Crowded vision conversations:

A ventriloquial perspective on what constitutes vision

in employee interactions

Ellen Nathues

s1627600

Supervisors: Dr. Mark van Vuuren & Dr. Suzanne Janssen

Institution: University of Twente

Faculty: Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences

Department: Communication Science

Date: January 9, 2018

Abstract

Visions are ubiquitous in organizations. They define organizations' ideal futures and give answers to the questions of what and where to be. Management expects visions to strengthen alignment and motivation throughout the organization. In reality, however, many visions never make it from the posters on the walls to the hearts and minds of members, at least not as intended. Current research considers visions as static scriptures, takes a rhetorical lens on vision composition and content, and focuses on the role of management. It is overlooked that visions, once joining everyday organizational interactions, escape the control of the few of the top and grow into the collective and constantly emerging constitutions of the many at the floor. This results in substantial incongruences in vision meaning between different organizational layers and in visions missing out on their very purpose.

This study conceives of visions as dynamic and evolving realities and shifts the analysis from managerial and rhetorical fields to the interactional vision constitutions of employees. It adopts the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) perspective and, particularly, grounds vision constitution in a ventriloquial approach. Per CCO school, organizational realities, such as visions, are shaped and constituted in communication and interaction. Ventriloquism looks beyond the apparent human interactants and encompasses the additional actants that are present in interactions and co-constitute reality and meaning.

The objective of this study was to gain insight into the actants populating employee vision interactions, how these actants share agency, and how they ultimately constitute vision. To explore this, in five focus groups 23 employees from four organizations of different sizes, structures, and industries were asked to share their ideas on their organization's ideal future and to discuss the official vision. Participants demonstrated an ability to envision firmly anchored in their values, principles, and emotions and influenced by organizational practices they were not approving of. Moreover, to make sense of visions,

participants translated abstract vision content into tangible everyday practices by invoking diverse actants, such as other people's behavior or architectural elements. Overall, vision constitutions were crowded by actants of diverse ontologies including human, nonhuman, material, and immaterial.

Managerial and rhetorical studies so far investigate visions from above their surface and center on higher organizational levels. In contrast, the constitutive approach of this study reveals what substantiates vision from below the surface in employees' perceptions. Thus, it reveals what stands under vision realities and meanings as enacted and lived in the everyday organizational life.

Keywords: vision, employee constructions, employee interaction, communicative constitution of organizations, ventriloquism, relational agency, constitutive methodology

Table of Contents

Introduction

In most of today's organizations, when managers think of vision, they see two things. First, an overarching, highly abstract and idealistic future goal arduously developed and established with their very own minds, hands, and mouths (Kantabutra, 2008, 2009). Second, a horde of organizational members committedly working towards this shared vision (Baum, 2007). What both managers and the majority of current writings on vision tend to ignore is what happens in between the first and the second. Current research considers visions as static scriptures, takes a rhetorical lens on vision composition and content, and focuses on the role of management in creating and sharing visions. An incredible amount of time, thoughts, and talent is invested into crafting the perfect vision which is then assumed to work its own magic into the minds and hearts of all organizational members. Unfortunately, as in the child's play Chinese Whispers, on the way down to the floor of the organization visions alter and transform, thereby missing out on their very purpose (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Rather than being static scriptures that convey fixed meanings, visions are dynamic and evolving realities formed not only on the desks of management but as well in the minds, hearts, and mouths of all employees.

Imagine a wall poster that reads: '*We will be recognized in the world as the leader in knowledge generation and sharing whilst leveraging our brand value, delivering customer value, and building a profitable future.*' This fictional but very typical example of a vision fulfills the rhetorical requirements: It is future-oriented, desirable, challenging, and abstract. However, while managers might have a shared mindset about what this vision means, its meanings can vary substantially for other organizational members. For instance, employee A might translate customer value into offering quick but superficial knowledge based on her observations of co-workers. Employee B might personally value quality and translate customer value into offering extensively researched and detailed knowledge. Employee C

might be influenced by management's behavior and give more weight to making profits and less to customer value, delivering only minimum service. In short, priorities and what the ideal future precisely is are not clear. The written vision, even as a static scripture, cannot be reduced to one meaning. Instead, meaning is constituted in an emerging and dynamic fashion (Cooren, 2010; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). This does not only hold for poor visions, as in this example, but for everything that is said, written, or done. While rhetorical and managerial lenses capture a partial and superficial image of vision, it needs to be uncovered how visions are constituted in communication in everyday organizational interactions. Here, visions are made sense of, aligned with, and lived. And therefore, visions must be aligned with what constitutes them in usage; narrowing the vision meaning gaps between different organizational layers and enabling visions to fulfill the very purpose they were once established for.

Vision's embeddedness in communication and interaction positions the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) school as an appropriate and auspicious lens to study vision. Per CCO school, communication occupies a fundamental and formative role in constituting and shaping organizational realities; always on the terra firm of interaction (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). Conceiving of vision as a matter of accomplishment, appropriation, and performance in interaction and shifting the level of analysis from managers to employees, this study investigates what employees see when they think of vision, i.e., what constitutes vision in employees' perceptions. Particularly, this paper adopts the CCO perspective of ventriloquism which argues that interactions are populated by a plentitude of actants of various ontologies, beyond the apparent interactants (Cooren, 2010a). These additional actants are not only of human, but as well of nonhuman, material, and immaterial character. They enter interactions and constitute realities and meanings through the human and apparent interactants, either as vents or figures. Vents animate the

interactants to act and speak, such as the feeling of anger that moves a person in a heated dispute. Figures are invoked by interactants to convey and add authority to one's own claims, such as the invocation of a rule to point someone to her wrong behavior. The apparent interactants, the vents, and the figures collectively constitute realities and meanings, sharing agency as a hybrid and joint mediation (Cooren, Fairhust, & Huet, 2012). That is, they all make a difference in the constitutions of and interactions about vision. In this paper, agency is, thus, conceived of from a relational ontology with the question of who or what is acting being of an open and inclusive manner.

Referring back to the fictitious vision example from before, A constituted the vision in coworkers' work practices, B was animated by her value of quality which impacted vision meaning, and C constituted the vision in management's behavior. This example admittedly presents a much-simplified image of the complex constitutions that form realities and meanings. Still, it demonstrates that vision realities and meanings vary depending upon their constitutions in communication and interaction. It is, consequentially, essential to investigate how visions are accomplished in communication and, particularly, who or what plays into their constitution. This paper is based on the following central research question:

CRQ Which actants, vents, and figures are (made) present in interactions and conversations among employees about their organization's vision, and how do they constitute and make a difference in these visions and their meanings?

The contributions of this paper lie in its theoretical and methodological approaches to a traditional organizational element, vision. On a more general level, by applying a ventriloquial lens on vision, the study offers a new approach for investigating the (communicative) constitution of organizational elements. This approach allows to uncover how the realities and meanings of organizational elements are accomplished, performed, and what constitutes them in communication and interaction. Particularly, it echoes recent calls

for revealing how actants of various ontologies are intertwined and mutually constitutive for realities, meanings, and sense-making and allows to uncover the communicative practices that add to organizational realities in greater detail (see e.g. Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, 2010a, 2012; Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). The constitutive approach of this study allows to reveal what substantiates organizational elements from below the surface. In other words, it allows to reveal what stands under realities and meanings as enacted and lived in the everyday organizational life.

