst & Humphreys, 2013; Munro & Jordan, 2013; Thanem, 2012). In particular, these studies have sought to shift the analytical focus from the social construction of “a” space to the ongoing, open-ended, and fluid production of space. According to this view, space and organizing are “tightly entangled” (Mengis et al., 2018) in the sense that space is both a dynamic outcome and a generative force of organizational practices (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). Space, then, does not pre-exist its enactment but rather emerges or takes place in and through particular activities, events, and practices of organizing. To illustrate, Best and Hindmarsh (2019) have illustrated how museums as organizational spaces are invested with “sense and significance” in and through embodied practices of tour guides and their audiences.
In developing the process perspective on organizational space, some scholars have invited us to re-conceptualize space as *spacing* and to acknowledge the various and situated qualities of space (e.g. Beyes & Michels, 2014; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Vásquez, 2016; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). According to Beyes and Steyaert (2012), such reconceptualization requires focusing on the “embodied affects and encounters generated here-and-now and assembled from the manifold (im)materialities” (p. 53) as well as “a conceptual awareness of the material, embodied, affective and minor configurations of space” (p. 56). Therefore, the notion of spacing encourages researchers to investigate space as an enacted, affective, and political phenomenon. Despite these important developments, we know little about how the affective capacity of organizational space actually emerges and contributes to power and politics in organizations. To respond to this research need, I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s and their followers’ work on affect. In the next section, I will briefly discuss my affect theoretical approach.
3. Affect

To consider the affective quality of organizational space, I locate my work within the current “affective turn” in social sciences and humanities (Blackman & Venn, 2010; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002) that has recently taken place also within organizational research (Fotaki et al., 2017; Karppi, Kähkönen, Mannevuo, Pajala, & Sihvonen, 2016; Katila et al., 2019; Kenny, 2012; Pullen et al., 2017; Vachhani, 2013). This turn can be described as a renewed interest in the role of affects, moods, emotions, and non-conscious dimensions of experience in various domains and settings (Blackman & Venn, 2010; Koivunen, 2010). Gregg and Seighworth (2010) highlight eight different streams of research shaping the affective turn. In short, these are the (post)phenomenological theories of embodiment; theories of human/nonhuman assemblages, such as cybernetics; non-Cartesian philosophies; psychological and psychoanalytic theories that highlight the notion of drive; research on normalizing power in feminist, queer, and subaltern and disability studies; a range of criticism of the linguistic turn; critical studies of emotions; and science studies.

As this list hints, there is no conceptual consensus about affect or the affective turn. For example, while some scholars see the affective turn as an epistemological and methodological matter that provides new opportunities for stronger personal and political accountability (Knudsen & Stage, 2015), other scholars view it as a move beyond the individual and a shift “from language, discourse, and representation to the real, from body to matter, from cultures to nature, from identity to difference, from psychic to social” (Koivunen, 2010: 9). In this dissertation, I join a handful of organizational scholars who build on affect theory that draws from the writings of Baruch Spinoza and has been expanded by Deleuze and Guattari (Gherardi, 2017, 2018; Hietanen, Andén, & Wickström, 2019; Linstead & Thanem, 2007; Pullen et al., 2017; Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015). In what has become a canonical text about affect in this line of research, Massumi (2002) defines affect as bodily responses that are in excess of conscious states of perception; they highlight the visceral perception that precedes perception. Importantly, then, affect is not a subjective property but instead a force or intensity that operates in and through encounters between bodies; it is about ineffable sensations rather than personalized and recognizable emotions (Massumi, 2002). For example, when a person identifies an event, a workspace, a story, or an object as making her feel disgust or joy, she registers an affective reaction that has already happened.
Thus, from Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, emotion is shaped by language and culture, whereas affect “is that felt energy that creates a scene, punctuating matter into what matters” (Kuhn et al., 2017). In this view, affect does not function through “the structures of language, discourse and meaning” (Beyes & De Cock, 2017: 66) but through “the passage from one experiential state of the body to another” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: xvi). Thus, being affected requires change in one’s experience and readiness for action (Thrift, 2008). For example, affect is what triggers our excitement and passionate attachment (Katila et al., 2019) and forces us to think in new ways (Deleuze, 1994). Like these examples suggest, affect does not operate only in and through relationships between human bodies; instead, it also emerges in relations with nonhuman bodies, such as built environment, material artifacts, animals, plants, and technologies (Gherardi, 2018; Michels & Steyaert, 2017). Thus, affect rejects the division of human and nonhuman bodies: “[a] body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity” (Deleuze, 1988: 27).