More specifically, by considering visions as accomplished and constituted in communication and interaction, this study moves vision research from static considerations on the desks of management to visions' dynamic emergence and constitutions in the minds, hearts, and mouths of employees. Thus, this paper's approach allows for an investigation of visions (a) precisely where they are supposed to have the biggest impact, i.e., at the employee level; and (b) as truly lived realities. By taking a constitutive and, particularly, ventriloquial stance, this study provides answers to the question of what constitutes vision as an evolving and lived reality, reaching beyond the prescriptive but superficial vision elements and attributes. Instead, it uncovers the so far ignored constitutions that make visions tangible, understandable, and of matter within the everyday practice of organizations. The study sheds light on the complexity of actants, vents, and figures playing into employee vision constitutions and thereby reveals what substantiates, or stands under, vision reality and meaning. It enables seeing visions from below their surfaces and contributes to an overall more comprehensive, transparent, and clearer image and understanding of visions as lived realities. Eventually, understanding employee vision constitutions will help to design visions that, in fact, align and engage organizational members along a common thread and fulfill their very purpose.

Theoretical framework

Vision

In the organizational world, visions seem to be ubiquitous pieces of sheer imperative nature. Defined as an organization's "ideal goal […] strive[d] to achieve in future" (Kopaneva, 2015, p. 1), a vision figuratively builds the backbone of an organization. It gives answers to the two pivotal questions of what and where to be in future (Baum, 2007; Jing, Avery, & Bergsteiner, 2013; O'Connell, Hickerson, & Pillutla, 2010). Thereby, it can set the tone and frame for organizational action, guide member behavior and decision-making, and motivate toward a shared purpose (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004; Mirvis, Googins, & Kinnicutt, 2010). Typically, visions come in the form of arduously written statements, covering a future time span of 10 to 20 years (Fairhust, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997). Studies have evidenced compelling contributions of visions to organizational success. Amongst other, they are associated with increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance, as well as decreased turnover and role ambiguity (Levin, 2000; O'Connell et al., 2010; Zaccaro, 2001).

Overall, research to date presents an ample but rigid body of vision literature that is centered on rhetorical and managerial perspectives. It comes to no surprise that specific content attributes and leadership are classified as critical elements of successful visions (Bartkus & Glassman, 2007; Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001). First, the attributes conciseness, clarity, future orientation, stability, challenge, abstractness, and desirability are deemed particularly effective for vision success (Baum, 2007; Kantabutra & Avery, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Levin, 2000). Second, developing and disseminating visions are regarded as fundamental tasks of leaders, building the bedrock of power and authority (Berson et al., 2001; Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014; Kantabutra, 2008, 2009). Leaders are supposed to define, establish, and share visions that, noteworthily, employees are ought to be committed

to (Baum, 2007; Berson et al., 2001; Jing et al., 2013; Kantabutra, 2009; Sosik & Dinger, 2007). Taken together, present writings provide a how-to guide on vision development. Still, studies demonstrate a widespread failure of visions, depicting them as "nothing more than a boring stream of words" (Collins & Porras, 1991, p. 31), a "faddish and trendy concept" (Kantabutra, 2009, p. 319) and "mere celebratory ornamentation" (Thyssen, as cited in Kopaneva & Sias, 2015, p. 359).

Rather than being products of leadership and how-to guides, visions are processes that start, not end, with adoption and adaption by all organizational members (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004; Cole, Harris, & Bernerth, 2006). Leaders do not articulate visions in a vacuum and first studies demonstrate the need for vision setting to take place at all organizational levels (Baum, 2007; Collins & Porras, 1991; Kopaneva & Sias, 2015); particularly as organizations depend more and more on employees to contribute to strategic goal achievement (Boswell, Bingham, & Colvin, 2006). Visions are, thus, not only in the minds of the few at the top but instead in the mouths of the many at the floor, where their meanings can easily be blunted (Berson et al., 2001; Fairhust et al., 1997). Nonetheless, most vision research overlooks employees' views towards, understandings of, and experiences with visions (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). Insight about what happens to visions after development, that is, once they join everyday organizational interactions, is mostly absent.

A sole exception here is provided by Kopaneva and Sias (2015) whose interview study indicates a very low congruence between official and employee vision constructions. In their study, official vision constructions were consistently broader and more complex than employee constructions. Most commonly, employees based their constructions on either bringing benefit to the world or the company and named the three themes of excellence in products and services, market leadership, and growth. The individual-centered study points to gaps between official, organizational representations of vision and the level of everyday

practice as experienced and observed by employees. Still, the study leaves the question about the factors contributing to these gaps and different constructions open: What precisely constitutes visions in everyday organizational interactions between employees? Despite vision's ultimate embeddedness in communication and its often-inherent ambiguity necessitating interaction for clarification, studies have not yet addressed what precisely constitutes vision in employee communications and interactions.

Communicative constitution of organizations, ventriloquism, and relational agency

According to the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) perspective, communication occupies a fundamental and formative role in organizations. Rather than considering organizations as fixed entities, CCO scholarship focuses on what is happening in communication and draws a picture of organizations as emerging on the terra firm of interaction (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Castor & Cooren, 2006). In these interactions, organizational realities are accomplished and meanings negotiated (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). Importantly, every interaction is a matter of interpretation and every interpretation a matter of judgment. Interactions, therefore, are critical sites where organizational realities are co- and re-constituted and where meanings tend to transform, multiply, and slip away from single actors' control (Cooren, 2010a; Cooren, Matte, Benoit-Barné, & Brummans, 2013; Vasquez et al., 2016). Here, visions slip away from managers' control, are constituted as a collective accomplishment, and often are reshaped in meaning.

Of late, CCO research has been criticized for focusing too strongly on individual agency and on how humans orient to each other (Cooren et al., 2013; Reed, 2009). However, the organizational world is constituted by actants of variable ontologies hat all have agency, i.e., the "capacity to make a difference" (Castor & Cooren, 2006, p. 573). Human, nonhuman, material, and immaterial actants collectively build realities and meanings (Caronia & Mortari,

2015). To name just a few, these actants include documents, statuses, policies, values, experiences, and feelings (Cooren, 2010a).

For illustration, imagine the following interaction among employees about two aspects of their organization's vision that read: "*[…] through continuous training and development of our qualifications, and through best-quality medical products and technical equipment*."

Lena:	It also says here 'through continuous training'.
Anki:	Well, the <u>doctors get that (1)</u>.
Lena:	Well, the DOCTORS, but what about the rest?
Anki:	That's <u>where they save money (2)</u>. And the <u>doctors have to do the trainings (3)</u>, no matter what.
Lena:	[…] Because <u>we don't have continuous training (4)</u>. <u>CERTAINLY NOT (5)</u>. […]
Anki:	And technical equipment? For me it's hard to judge, but is it really that good? […]
Dani:	Well, like in physiotherapy, <u>we do have them all (6)</u>, many are repaired like 30 times but. […]
Trese:	[…] <u>What I see (6) and hear (7)</u>, we really are well equipped.
Lena:	[…] Also for the check-ups, they have an <u>iPad (6)</u> now. […]
Sandra:	In fact, <u>people always wonder (7)</u> why such a rather small hospital has so many things.

Here, vision is constituted and substantiated through various actants (underlined and numbered): (1) doctors' practices, (2) management's practices, (3) training policies, (4) own experiences and (5) feelings of frustration and anger about these, (6) technical artifacts, and (7) opinions of external persons. While this example admittedly gives only initial and simplified insight, it demonstrates the diversity of actants playing into vision constitution in communication and interaction.

The concept of ventriloquism as introduced by Cooren (2010a) offers a rich view of communication that reaches beyond the obvious interactants and encompasses the additional actants that are (made) present in interactions (Cooren et al., 2013; Cooren & Sandler, 2014); as in the example above. Ventriloquism poses the question of who or what is acting and

constituting reality and meaning in an open and inclusive manner, with no priority given to human actants over objects or things (Caronia & Cooren, 2014). With ventriloquism, agency is, thus, conceived of from a relational ontology, i.e., as a hybrid and joint mediation that is shared among actants of various forms and appearances (Cooren, Fairhust, & Huet, 2012). Ventriloquism thereby broadens the spectrum of what is conceived of as interaction and allows for a more profound perception of the totality of actants that constitute realities and meanings (Cooren et al., 2013; Cooren & Bencherki, 2010).

In particular, ventriloquism illustrates how interactants invoke or are animated upon specific figures or vents and how they come to speak and act for these (Cooren, 2012). Importantly, figures and vents are qualified partakers in the constitution and enactment of reality and meaning (Cooren et al., 2013). They include, to enumerate a few, "values, beliefs, and principles; inclinations, feelings, emotions, passions, and attachments; practices and procedures; or artifacts, such as objects and texts" (Brummans & Cooren, 2011, p. 187).

In the artistic praxis of ventriloquism (i.e., belly-speaking), ventriloquists refer to their dolls or dummies as *figures*, that is, as something that they make speak. Similarly, in communication, *figures* are made present and to speak by interactants (Cooren, 2010a). Upstream ventriloquism focuses on which *figures* are implicitly or explicitly invoked in interaction by "identifying *in the name of what or whom* a given interlocutor appears to speak" (Cooren, 2010a, p. 135; italics in original). In the before example, Anki explicitly invokes the doctors' practices into the interaction: "Well, the doctors get that." Anki further implicitly invokes the training policies of doctors: "And the doctors have to do the trainings, no matter what." Lena implicitly invokes her own experience about training: "Because we don't have continuous training. CERTAINLY NOT." In this instance, the practices, policies, and experiences constitute and substantiate vision and play into its reality and meaning for the employees.

Importantly, any action can be scrutinized for what made it possible, that is, for its passive dimension or passitivity (Cooren & Bencherki, 2010). Ventriloquists use the term *vents*, an abbreviation of ventriloquists, to refer to each other. Acting as *vents*, ventriloquists animate their dummies to speak in their artistic performances. Thus, the action of the dummy is made possible by the *vent*. Similarly, in communication, *vents* animate interactants to say and act what and how they do, that is, they make their utterances and actions possible. Referring back to the before example, Anki can only perform the action of adding the policies into the interaction because these policies (passively) exist. If there were not existing, Anki's action would have not been made possible. Similarly, Lena could not invoke her experience if this experience is not something she has, in fact, experienced before. Moreover, Lena's feelings of frustration and anger about this experience animate (and thereby make it possible for) her to say what she is saying and act how she is acting. The focus of downstream ventriloquism is precisely that: What animates interactants?

The demarcation between upstream and downstream ventriloquism is analytical only. In interactions, *figures* and *vents* convey themselves conjointly through the participating interactants who are always both actors and passers (Cooren, 2010a). As an actor, employee Anki actively invoked the policies into the interaction. Simultaneously, these policies passed through Anki in Anki's role as a passer. Still, one aspect can be emphasized over the other. An interactant can intentionally or unintentionally position him- or herself as either more of a dummy that is made to act through a *vent*, or as more of a *vent* that makes dummies, or *figures*, speak for her- or himself (Cooren, 2010a). It is worth referring back to employee Lena's turn of talk in the before example: "Because we don't have continuous training. CERTAINLY NOT." Here, Lena emphasizes her actor position when invoking the figure of experience. She intentionally and actively adds this experience to the interaction to substantiate her organization's vision. At the same time, Lena's feelings of frustration and

anger as demonstrated in her loud voice pass through Lena and make her act the way she is, indeed, acting. Lena is, consequentially, also a passer and dummy to her feelings.

Taken together, ventriloquism allows to uncover what constitutes vision as an evolving and lived reality, that is, the constitutions that make visions tangible, understandable, and of matter within the everyday practices and interactions of organizations.

Method

Focus groups and sample

This study was based on a focus group approach to capitalize on the communication and interaction between participants. Further, the focus group approach enabled a focus on the interactive processes that contribute to the collective constitution and sense-making of visions (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Kitzinger, 1995). I am aware that the CCO perspective I adopt in this study prefers natural observations over artificial settings. As interactions about an organization's vision are not readily observed at the employee level, I opted for focus groups nonetheless. Of course, focus groups present their own performances. However, by acknowledging for this performative character, access to the views, experiences, and understandings of participants can be gained precisely through this performativity. A further advantage of focus groups is the deep engagement of employees with vision.

Sampling for the focus groups was stratified purposive, that is, based on a hybrid approach of diversity across but homogeneity within groups. To fit the exploratory endeavor of this study, participants were recruited from four organizations that varied in industry, size, and structure. The organizations were conveniently recruited from the researcher's network and chosen for because of the diversity in backgrounds (i.e., health care, fire protection, finance, and consumer products). The only commonality between all four organizations is their German nationality due to sampling from the researcher's network. Table 1 gives

detailed information about each organization. For confidentiality reasons, organizations were given pseudo names.

Per organization, one to two focus groups were conducted. That led to a total of five focus groups with a total of 23 participants, varying between four and five participants per group (Gill et al., 2008; Kitzinger, 1995; Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). Data was, thus, gathered from multiple sources. All participants were hierarchically on the employee level. Management was excluded, just as employees from human resources, marketing, and communication because of their probable bias to vision. Participants were asked to take part in the study by their organizations and joined voluntarily. To capitalize on shared experiences and for participants to be comfortable in talking to one another, participants were selected to obtain positions at a similar level and have some personal experience with each other (Kitzinger, 1995; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). Table 1 gives detailed information about the participants, including age, positions, and tenure.