Affect theorists have employed the concept of atmosphere to examine the spatiality of affect (Borch, 2010; Julmi, 2016; Michels & Steyaert, 2017). This concept refers to “spatially discharged affective qualities” (Anderson, 2009: 80) or a more or less shared affective state surrounding actors and emerging from relations between bodies and their environment. To illustrate, on entering a room, one can feel the friendly or tense atmosphere (Brennan, 2004). The notion of atmosphere highlights the idea that affect is not a subjective quality but rather comes from the outside (Anderson, 2009). Atmosphere surrounds people and materiality “as the shared ground from which affect emerges” (Gherardi, 2018: 9). Extant literature has examined affective atmospheres in various empirical contexts, such as artistic interventions in urban space (Michels & Steyaert, 2017), football matches (Edensor, 2015), and consumption spaces (Biehl-Missal & Saren, 2012).

### 3.1 Engineering and modulation of affect

Scholars have argued that affect is intimately connected with the questions of power and politics (Ash, 2010; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2004, 2008). In particular, scholars suggest that affect can be deliberately produced to create body politics and push the actions and energies of individuals to specific directions with particular aims in mind. Thrift (2004, 2008) posits that affect reveals a particular surface in which power is exercised. He argues that in contemporary societies individuals are increasingly regulated at the level of their bodily responses through the “engineering” and “modulation” of affect. Specifically, Thrift (2004) notes that “knowledges of the creation and mobilization of affect have become an integral part of the everyday urban landscape ... [and] these knowledges are not only being deployed knowingly, they are deployed politically ... to political ends” (p. 58). Thrift (2004) uses an
example from the military: he argues that military training techniques that involve harsh bodily conditioning allow anger and other aggressive affective responses to be channeled in certain ways, such as to increase firing rates.

Ash (2010) suggests that the manipulation of affect functions in two main ways. On the one hand, it functions to shift and alter peoples' affective states, such as from a positive to a negative state. On the other hand, it may seek to maintain a certain affective state for a particular period of time. In corporate and entrepreneurial settings, scholars have noted that the manipulation of affect can target people's dispositions and motivations through various means of seduction and entrancement (Ashcraft, 2017; Karppi et al., 2016). In these settings, the manipulation of affect may be seen as part of a broader set of mechanisms of control and regulation. Engineering and modulation of affect thus highlight how people's bodily, pre-personal responses have become objects of commodification and institutionalized regulation.

As these examples suggest, deliberate production and manipulation of affect requires certain technologies through which they are enacted. In particular, several scholars suggest that it is through spatial design, material artifacts, and visual representations that affects are shaped (Ash, 2010; Thrift, 2004). In his study, Ash (2012) exemplified how industrial production of video games relies on techniques of “affective design” that attempt to indirectly generate particular kinds of affective responses. Michels and Steyaert (2017), in turn, highlight how a careful design process, including, for example, costume tailoring and planning of music and choreography, was needed to create a particular affective atmosphere in an urban artistic intervention. It is, however, important to emphasize that despite these efforts of manipulation, their outcomes are not predetermined. Instead, affect functions outside simple determinate relations of cause and effect, and the effects of affect are best thought of as resonances rather than assured outcomes (Michels & Steyaert, 2017). Thus, it is also important to acknowledge the unintended and surprising consequences linked to affective experiences.

### 3.2 Affect and new possibilities of acting and feeling

In addition to reinforcing dominant power relations, affect can induce political change and generate new possibilities of acting and feeling (Pullen et al., 2017; Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015). In particular, as affect is an unformed and unstructured force by nature, it holds the potential to unsettle our subjective notions of meanings and emotions (Massumi, 2002). Much of the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) on affect concentrates on this potential and investigates how life itself can be different. As Pullen, Rhodes, and Thanem (2017) write, for Deleuze and Guattari affect has political significance because it has the potential to “subvert and exceed the suffocating technologies of capture, control, exploitation and oppression that underpin the capitalist order” (p. 109). Thus, in considering the affective quality of organizational space it is important to acknowledge how spatial, affective experiences may trigger (radical) political change.
In examining the relationship between affect and political change, the terms of agencement and territorialization are central. In the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), agencement has a double meaning. On the one hand, it assumes a relational ontology and highlights the ongoing process in which the constitutive elements of any (organizational) phenomenon, such as humans, technologies, discourses, and buildings, are connected with each other. Within agencement, these elements have the capacity to affect and be affected by each other. On the other hand, agencement refers to the temporary configuration of these elements, which gives a phenomenon its expression. In this view, then, “organizational space” should be seen as a relational phenomenon; constantly changing agencements of human and nonhuman elements having the capacity to affect/be affected by each other. As agencements, phenomena are subjects of simultaneous affective processes of re- and de-territorialization. By re-territorialization, Deleuze and Guattari refer to forces, such as societal norms, through which the relationships between human and nonhuman elements are ordered in certain ways to fit with certain categories, structures, and separations, such as “inside/outside” and “feminine/masculine.” In contrast, the notion of de-territorialization refers to forces that disrupt such orderings and destabilize them in ways that cannot be fully controlled.