Table 1: Organizations, participants, and focus groups

Pseudo	Organization	Participants	Focus groups
Apricot	German and regional banking and finance organization employing more than 1,500 people. Offering products and services in all areas of the finance sector, including private and business. Existing for 175 years.	n = 4, all female mean age = 25 (23-27) mean tenure = 5.75 years (5-7) positions included: corporate client assistant and private client bank clerk	1 group, duration: 00:55 # words in transcript: 7,678
Banana	One of the biggest fire brigades in Germany, employing more than 600 people. Helping people in a diverse array of emergency situations including fire protection and ambulance.	n = 5, all male mean age = 47 (40-54) mean tenure = 22 years (16-31) positions included: firefighter in emergency service and fire chief in emergency services	1 group, duration: 01:27 # words in transcript: 16,414
Cherry	Local and catholic hospital employing more than 850 employees. Offering very diverse health services (medical check-up, surgery, aftercare check-up, nursing, physiotherapy, fitness, etc.) for a diverse array of health-related fields (cardiology, trauma surgery, internal medicine, orthopedics, gynecology, neurology, etc.).	n = 5, all female mean age = 35 (26-51) mean tenure = 4.3 years (1.5-11) positions included: nurse, physician assistant, physio therapist, fitness trainer, and surgery service	1 group, duration: 01:50 # words in transcript: 14,853
Date	12-year old German direct selling organization employing more than 250 employees and operating in the erotic and sensual product branch, mainly selling their products via home parties accompanied by (independent) product advisors.	Group#1: n = 4, all female mean age = 32 (24-42) mean tenure = 1.5 years (0.5-2.5) positions included: sales representative and product advisor Group#2: n = 5, all female mean age = 30 (25-38) mean tenure = 2 years (1-5.5) positions included: sales representative and product advisor	Group#1, duration: 01:29 # words in transcript: 6,031 Group#2, duration: 01:21 # words in transcript: 6,221

At the beginning of the focus groups participants were welcomed, thanked for their participation, and given a short briefing. Participants were informed about their rights (such as leaving the discussion at any point) and the audio-taping, ensured of the confidentiality in handling the data, and encouraged to speak freely throughout the discussion. Afterwards, they were asked for informed consent and to fill in a short demographic questionnaire that covered age, gender, nationality, work position, department, tenure, and industry of their organization (Appendix). Moreover, participants were asked for a pseudo name.

The focus group discussions followed a semi-structured approach with a flexible set of questions only (Gill et al., 2008). Questions were derived from vision literature and partly adapted or mixed with self-developed ones (Collins & Porras, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Kopaneva, 2013; Levin, 2000). Questions were recorded in a topic guide (see Appendix). The topic guide was mainly used to start off the discussions and keep discussions moving forward when they stagnated or moved too far from the topic of vision. Apart from that, it was not made use of for interactions to progress as naturally as possible. The topic guide was structured along three main topics moving from broader to more focal aspects. First, questions concerned the general future of the organization. Second, questions evolved around values. Third, questions were specifically directed at the official organizational vision. For this paper, mainly topics one and three were relevant.

From the outset on, the focus group discussions were centered on the organization's vision by starting off with an open question about the ideal future state (*If you think about an ideal future state of your organization towards which it strives, what is it?*). This question does not explicitly ask about vision for two reasons: First, vision was implicitly referred to in order to avoid a simple reproduction of vision as possibly learnt by heart. Second, while the word vision might not be clear to all lower-level organizational members, the words 'ideal

future state' are more specific and, thus, graspable. To ensure that participants thought of the long-term future, they were asked to think in a time span of 10 to 20 years into the future.

In the later parts of the discussion, participants were handed out their organizations' official visions and asked to comment and reflect on these. Amongst other, participants were asked about the authors of vision and in how far their work aligns with the vision. Throughout the discussion, moderator involvement was kept to a minimum with intervening only when the discussion stagnated or moved too far from the topic of vision. In these instances, the moderator facilitated and guided the further discussion along the topic guide.

Before ending the discussions, participants were asked for open questions or additional remarks. Participants were once again thanked for their participation, informed about the next steps (i.e., translation and transcription), and asked if they would be available to answer questions should uncertainties or unclear formulations occur during data analysis.

All focus groups were audio-recorded, translated from German to English, and transcribed (Halkier, 2010). While translations and transcription were time-consuming, conducting the focus groups in the participants' first language yielded rich data. Translations from source language to target language were produced meaning-based. With German being the first language of the researcher too, participants' expressed meanings were understood by the listener and could accurately be portrayed, thereby supporting the truth value of the translated focus group data. As part of the transcription, organizations' and participants' names were exchanged by pseudo names. Places, competitors' names, and other people's names were exchanged, too. In total, the focus groups resulted in 117 pages of single-spaced transcription with a total of 51,197 words. Transcripts were filed into Atlas.ti. Additionally, field notes were taken to capture impressions of the discussion and atmosphere and to embed the interaction into its context. First, field notes described participants' backgrounds and their relationships to one another. Second, field notes included a short summary of the discussion

and an account of the atmosphere. Third, field notes were used for initial reflections on how vision was constituted throughout the discussions. This supported sensitizing for future focus groups and the later data analysis.

Ventriloquial data analysis

To my knowledge, general frameworks that provide guidance for ventriloquial analyses are not available in literature to date. In my analysis, I followed three phases:

In phase one, I emerged in the totality of transcripts, inductively looking for manifestations of figures and vents as part of an open coding. Specifically, I looked for explicit invocations, implicit invocations, and animations by addressing the questions as in Table 2 to the transcripts (F. Cooren, personal communication, July 21, 2017). To illustrate, consider the following (shortened) interaction between participants of this study that concerns a new structure suggestion. Manifestations of vents and figures are underlined and numbered, and included in Table 2.

Sandra:	Particular contact persons for particular issues.
Trese:	It is better.
Anki:	Yes, and for employees it is easier, too. Because we can easier guide patients (1). Like when one comes, you now tell them you can go there, and there, and you can choose (2). And then they ask 'Who do you think is better?' (3). And we as employees (4) cannot give a judgment (5). […] And that way you can say 'Listen, knee pain, arthrosis, you straight away have to go to Dr. Hunt.' (6) […]
Trese:	And also, I would say for external people (7), it does make a better impression (8). […] Well, it is nice if a doctor is very broad in his abilities. But I think they can better do one thing very well - [Anki interrupts]
Anki:	And importantly keep care of the patients from start till end (9).

Table 2: Ventriloquial questions addressed to the transcripts

Explicit invocation	Implicit invocation	Animation
Directly naming a figure	Indirectly staging a figure	Vents that act upon another actant
What is a person invoking with what she is saying?	*What voice(s) can be recognized in what a person is saying?*	*What makes a person say what she is saying?*
In the example: Anki is directly naming (1)(5) her and her coworkers' future work processes, (2) her and her coworker's current work processes, and (3) the voices and behaviors of customers.	In the example: Anki is indirectly staging (4) the hospital's hierarchy and her and her coworkers' status as employees, and (5) the hospital's rule that employees are not allowed to help patients decide on a doctor. Trese is implicitly invoking (7) other people's opinions and (8) the recognition of reputation.	In the example: Anki is acted upon (9) her principle 'patient first' when she interrupts Trese. While it is impolite to interrupt, optimum patient care is of such relevance to her that her principle makes her interrupt Trese and bring forward the aspect of treating patients well throughout the entire process.

Further, I addressed every identification of a vent or figure with the question of responsibility (i.e., *Who or what is responsible?*) to ensure that agency is attributed legitimately across human, nonhuman, material, and immaterial actants. For example, the nonhuman and immaterial figures *rule* and *status* are responsible for the current, unpleasant work processes of Anki and her co-workers and, thus, two reasons for envisioning a new, more specialized and separated structure.

In total, phase one resulted in a list of 243 codes of vents and figures as retraced in Atlas.ti. The codes of vents and figures were created as inclusive as possible and covered various ontologies. They covered anecdotes and experiences, diverse attitudes, beliefs, and opinions, behaviors and practices of different actants, emotions and feelings, facts, values, principles, and ideologies, non-existences of, e.g., space, a plentitude of different objects, other places and organizations, policies, rules, and regulations, standards and statuses, and the voices of additional actants. At this point, vents and figures were coded very specifically, i.e., codes included the specific emotion or feeling, the specific value, the specific object and so on. Moreover, different codes were used for different actants, such as one's own feeling of stress and other employees' feelings of stress.

Whenever significant meaning uncertainties occurred during this first analysis stage, I checked back with the specific focus groups members. This was most often the case for the fire brigade group that used many work-related abbreviations and expressions.

In phase two, through axial coding, I grouped the codes of vents and figures into first-order categories, iteratively and through constant comparison between the different transcripts. Categories presented first clustering categories of the codes, without the codes' specificity in detail. For example, all positive and negative feelings were grouped into the first-order category of feelings along two actant levels (i.e., own or others). This resulted in a list of 59 first-order categories. Amongst others, first-order categories included experiences, behaviors, values, attitudes, feelings, and emotions of oneself and others. Documents were grouped into the first-order categories of planning, binding, and guiding documents. Other material and nonhuman first-order categories included places, buildings, interior elements, devices, programs, vehicles, and products. Immaterial and nonhuman first-order categories included, amongst others, brand feelings, facts and trends, statuses and positions, and regulations and policies. Taken together, the first-order categories already indicated the diverse complexity of partakers in employees' vision conversations.

Additionally, I supplemented each of the first-order categories with the specific activity participants were in engaging in, e.g., *instancing* another's practices, *attributing* another's feelings, or *adducing* an official document. Thereby, I got an idea of the processes and activities employees were engaging in when enacting and making sense of vision, and of how vision constitutions entered the interactions. In total, I added the ten activities of *remembering, instancing, feeling, attributing, thinking, adducing, including, excluding, exemplifying* and *comparing*.

Next, I identified linkages and relationships between both the first-order categories and the activities. For instance, own values, principles, and ideologies were linked contentual

and grouped into the first-order theme *thinking characteristics*. Other's statements and announcements were grouped into *other's speakings*, the different documents were grouped into *writings*, rules, policies, and laws were grouped into *directives* and the first-order categories of facts, lies, and trends into *informatives*. The activities feeling and thinking were grouped into the activity of *influencing*, and the activities of *envisioning* and *translating* added as incorporating all other activities. This resulted in a list of 24 first-order themes and six main activities (*envisioning*, *translating*, *exemplifying*, *verifying, substantiating*, and *influencing)*. Moreover, I grouped the first-order themes into a total of four second-order themes for further abstractness and a clear ordering of actants' ontologies (i.e., *behavioral processes*, *mental processes*, *'this'* or nonhuman-material partakers, and *'that'* or nonhuman-immaterial partakers).

In phase three, I selected two core activities (i.e., *envisioning* and *translating*) and put these in relation to the remaining and relevant activities. I selected these two activities as they presented the main processes of employee vision constitution and sense-making and covered the vision interactions as observed in the focus groups. For example, I defined *influencing* as a direct determinant of *envisioning*, and *exemplifying* and *verifying* as two separate processes of *translating*. Next, I related the first- and second-order themes to the respective activities. For instance, the first-order themes of *own thinking characteristics* and *emotions and feelings* directly influenced the *envisioning* of participants, i.e., figures or vents of these first-order themes constituted vision by *influencing* participants' own *envisioning* and, thus, visions. Figures of other first-order themes, such as *directives* or *coworkers' actings*, were invoked by participants to substantiate their exemplifications of own visions or verifications of official ones. In other words, these figures constituted vision by *substantiating* its (future) reality and meanings. In total, phase three gave a structured and concise impression of the figures and

vents constituting vision in employee interactions, ordered along the two main activities of developing vision (i.e., *envisioning*) and making sense of them (i.e., *translating*).

I then selected "powerfully illustrative" sequences (or, vignettes, see Langley & Abdallah, 2011, p. 127) for a detailed elaboration and showing of the entirety of actants in the vision interactions, both about own and official visions. In total, I selected six vignettes ordered along the different activities participants were engaging in when constituting vision. With this approach, I stay truthful to Cooren who uses a similar method in his ventriloquial papers (e.g., see Cooren, 2010c; Cooren & Bencherki, 2010; Cooren et al., 2013). Moreover, the real data vignettes add credibility to the theoretical insight of my analysis by allowing the reader to judge the soundness of my analyses and findings. In addition, the detailed method description, field notes, and vignette descriptions provide context for the reader, contributing to the transferability of my research findings.

Yet, my interpretation of the data and selection of vignettes is subjective. To my judgment, however, the researcher (including his or her subjectivity) builds a central feature of any ventriloquial analysis which does not impact the trustworthiness of findings. The facts that figures or vents say: 'I am interpreted by an author' and that vignettes say: 'I am chosen by an author' openly declares subjectivity; by exposing the person behind the findings, the interpretation and the selection. In this respect, and with the real data sequences, the reader is encouraged to think on his own, to construct his own understanding, and to add his own voice. Paradoxically, the overt possible untrustworthiness of a ventriloquial analysis with vignettes is what simultaneously makes it credible, confirmable and trustworthy.

Findings

In interactions about their organizations' visions, participants engaged in the main activities of *envisioning* and *translating*. While participants translated own visions into the future (i.e., *exemplifying*), official visions were translated to the present (i.e., *verifying*). In these main activities, participants were joined by a plenitude of vents and figures that collectively constituted visions realities and meanings. The following sections examine these vents and figures. First, the vents and figures constituting vision in the activities of employees' own visions, i.e., envisioning and exemplifying, will be examined along three vignettes. In the second part, the vents and figures constituting organizations' official visions will be explored, again along three vignettes.

Vision of employees: Envisioning and exemplifying

In the first part of the discussion, participants were asked about their ideas and thoughts on the ideal future of their organizations and doing so, demonstrated an ability to envision. Particularly, envisioning was an interactional and collective achievement that was joined by other partakers present in the interaction, such as participants' values and feelings. Participants translated their self- and co-constructed visions forward, that is into the future. They drew a detailed image of how the envisioned future would look and feel like by invoking a multitude of figures.

Vignette 1: Envisioning. In Vignette 1, participants of the finance organization (Apricot) envision superb customer service as an important aspect of the organization's digital future. They brought forward this digital future shortly before, influenced by general societal trends. Interaction between the participants is harmonious and friendly. Participants attend to each other's utterances and constitute their organization's ideal future collectively.

245	Ella:	I think one main advantage of Apricot is quality. That's something really important
246		for us, and that in future, when maybe really everything is online that with us it's
247		different than from the rest – like customers do not have to wait in line so long, and
248		get through very quick. With other direct banks, that's what I heard from customers,
249		they call there and then they have to wait for at least 15 minutes, or they don't have
250		a real opportunity to talk with someone in detail- [Rosie interrupts]
251	Rosie:	That's already our goal now! Customers shall not wait any longer than one minute
252		in the phone line.
253	Maria:	Yes, true.
254	Ella:	Yes, I believe that's something that's really good for us. Quality in everything.
255		Because I think whenever Apricot does something, eh … they really take care that
256		it's of very good quality.
257	Rosie:	For example, with the app they did.