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), (re-)territorialized space is striated space, meaning it is rule-intensive, strictly bounded, and confining. It emerges as an outcome of social orders that produce hegemonic structures, such as bureaucratic or heterosexual norms and expectations. In contrast, de-territorialized space is smooth space; a non-differentiated space that lacks signification, creates open-ended possibilities of action, and emerges in unexpected and unpredictable ways as resistant to controlling forces, making it difficult to capture (Munro & Jordan, 2014; Thanem, 2012). Importantly, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987) particular affects can trigger radical political change, which challenges the striated space (e.g. a heteronormative space) and contributes to the processes of de-territorialization and the emergence of smooth space. Hence, in considering how affects can induce political change and generate new possibilities of acting in organizational space, particular emphasis needs to be placed on the re- and de-territorialization dynamics.
4. Ethnographic study

This dissertation adopts an ethnographic approach to examine how the affective capacity of organizational space emerges and contributes to power and politics in the context of collaborative spaces. Recently, ethnography has become a key research approach within studies of organizational space (Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010) and affect (Knudsen & Stage, 2015). The ethnographic approach is often characterized by the researcher’s deep engagement in the setting to be studied and the use of various research methods to explore contextual aspects and uncover everyday activities and understandings (Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009). In the existing literature, three features stand out as essential to ethnographic research: (1) engaging in fieldwork, (2) focusing on sensemaking and sensegiving, and (3) presenting and articulating ethnographic analysis (Van Hulst, Ybema, & Yanow, 2017; Van Maanen, 2011).

First, ethnographic inquiry can be understood as a research strategy that builds on a researcher’s prolonged, intensive, and embodied engagement with a particular setting and its actors. This engagement takes place through certain fieldwork methods, which often consist of observing (with a particular degree of participation), talking, and interviewing as well as interpreting documents and other material artefacts (Ybema et al., 2009). Van Hulst, Ybema, and Yanow (2017) suggest that researchers should combine these different methods in fieldwork to capture not only the continuous unfolding of organizational life but also its broader and longer-term effects and consequences. Studies further remind us that ethnographers are never passive observers in fieldwork, but they necessarily affect and are affected by other human and nonhuman bodies in the field (Thanem & Knights, 2019). Ethnography thus raises ethical concerns because it highlights embodied relationships and because of the unequal power relations between that which sees and that which is seen, the observer and the observed.

Second, taking an ethnographic approach to organizational analysis entails focusing on sensemaking and sensegiving processes. Sometimes referred as “sensework,” this feature concentrates on organizational members’ sensemaking, for example in relation to their work or workspaces; the ethnographer’s sensemaking of organizational practices, spaces, implicit norms, and other elements; as well as the ethnographer’s sensitivity towards the hidden, political, and emotional aspects of organizational life (Van Hulst et al., 2017; Van
Maanen, 2011; Ybema et al., 2009). Yanow (2010) proposes that in order to understand the ways in which space matters in organizational life, researchers need to develop an embodied “spatial sensibility” to the often implicit and taken-for-granted meanings connected to it. Taking an affect theoretical view on ethnography, Gherardi (2018), in turn, proposes that researchers should acknowledge their bodily capacity to affect and be affected as a resource for making interpretations; affecting/becoming affected should be understood as essential for the sensemaking process. As these observations highlight, ethnographic inquiry focuses not only on what is immediately visible and presented in “front stage” but also on what happens “off stage” or out of sight.

Third, the analysis of ethnographic observations and other materials are commonly presented and articulated through written texts. Often labelled as “textwork” (Van Maanen, 2011), this feature highlights how ethnography gives voice to details of everyday organizational life and connects them with broader social, political, and historical trajectories. In so doing, ethnographic writing offers an alternative to static, general, and apolitical styles of scholarly expression. Commonly, ethnographic writing is supported by fieldnotes and aims at providing a “thick” description of the research setting and the phenomenon under study (Geertz, 1973). By such description, Geertz (1973) refers to a textual presentation that not only focuses on the micro-level details of organizational happenings but also provides a contextual background so that the readers can understand the significance of what is being described. Scholars working at the intersection of ethnography and affect theory (e.g. Gherardi, 2018; Stewart, 2007) have further noted that ethnographic writing should let the readers sense and feel what affect “does” in organizations. Hence, rather than “capturing” affect, ethnographic writing should aim at communicating it to the readers.