Vignette 1

Animated, or influenced by the organization's and her internalized value of quality as well as by her pride about this quality (l. 245-48), Ella explicitly adds quality as an important aspect of superb customer service to the interaction (l. 245). To give solidity to her claim, she instances a positive practice of her own organization (l. 247-48) and a negative practice of competitors (l. 247). The latter is given even more solidity by instancing the experience of customers with these competitors (l. 248-50). Noteworthily, in this instance, it is not only Ella instancing this experience, but as well her principle ('customer first') that animates her to add the customer perspective and, thus, is speaking out of her. If this principle would not be of matter to Ella, she would have not taken the customer perspective and would have not instanced customers' experiences here. Rosie joins into the collective envisioning by implicitly adducing a policy into the interaction that adds solidity to Ella's quality conceptions:

"That's already our goal now! Customer shall not wait any longer than 1 minute in the

phone line." (l. 251-52);

as well as by explicitly adducing the app of the organization as a sign for quality (l. 257).

Vignette 2: Exemplifying. Vignette 2 is an excerpt from the hospital's discussion (Cherry). Here, participants translate forward an aspect they envisioned before: more

humanity towards patients. Particularly, in this excerpt, forward translation is challenged by the objecting behavior of two participants.

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

Vignette 2

Anki translates forward the before envisioned by exemplifying a doctor's practices and behavior towards a patient in very detail (l. 759-62). Here, Anki's principle ('patient first') animates her to exemplify the vision from the patients' perspective and to give her exemplification the high level of detail. Anki's exemplification is met with skepticism by two other participants: Sandra and Lena explicitly adduce a television and implicitly its embellished projections to question Anki's sayings (l. 763-64), further emphasized by Lena's laughter (l. 764). However, by adding the practices of Dutch hospitals (l. 765-69) and explicitly invoking "these big curtains" (l. 765) as a symbol for privacy and humanity, Anki restores the justifiability and solidity of her exemplification. Dani joins Anki and gives further solidity to the Dutch hospital example by explicitly adducing the "barrier between patient and doctor" (l. 770-71) that does not exist in the Netherlands. She implicitly attributes the principle of equality to the Dutch culture in general and Dutch hospitals in particular (l.

770-71; l. 7734), positioning them as an example and standard for more humanity towards patients. The principle of equality simultaneously animates Dani in this instance: If the principle were not of relevance to her, she would have not invoked an example that centered as strongly on equality as the example that she did, in fact, invoke. At this point, Lena dissociates from her former objecting stance and associates along their, now collective, exemplification of more humanity (l. 772; l. 775).

Vignette 3: Envisioning and exemplifying. The vignette below is an excerpt from the beginning of the hospital's group discussion (Cherry), i.e., shortly after the initial question about the organization's ideal future was posed. One of the participants, Anki, envisions two aspects of the hospital's ideal future: growth and optimized patient treatment, including German-speaking doctors. These are then further envisioned and exemplified in interaction among the participants. Interaction is friendly and harmonious. Participants attend to each other's utterances and build vision reality and meaning collectively.

70 71 72	Anki:	Well, I think they want to get bigger, grow. More doctors, and really getting doctors that stay on LONG-TERM, are German-speaking and secure that the patients are being treated well. And eh- [Sandra interrupts]
73	Sandra:	Space?
74 75	Anki:	Yeah well SPACE IS THE PROBLEM. They COULD become bigger- [Sandra interrupts]
76	Sandra:	They must leave the current place.
77 78 79	Anki:	Yes, principally the hospital would need to move to another place less central. To really become bigger. Or opening a second location so that eh some place you have internal medicine and somewhere else the surgery.
80	Trese:	Or, practically like having a poly clinic or such a thing.
81 82 83 84	Anki:	Yes, exactly also possible. That you do such a thing where there is the room and space for it. That they put something new there. But, I think in general they want to become bigger and make the departments bigger. But it doesn't function like that the way they do it right now. Also, because we don't have enough beds for that.
85 86 87 88 89 90 91	Trese:	And the approach, like what you said eh of German doctors or at least doctors that are able to speak the German language. Because that is something you hear MORE AND MORE OFTEN from people around you. That well, yes, I would say sometimes are really HORRIFIED about that, because they have no possibility to. Especially in the internal medicine, I find, there are like very many on station 1, 2 that are not able to speak the German language and THERE are a LOT OF OLD PEOPLE.
92	Dani:	Exactly.

Vignette 3

In her envisioning of the hospital's ideal future, Anki is influenced by her principle ('patient first') and value ('quality') about and towards patient care. If the principle and value were not of matter to her, she would have not taken a patient perspective and centered one aspect of her envisioning around patients' well-being. Further, she would have not added the aspect of language to her envisioning if the quality of her hospital's services towards patients was not of matter to her. Her principle and value, both acting as vents in the interaction, influence her envisioning, and animate her to voice good patient treatment as one of the organization's key goals; next to growth (l. 70-72). Sandra responds to the latter by adducing the figure of space, or rather the lack thereof, to the conversation (l. 73), which Anki agrees with strongly (l. 74). By explicitly invoking this absence, Sandy prepares the ground for her forward translation or exemplification of growth: "They must leave the current place." (l. 76). Joining Sandra in her forward translation, Anki exemplifies this behavioral process in further detail (l. 77-79; l. 81-82). Trese explicitly adds the example of a poly clinic (and implicitly this poly clinic's practices) to the interaction (l. 80); thereby adding solidity to the envisioning and exemplifying of Sandra and Anki. Further solidity to their suggestion of a new location is added by Anki herself, when she implicitly invokes the failure of current management practices (l. 83-84), and explicitly invokes beds, or again the non-existence thereof, as a symbol for the current lack of space (l. 84).

Next, Trese refers back to Anki's initial suggestion of German-speaking doctors. Again, she lends solidity to Anki's suggestion by implicitly adding the voices and experiences of "people around" (l. 87) to the conversation. In this sense, it is not only her and Anki experiencing a lack of German language abilities among doctors but also persons external to the hospital that are now partaking in the given interaction. Anki further strengthens solidity by implicitly attributing the emotion of fear and the feelings of helplessness, insecurity, and despair to these external persons (l. 87-88). Eventually, she

explicitly adds an informative or fact about the patients to the interaction, "THERE are a LOT OF OLD PEOPLE" (l. 90-91), which she lets stand on and speak for its own. All on its own, the fact implicitly invokes old people's incapability to speak foreign languages and thereby, gives further solidity to the envisioned claim for more German-speaking doctors. At the end of the vignette, a participant who has so far not been engaged in the interaction, Dani, voices her agreement and, thus, joins the collective envisioning and exemplifying of the other three (l. 92). Although Dani has not been actively involved, she constitutes vision as the other interactants did; emphasizing that realities and meaning are always socially and interactively accomplished.

The crowdedness of employee vision constructions and constitutions. In the vignette examples and analyses above, actants beyond the obvious and human crowded the interactional scene of employee vision constructions and constitutions. These actants, or vents and figures, influenced and substantiated both the envisioning and sense-making processes of employees.

Vents and figures of envisioning. Participants were asked about their ideas and thoughts on the ideal future of their organizations and doing so, demonstrated an ability to envision. Particularly, envisioning was an interactional and collective achievement between participants and other partakers present in the interaction. First, participants' thinking characteristics (i.e., their attitudes, values, and principles) and their emotions and feelings were acting as vents, animating participants to envision what they did in fact envision (see Vignette 1 and 3). This indicates an emotional and ideological anchoring of visions which in turn indicates a strong potential of visions to be, or become, of matter. Noteworthily, participants saw the same potential: "It will help you stay on the right direction." (Dani, Cherry); "I think many things could be harmonized and aligned via a clear vision." (Trese, Cherry); "And align everyone. Along a goal, along certain values." (Dani, Date, group 2).

Second, participants were influenced by current practices that they observed in their organization and that they were not approving of. To strengthen the case for their own visions, participants added these practices as figures to the interaction, mostly in form of others' speakings and actings (e.g., management's practices in Vignette 3), others' emotions, feelings and thinking characteristics (e.g., patients' feelings in Vignette 3), nonhuman and material actants, such as architectural elements (e.g., the beds in Vignette 3), and nonhuman and immaterial actants, such as a directive (e.g., the rule or goal in Vignette 1) or non-existence of something (e.g., the lack of space in Vignette 3). In this respect, it was not only the participants building the case for their visions but also the totality of additional actants.

Vents and figures of exemplifying. Participants' stance towards visions underscores visions' strong potential to be of matter within organizations, but the latter is only effected in the subsequent phase of translating the vision into tangible and comprehensible aspects. In the focus groups, participants translated their self- and co-constructed visions forward, that is, into the future. This helped participants to make sense of their visions. Specifically, they drew a detailed image of how the envisioned future would look and feel like by invoking a multitude of figures. Mostly, these figures included others' speakings and actings (e.g., doctors' practices in Vignette 2), nonhuman and material actants, such as architectural elements (e.g., the place in Vignette 3), and nonhuman and immaterial actants, such as the cultural barrier (see Vignette 2). To validate these exemplified figures, employees further invoked actants that mirror the envisioned future (see Vignette 3). In this respect, figures both enabled the translation and, thus, going on mattering of vision, and added credibility and solidity to this former: It were not only the participants saying their exemplifications are realistic but also all other entities invoked that are already acting in such a manner.

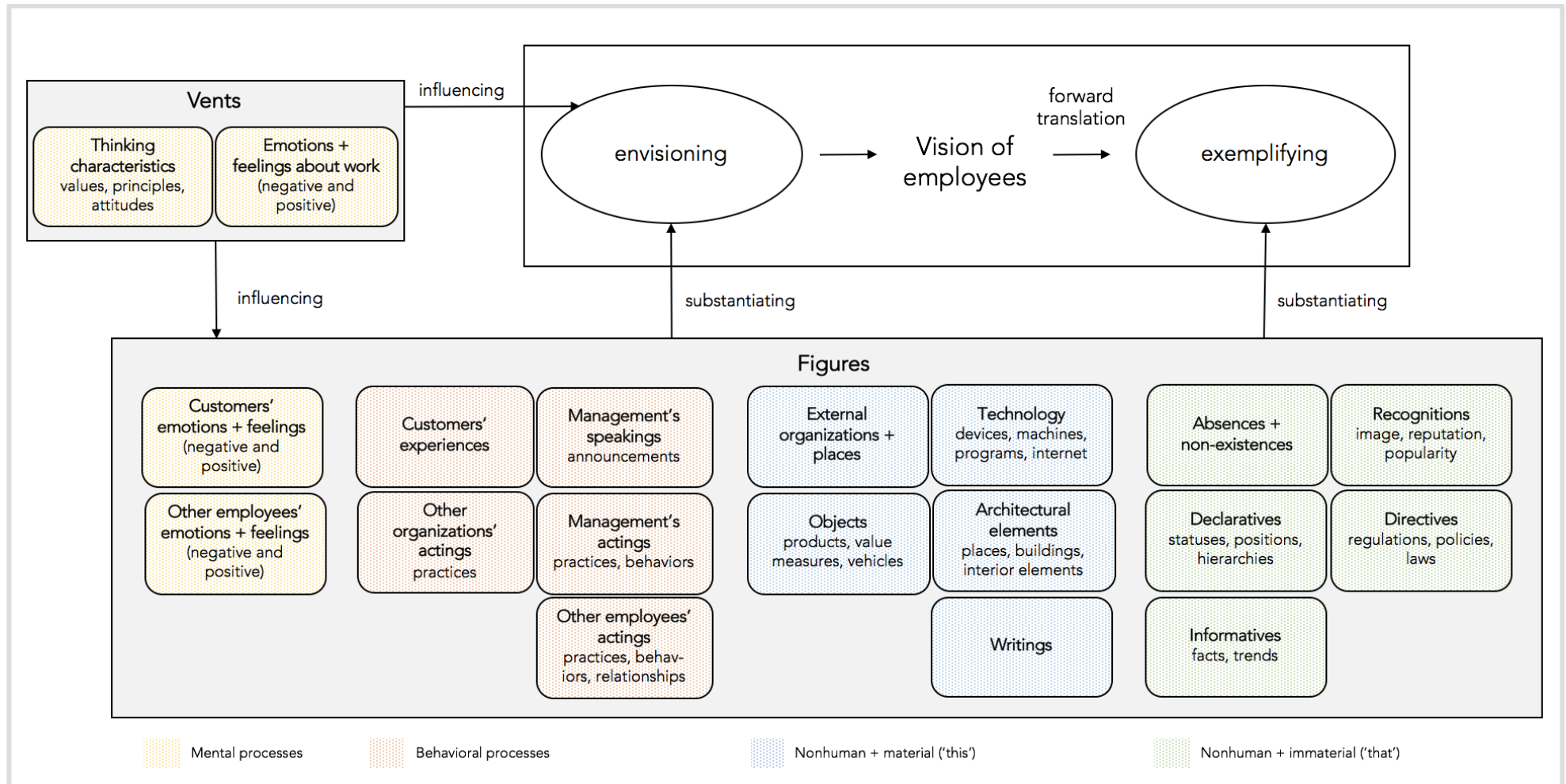Figure 1 illustrates the vents and figures present in the phases of self-constructed visions.

Figure 1: Vents and figures present in employee envisioning and exemplifying

Official visions: Verifying

In the second part of the focus groups, participants were handed out their organization's official vision statements and asked to reflect and comment on these. As with their self-constructed visions, participants translated the official statements from a broad to a narrower understanding. However, this time their translation followed the opposite direction as before, i.e., participants translated the statements backward in an attempt to verify the statements' validity and truthfulness. This translation led participants to either confirm, object, or simply ignore the official vision.

Vignette 4: Consenting verification. Vignette 4 is an excerpt from the direct selling organization (Date, group 1). Participants were handed out their organization's official vision statements shortly before and are now discussing one broad and vague aspect of these statements: being a movement that improves the lives of many. With its products and services in erotic lifestyle branch, the organization aims to foster a generally more open society and culture. Moreover, the organization wants to contribute to the sexual autonomy and the well-being of customers.

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

Vignette 4

To make the statement more comprehensible, Nina translates it back to, that is, grounds it in her work perception and attitude: "I always consider myself as kind of an information scout." (l. 204-05). She explicitly brings forward how she conceives of her work and its impact, thereby implicitly invoking her positive work attitude. She is simultaneously animated by her attitude, insofar as that it makes her bring forward what she is bringing forward as a reaction to the official statement. If Nina were not having this positive work attitude, and would not consider herself as an information scout, she would have translated back the statement to other, to her more apparent aspects first. However, when reading the official statement, her own work perception comes to her mind first, indicating that her utterance is animated strongly by her attitude. Possibly, her pride about the impact of her work animates her, too. Moreover, Nina grounds the official statement in the experiences of customers (l. 205-09). She explicitly gives her elderly customers a voice in the interaction (l. 206-07), and implicitly invokes the mindsets and experiences of her younger customers (l. 207-09). Thus, her work perception and attitude, the elderly and the younger customers are partaking in the interaction and, importantly, affirmatively substantiate the truthfulness of the official statement. Nina is joined by Jessie who adds further verification by explicitly invoking the impacts on "society" (l. 212) to the interaction, and by Anne who translates the statement back to another aspect of their work: "And being there as a contact person" (l. 214). The latter aspect is further verified by referring to the number of houses or households the participants are part of (l. 215), again emphasizing the impact of their work. Eventually, animated by her pride (l. 216) Jessie explicitly invokes the trust of customers which she substantiates by instancing an anecdote of her own experiences (l. 216-19).