Overall, ethnography is considered as a particularly suitable approach to examine organizational space and affect because it positions the researcher’s body as crucial for empirical inquiry. In particular, and as Yanow (2010) notes, the study of space “requires not only attending to space ... but also “feeling” space – an intentional act, of imagination, perhaps, but certainly a bodily one of indwelling and through-moving, in a phenomenological attitude, attending to one’s sensing” (p. 139). Empirical examination of space entails not only observing and interviewing people, but also the development of sensory and embodied knowing in various forms—aesthetic, tacit, pre-reflexive, and pre-discursive—that take place beyond intention or consciousness. Similarly, Knudsen, and Stage (2015) point out that using the researcher’s own body as a research instrument and means of collecting data may help researchers acknowledge how affect functions in social life.
4.1 Empirical setting

This dissertation builds on an ethnographic study of a Nordic startup incubator, Helsinki Think Company (ThinkCo). ThinkCo is a university-based incubator (O’Neal, 2005) that is sponsored by the University of Helsinki and the City of Helsinki. As an organization, ThinkCo is a private company with around 20 employees or “hosts.” The stated goal of ThinkCo is to encourage entrepreneurship and venture creation, especially among university students, graduates, and researchers. In addition to organizing specific incubator and accelerator programs, ThinkCo functions through four coworking spaces located at the campuses of the University of Helsinki. These spaces can be used free-of-charge, and they are available for keyholders 24/7. In addition to being coworking spaces, these venues host various entrepreneurial events, such as pitch nights, business mentoring events, and inspirational speaker events. In promotional materials, ThinkCo is described as “a community, a coworking space and event hub focused on taking academics to action” (ThinkCo, 2019).

4.2 Ethnographic materials

I have followed the activities of ThinkCo intensively from 2014–2015 and occasionally in 2016. Following the basic premises of organizational ethnography (Ybema et al., 2009), I deeply engaged with the ThinkCo organization. This included, among other things, attending dozens of official and unofficial events and meetings, participating in a startup accelerator program in 2015 and 2016, using the ThinkCo premises as my office space, and organizing workshops and other events at ThinkCo. During the fieldwork, I generated empirical materials that include field notes, video recordings, photographs, interview transcripts, and other documents. Permission to generate these materials was granted by the University of Helsinki, the City of Helsinki, ThinkCo managers, and the participants of the ThinkCo events I attended. In the empirical essays, I use pseudonyms of the ThinkCo managers and participants in order to ensure their anonymity.

Field notes and recordings

The field notes and recordings generated for this dissertation consist of around 160 pages of transcribed field notes, 180 photographs, and 30 video recordings. These materials include my observations of, reactions to, and preliminary theorizing on the practices, spaces, events, people, and material aspects of ThinkCo. During the fieldwork, I paid particular attention to interactions between the spatial elements of ThinkCo and the people engaging with them. For example, I concentrated on how the ThinkCo venues were planned and modified over time, what kind of embodied practices emerged in relation to them, and what kind of (affective) encounters I became a part in and around.

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1 This research was supported by Tekes, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (grant 264/31/2013). Dr. Saija Katila was the primary investigator of this research project.
Interview data
In addition to the field notes and other recordings, the empirical materials generated for this dissertation consist of 35 interviews with the founders, employees, users, and sponsors of ThinkCo. I conducted these interviews in collaboration with my co-author and colleague, Saija Katila. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Finnish, and we used snowball sampling and informal networking at ThinkCo to recruit the interviewees. A semi-structured framework guided the interviews. Their typical duration was between 45 and 90 minutes, and they were transcribed verbatim. In the interviews, we were particularly interested in understanding how the interviewees perceived the ThinkCo organization, specifically its goals, practices, and culture.

Other materials
To supplement the recorded observations and interview transcripts, I collected over 200 pages of “naturally occurring data” (Silverman, 2013) connected to ThinkCo. These materials include workshop templates, consultant reports, annual reports, media reports, blog posts, social media posts, and photographs. To collect these materials, I have, for example, actively followed the ways in which the participants of ThinkCo events share content about ThinkCo on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In the dissertation, these materials are mainly used to get a general understanding of the empirical case, and, in particular, a thorough picture of the public’s understanding of ThinkCo.
5. Summary of findings

In this section, I focus on summarizing the four essays. I pay particular attention to their key findings, methodological aspects, and contributions to theory. Specifically, I highlight how they help us to understand the affective capacity of organizational space as well as its contributions to power and politics in organizations.

5.1 Essay 1: “Process studies of organizational space”

Essay 1 conducts a review of the existing process studies of organizational space. It argues that although space has become a key analytic concept for the study of organizations, and although scholars increasingly treat space as a process rather than a stable container, literature in this area is widely dispersed and not well integrated. Specifically, the paper suggests that the absence of integration in this area poses critical difficulties for future research and theory development. To address this challenge, the paper develops a typology of process orientations to the study of space and organizing. This typology consists of five process orientations that help researchers to classify existing studies and to develop new approaches: developing, transitioning, imbricating, becoming, and constituting.

The developing orientation parallels traditional views of space that highlight an organization’s physical environment, such as buildings and layouts. Yet, unlike the traditional research, developing studies focus on space as something that changes episodically. For example, they examine how renovations or rearrangements of workspaces contribute to organization (McElroy & Morrow, 2010; Zalesny & Farace, 1987). The second orientation, transitioning, shifts attention from episodic changes to the dynamics of inhabiting new or alternative spaces, typically those in which organizational rules, norms, and roles are temporarily suspended (Courpasson et al., 2017; Shortt, 2015). While these studies focus on concrete spaces such as corridors and informal meeting places, they highlight permeable and vague boundaries or being in-between or moving outside the organization.

In contrast, the imbricating orientation focuses on how space emerges and transforms through organizational practices and activities that are interwoven
in material-relational bundles that form specific affordances and appropriations (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Munro & Jordan, 2013). The becoming orientation, in turn, shifts the attention to the affective, emergent, and fluid events and relations that create space (Knox, O’Doherty, Vurdubakis, & Westrup, 2008; Thanem, 2012). These studies explicitly acknowledge that affective capacity of space and treat it as a situated accomplishment emerging through multiple, fleeting interrelationships of human and material elements. The fifth orientation, constituting, concentrates on the continual structuring and restructuring, shaping, and composing of space (Sivunen & Putnam, 2019; Wilhoit, 2016). Taking this orientation, researchers highlight how interactions in and through space give rise to organization and organizing.

In addition to developing this typology, Essay 1 uncovers four key constructs that surface across the process studies of organizational space: movement, boundaries, assemblages, and scaling. Specifically, the paper highlights how these constructs problematize the ones used in more traditional organizational space research. In particular, we show how the process constructs challenge the ideological basis of physical structures and distance as determining space through fixed barriers, measurable points, and physical separation. Furthermore, they problematize the traditional constructs of workplace arrangements and spatial scales by highlighting how they fail to capture ongoing changes in spatial configurations and organizational reach.

Overall, Essay 1 has four key contributions. First, it integrates the findings on how space operates as a process in organizational scholarship. While previous reviews have focused on physical environment, workspace arrangements, and demarcated scales in organizations (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Taylor & Spicer, 2007), we concentrate on findings from studies that treat space as a dynamic, ongoing process. Second, the paper sets forth a typology that differentiates process studies of organizational space. This typology highlights how space is both physical and emergent and how it shapes and is shaped by organizational actions. Third, the article deciphers, compares, and contrasts key constructs of organizational space that emerge from both the traditional and process literatures. Fourth, the essay shows how “spatial activities” emerge from the intersections of the key process constructs.

5.2 Essay 2: “Becoming upbeat: Learning the affecto-rhythmic order of organizational practices”

Essay 2 addresses the research aim of this dissertation by focusing on the spatial, organizational practices of a Nordic startup accelerator. Specifically, it argues that although existing studies recognize that practices are rhythmic and affective by nature, we know little of how these two aspects relate in the flow of practice. We suggest that this is a critical shortcoming, as treating rhythms and affects separately easily disregards the ways in which shifts in organizational rhythms (e.g. imposed acceleration) may evoke shifts in affective intensities and the capacity of organizational members to act and vice versa. Hence, our first
research question is as follows: *How are rhythms and affects connected in organizational practice?*

Building on a practice-theoretical perspective on learning and knowing, we theorize that practice-specific rhythms and affects are entangled and suggest an integrative concept of *affecto-rhythmic order*. This concept highlights the norms and an aesthetic criterion that define the “appropriate” rhythms and associated affective attunement (i.e. a shared affective state that can be enacted in specific organizational practices). From this perspective, becoming a competent organizational member requires learning and embodying the contextual affecto-rhythmic order in practice. Thus, our second research question is as follows: *How do organizational members learn and embody the rhythms and affective attunement of organizational practice?*

To answer these research questions, we build on the ethnographic study of ThinkCo (see section 4) and particularly focus on its annual startup accelerator program called 4UNI. The 4UNI is a two-month long startup accelerator program for early-stage entrepreneurship teams. I attended it as a participant-researcher in 2015 and 2016. The field study follows the tradition of affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2018; Stewart, 2007) and draws on Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis. This methodological combination suggests that examining the affective and rhythmic character of spatial, organizational practices requires active bodily engagement and activation of multiple senses.

Based on the empirical study, the 4UNI accelerator operates through two key practices (1) the practice of business idea development and (2) the practice of sales pitching. We suggest that these spatial practices draw on and reproduce a contextual affecto-rhythmic order that is best described as *upbeat*. This order highlights the entanglement of certain fast-paced rhythms of working and certain positive, perky ways of being and doing. We show with various ethnographic vignettes how becoming a competent accelerator participant requires “becoming upbeat.” Specifically, we highlight how this entails openness to multiple sensory cues available in organizational space and constituting the affecto-rhythmic order; submission to ongoing bodily dressage according to the order; being assessed and assessing others in relation to the order; and affecting/being affected by others in keeping with the contextual order.

Through this study, my colleagues and I make four contributions. First, we theorize and empirically illustrate the entanglement of practice-specific rhythms and affective attunement in spatial, organizational practices. Second, we highlight the affective nature of inter-corporeal learning in organizational practices that occurs through collective affective attunement. Third, we extend the view of the regulative power of practices to include an affective dimension that functions through a compelling “mood” or “groove.” Fourth, and finally, we show how a methodology inspired by affective ethnography and rhythmanalysis can help scholars examine affect and write about it in organizational research.
5.3 Essay 3: “Space/Gender in becoming: An affective ethnography of an entrepreneurial event hub”

Essay 3 addresses the research aim by investigating how affective organizational space emerges in relationships between heterogeneous elements in the context of an entrepreneurial event hub. Specifically, this paper focuses on how encounters with (in) such space can trigger politics that force people to “re-think” traditional representations of gender and organizational space. The study posits that although existing studies show that workspaces materialize gender norms and evoke gendered experiences (Hirst & Schwabenland, 2018; Panayiotou, 2015; Tyler & Cohen, 2010), they tend to privilege representational accounts that construct space as a relatively stable, social product. Consequently, they tend to overlook the affective fluidity and multiplicity of both gender (Pullen et al., 2017) and space (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). To address this shortcoming, we draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) theorizing on desiring intensities and immanent relations. We conceptualize space and gender as agencements consisting of various human and material elements. This allows us to reimagine gender and space outside of, and in between, traditional dualities such as “feminine” and “masculine”. We suggest that this is important as it enables us to critically explore the nuances of gendered inclusion/exclusion in organizational spaces.

Building on the ethnographic study of ThinkCo (section 4), this paper expresses through evocative vignettes how the affective capacity of space emerges and contributes to organizational power and politics. Specifically, we show how the drive behind ThinkCo was to offer a space for multiple (alternative) becomings. Through oscillations between smoothness and striation, the space came into being in an ambiguous manner. Although symbols and discourses were adopted from typical, idealized depictions of entrepreneurship, there was still a sense of that which was “yet to come”, which allowed for a lingering sense of possibility (of difference). However, through series of events, an agencement emerged that contributed to a spacing that followed desiring tendencies of predominant entrepreneurial (neoliberal, late-capitalist) orders. The materiality of similarity, and values such as competition temporarily territorialized the ThinkCo space, giving rise to Western masculinity as a defining stratum. Desires for a space of multiple (alternative) becomings quickly turned into a space of similar (ordinary) becomings, for similar-izing subjectivities creating an affective sense of inclusion/exclusion.

Overall, this paper offers three contributions. First, we offer an affective ethnographic account of the fluid, multiple and entangled becomings of space and gender. We highlight how these becomings problematize the traditional gender duality and challenge the notion of space as a stable, social product. Second, we show of a space can “masquerade” as one of smoothness with innate potential of difference. Although the masquerade at ThinkCo partially contributed to expressions of less specific or dominating expressions of gender, it played upon affective, liberating and joyful cues that ended up drawing participants intro
striated orders of sameness. Third, and finally, we elaborate on Pullen and colleagues (2017) adaption of “becoming-woman” to further problematize the possibilities of an affective politics of difference in organizations.

5.4 Essay 4: “Ethnographic approaches to the study of organizational space: Towards affective ethnography”

Essay 4 examines what ethnographic approaches are employed in organizational space research and how do they shape the ways in which space is treated in this area. Furthermore, the paper draws on the fieldwork at ThinkCo (section 4) to illustrate how affective ethnography can help in moving towards more-than-representational analysis of space and affect. The starting point of this article is that although ethnographic approaches have gained increasing popularity in organizational space research (Rouleau, de Rond, Musca, Raulet-Croset, & Borzeix, 2014; Van Marrewijk, 2011; Van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010), there is a dearth of knowledge about how they influence our thinking of space. To address this research need, I conceptualize ethnographic approaches as performative practices (Barad, 2007) that actively enact the spaces they investigate and represent (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012).

The paper shows how three types of ethnographic approaches surface in organizational space literature: objective, aesthetic, and action-based ethnographies. These approaches differ from each other in terms of the fieldwork methods, analytical assumptions and writing styles that they embrace. Consequently, they produce different views of space. While objective ethnography enacts space as a stable structure (Coradi, Heinzen, & Boutellier, 2015; Roethlisberger & William, 1939), aesthetic ethnography treats it as a carrier of meanings (Van Marrewijk, 2011; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011). Finally, action-based ethnography expresses it as an outcome of multiple activities and events (Cnossen & Bencherki, 2019; Jakonen et al., 2017). Despite these differences, the three approaches share a tendency towards representational epistemology highlighting meanings and significations. Consequently, they struggle to acknowledge and express the affective, pre-discursive quality of space. To address this challenge, I draw on a fieldwork example to illustrate how affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2018) can help in moving towards more-than-representational analysis of space and affect in organizing.

This paper contributes to organizational space research in three ways. First, it identifies and elaborates on the main ethnographic approaches that surface in organizational space literature. This can help scholars to better position their work in relation to existing research approaches. Second, the paper elucidating the performative effects of ethnographic approaches on how organizational space is constituted and treated. This is essential for developing better understanding about the (unintended) consequences of ethnographic approaches in spatial analysis of organizing. Third, and finally, the article illustrates with an empirical example how affective ethnography as an alternative ethnographic approach can help in moving towards more-than-representational analysis of space, one that is sensitive to its affective registers.
6. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this ethnographic study has been to examine and better understand how the affective capacity of organizational space emerges and contributes to power and politics in the context of collaborative spaces. The findings of this study are reported in four papers that address the research aim in different ways (Table 1). While the first paper shows how prior studies have conceptualized the relationship between space and affect, the second paper examines the organizational practices in and through which the affective capacity of space emerges. The third paper, in turn, theorizes space as an *agencement* of various elements and focuses on how encounters with(in) it can trigger affective politics. Finally, the fourth paper shows how affective ethnography can help researchers in developing a sensitivity towards the interrelations between space and affect. In the following, I will discuss the contributions of this dissertation in relation to existing literature.

Table 1. Key findings and contributions of the four essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Perspective to affective organizational space</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reviews the existing process studies of organizational space and shows how scholars recognizing the affective capacity of space embrace a strong, “becoming” process orientation to the study of space and organizing.</td>
<td>Process studies of organizational space can be divided into five orientations. These orientations transform the key constructs of space highlighted in the traditional organizational space literature.</td>
<td>1. Pulls together research on how space works as a process and how it is integral to organizing 2. Sets forth a typology of process approaches to organizational space 3. Sets forth the key constructs of organizational space 4. Shows how spatial activities arise from the intersections of the key constructs of space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Affective organizational space as shaped in and through sociomaterial practices that comprise a network of human bodies, material artifacts, rhythms, affective attunement, spatial arrangements, among other elements.</td>
<td>The rhythms and affective attunement of spatial, organizational practices constitute each other. This entanglement can be understood as the affecto-rhythmic order of organizational practice. Becoming a competent organizational member requires learning and embodying the contextual affecto-rhythmic order in practice.</td>
<td>1. Theorizes and illustrates the entanglement practice-specific rhythms and affects 2. Shows how inter-corporeal learning takes place via affective attunement 3. Illustrates how the regulative power of practices works at the level of affects 4. Shows how a combination of affective ethnography and rhythmanalysis can serve as a fruitful methodological approach for affect research</td>
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### 6.1 Contributions

This dissertation adds to existing organizational research by (1) theorizing and empirically showing how the affective quality of space emerges and contributes to organizational power and politics; (2) by demonstrating how different forms of process theorizing can advance understanding of space in organizations and organizing; and (3) by illustrating and further developing affective ethnography as a research approach to organizational research. In the following, I will address these contributions in more detail.

First, this dissertation adds to studies of organizational space as a materialization of power relations (Dale, 2005; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Ropo et al., 2015; Zhang & Spicer, 2014) by theorizing and empirically showing how the affective capacity of space emerges and contributes to power and politics in organizations. Although several studies, mainly building on Lefebvre’s (1991) “spatial triad”, have shown the contested and manipulated character of space, they have overlooked the link between space and affect in the enactment of power and politics. In this dissertation, I have drawn on a Deleuzian approach to investigate the affective capacity of space in the context of collaborative spaces. In this approach, affective organizational space emerges from encounters between various human and nonhuman constituents of space. Specifically, this view shifts the attention from the spatial triad towards the ways in which power and politics function through space on the level of pre-subjective and pre-cognitive affects. For example, in Essay 2 we illustrated, among other things, how a startup accelerator emerged as an (manipulated) affective space over time and created either strong attachment to or detachment from accelerator practices among the participants. In Essay 3, in turn, we investigated how the affective capacity of an entrepreneurial event hub developed over a period

| 3 | Affective organizational space as a constantly changing *agencement* of heterogeneous elements (bodies, artifacts, texts, etc.) having the capacity to affect and be affected by each other. | Affective encounters with(in) organizational space generate bodily responses that, on the one hand, push individuals to question the dominant orders of space/gender, and on the other hand, attract them towards these orders. | 1. Provides an affective ethnographic account of the fluid and multiple becoming of space/gender  
2. Shows how a fluid organizational space is constantly rearranged to affect individuals in desirable ways  
3. Empirically elaborates on the D+G’s notion of “becoming-woman” |
| 4 | Affective organizational space as a phenomenon non difficult to explore and write about through conventional ethnographic approaches that prioritize representational logic. Attending to such space calls for a different “attunement” or form of knowing and expressing. | Three ethnographic approaches surface in the organizational space literature: the objective, aesthetic, and action-based ethnographies. They privilege different forms of space but share a tendency towards representational epistemology. Moving towards affective ethnography can help scholars to develop sensitivity towards more-than-representational analysis. | 1. Identifies and elaborates on the main ethnographic approaches that surface in organizational space literature  
2. Elucidates the performative effects of ethnographic approaches on how organizational space is understood  
3. Extends affective ethnography to the domain of organizational space research to examine the affective quality of workspaces |
of three years and, for example, pushed people to problematize taken-for-granted representations of gender. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates that the (manipulated) affective capacity of organizational space can have significant consequences for power and politics in organizations as it shapes the range of activities potentially enactable within a particular setting. This capacity defines “what bodies can do” (Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015) in relation to space.

Second, this dissertation contributes to organizational space research (e.g. Best & Hindmarsh, 2019; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013) by demonstrating how different forms of process theorizing can advance understanding of space in organizations and organizing. Specifically, the study shows that process research of space is not a homogeneous approach and does not represent a singly perspective; instead, it includes a range of different approaches that embrace different assumptions and premises about space and organizing. In Essay 1, my colleagues and I identified five different orientations that serve as categories for classifying the process studies of organizational space: developing, transitioning, imbricating, becoming, and constituting. We further elaborated how each of these orientations tend to privilege a partly different view of space. In Essay 3, in turn, we engaged with the becoming orientation and employed the concept of agencement to examine organizational space as a process. In this article, we particularly showed how this conceptualization allows elucidating, on the one hand, the affective capacity of space, and on the other hand, the multiple and constantly developing trajectories that a space can take over time. In Essay 4, in contrast, I took on a performative view to space to demonstrate how different ethnographic approaches not only offer detailed descriptions of space but also help constitute it. Consequently, the dissertation highlights the variety of ways in which organizational space can be conceptualized as process as well as the heterogeneity of practices, processes and elements that constitute it. In so doing, the study can help researchers investigating organizational space to position their studies in relation to existing process-based literature.

Third, this dissertation contributes to the studies of affect in organizational research (Fotaki et al., 2017; Gherardi, 2017, 2018; Pullen et al., 2017; Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015) by illustrating and further developing affective ethnography as a research approach. Previous, mainly theoretical, research has defined affective ethnography as a style of performative ethnographic practice that relies on the ethnographer’s capacity to affect and be affected in order to produce interpretations (Gherardi, 2018). Scholars have further theorized that rather than being “an ethnography of affect”, this approach acknowledges that all human and nonhuman elements are already entangled in complex ways (Gherardi, 2018: 2, emphasis in the original). This dissertation, in turn, has drawn an empirical study of Nordic startup incubator and illustrated through three articles (2, 3, 4) how different forms of affective ethnography can help in developing sensitivity towards what affect “does” in encounters with(in) organizational space. For example, Essay 3 offered an evocative and affective ethnographic account of the developments of the startup incubator. Essay 4, in turn, showed
how affective ethnography differs from more conventional ethnographies of organizational space and invites us to move beyond representational analysis of space. Essay 2, in contrast, developed affective ethnography further in order to examine the entangled relationship between affect and rhythms in spatial, organizational practices. Specifically, this essay combined affective ethnography with Lefebvrian (2004) rhythm analysis to investigate and express the “affecto-rhythmic” character of organizational practices. Overall, this dissertation responds to recent calls “to undertake methodological experiments” and develop research approaches (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012: 53) that allow moving towards a more-than-representational analysis of organizational life.

6.2 Conclusions

To conclude, this dissertation has suggested that the relationship between space and affect deserves more attention because it offers an entry point to study how organizational power and politics function at the level of pre-discursive forces and bodily sensations. This is important as contemporary workspaces in general and collaborative spaces in particular are designed to appeal to the senses and emotions of their (potential) users much more than traditional workspaces. Specifically, these spaces are manipulated to generate particular affective responses in their users that, in turn, serve certain organizational interests. The study of Helsinki Think Company (ThinkCo) startup incubator showed how organizational space is modified to, for example, “push” people together, have a creative “buzz”, and produce a collective affective state of “upbeat”. I do not want to overstate the findings of one ethnographic study, but the case ThinkCo highlights how individuals working in collaborative spaces are required to contribute to the organization not only through their professional expertise and skills but also with their affective and sensory capacities. However, more research is needed to understand the affective quality of organizational space in other settings.

In addition, this dissertation has emphasized that the affective responses evoked by organizational space are not predetermined and cannot be fully designed. Despite efforts such as architecture and sensory design, the affective quality of space may develop into an unexpected direction and produce surprising consequences at any given moment. For example, an enthusiastic atmosphere influencing positively on collaborative work may change rapidly to that of anxiety and stress when stricter and tighter work rhythms are imposed (Essay 2). Specifically, the dissertation has sought to illustrate how affective encounters with (in) organizational space may generate surprising or even transformative responses that force individuals to think otherwise than they have been thinking (Essay 3). These unexpected responses highlight how affect allows other, alternative ways of being and doing to be unlocked in organizational spaces. In particular, they express how affect can establish affirmative action and politics that challenge, for example, domination and oppression. Therefore, future research should investigate the relationship between space and affect in different settings.
and with different approaches to track the forces that can trigger new and more sustainable forms of organizing.

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