Vignette 5: Objecting verification. In Vignette 5, participants of the hospital (Cherry) discuss one aspect of their hospital's official statements: the importance of transparent and professional communication. This aspect concerns diverse communication

processes within the hospital, such as communication directed towards the patients as well as

the downwards communication from management to employees. At this point of their

discussion, the atmosphere got slightly heated and emotion-loaded and voice levels increased.

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

Vignette 5

To verify the official statement concerning the importance of professional and

transparent communication, Trese translates it back to doctor's practices but only finds

objecting evidence in form of the implicitly invoked lack of German language ability of

doctors (l. 973). She gives her backward translation more detail and substance by invoking

the specific doctor behavior towards patients (l. 973-76) as well as by speaking in the name

of a "family member or patient" (l. 976) and invoking their emotion of fear and feelings of

helplessness and insecurity (l. 976-78). Eventually, she explicitly adds a comparison to a

"hospital in Cambodia" (l. 978) to figuratively widen the language gap. Noteworthily, rather

than substantiating the statement in the communication that is directed towards her, Trese

first substantiates it in the communication towards patients. She is animated by her principle

of 'patients first' which makes her take on the patients' perspective first. If this principle were

not of matter to Trese, she would have not initiated the discussion from the patients'

perspective that she here assumes. Instead, she probably would have centered on her own position and the communication that is directed towards her.

Animated by anger and frustration, Anki substantiates the statement in the management-employee communication by invoking management practices and behavior and her own experiences with these (ll. 984-86). Her anger and frustration animate her to increase her voice level and repeat her utterances. Furthermore, by explicitly invoking the concept of fact (l. 985) she adds authority and weight to her utterances. She gives her backward translation more detail and substance by adding a recent example to the interaction that spans a management decision, a doctor's practices, and her own and other employees' work practices (l. 986-90). Thus, these figures are now partaking in the interaction and constitute the experienced vision reality.

In total, in this vignette it is not just the obvious human interactants who object the official statement's truthfulness, but as well a total of nineteen additional vents and figures. In the doctor-patient communication, these include doctors' practices and behaviors, doctors' lack of language abilities, family members, patients, and their emotion of fear and feelings of helplessness and insecurity, and the place of Cambodia. In the management-employee communication, vents and figures include feelings of anger and frustration, management's practices, decisions, and behaviors and personal experiences with these, the concept of fact, a doctor's practices, and own and other employees' work practices.

Vignette 6: Failed verification. In Vignette 6, participants of the finance organization focus group (Apricot) respond to reading their organization's official vision statement shortly after it was handed out to them. The vision statement is broad in content, and aims at "making it easier for people to shape and live their everyday lives". Further, the statement aims at "giving safety to people" and at "collectively working on a good future for the region."

355	Lena:	This is COMPLETELY general.
356	Rosie:	Yes.
357	Lena:	That doesn't have ANYTHING to do with it.
358	Maria:	Probably, this has been the same for decades, I believe.
359	Lena:	Like, when I read this- [Rosie interrupts]
360	Rosie:	-like 1980s or something. [laughter]
361	Lena:	I would NEVER EVER get the feeling that this is from banking or finance, you
362		know, when I just read this paper. Could be … eh … everything.

Vignette 6

In this instance, participants try to but do not succeed in translating the vision

backward. The first attribute ascribed to the vision is "COMPLETELY general" (l. 355),

indicating that participants do not manage to find a connection with the statement: "That

doesn't have ANYTHING to do with it." (l. 357) and "I would NEVER EVER get the feeling

that this is from banking or finance." (l. 361). The too high level of vague- and abstractness

hinders any verification or substantiation of the vision in the figures of the examples before.

Neither work practices nor experiences nor the customer perspective is added to the

interaction to substantiate the vision. Instead, participants invoke dated past times ("this has

been the same for decades", l. 358; "like 1980s", l. 360) and attribute the vision to

meaningless entities ("everything", l. 362).

The crowdedness of official vision constitutions. As with employees' own visions,

actants beyond the obvious and human crowded the interactional scene of official vision

substantiations. These actants, or vents and figures, helped employees to make sense of,

substantiate, and verify their organizations' official visions, leading them to either confirm,

object, or simply ignore them. Put differently, these vents and figures contributed to visions

either going on mattering in interaction or getting lost in a crowded, conflicting, complex,

and confusing choir of voices.

Vents and figures of verifying. In the second part of the focus groups, participants

were handed out their organization's official vision statements and asked to reflect and

comment on these. As with their self-constructed visions, participants translated the official

statements from a broad to a narrower understanding. However, this time their translation followed the opposite direction as before, i.e., participants translated the statements backward in an attempt to verify the statements' validity and truthfulness. Most figures concerned management or higher hierarchical levels, possibly due to their vision authorship position in most of employees' minds: "Those are statements that are from like the top of the top." (Rosie, Apricot). For example, participants in Vignette 5 invoked management's behavior, practices, and decisions when substantiating the official vision. Furthermore, the thinking manners of participants, such as their principles, were present as vents and impacted the precise manner of backward translations. Once again referring back to Vignette 5, Trese's principle of 'patient first' animated her to substantiate the vision in the doctor-patient communication rather than in the communication that is directed at her and, thus, impacted the backward translation or constitution of the vision.

In total, this phase had three outcomes: First, employees managed to consentingly translate back and confirm the official vision in figures of others' speakings, actings, and feelings, own experiences and attitudes, nonhuman and material actants such as the households in Vignette 4, and nonhuman, immaterial actants such as society (see Vignette 4). Second, backward translations led employees to object the validity of their official visions. In the Vignette 5 example, these objecting substantiations were mainly in form of others' actings and speakings and own experiences, practices and feelings. Moreover, nonhuman and material actants, such as an object, and nonhuman and immaterial actants, such as directives, often constitute vision reality in these cases. For instance, when discussing one aspect their organization's official vision (i.e., '*promoting the activity, initiative and innovative power of employees*'), fire brigade participants invoked the innovative product catcher for humans that was not accepted and their rule or obligation to do trainings: "But there is a difference in HAVING the opportunity, or that this opportunity is like basically being PRESSED upon

you." (Xaver, fire brigade). Third, employees failed in translating the official vision backward. In these instances, employees were not able to move beyond the abstract- and vagueness of the official statements and, thus, the vision missed its chance to become of matter (see Vignette 6).

Groups that engaged mostly in consenting verification and substantiation simultaneously demonstrated a higher congruence between self-constructed and official visions. Living a vision throughout an organization, therefore, seems to strongly contribute to its translatability and its mattering beyond management. Interestingly, participants themselves emphasized this need for being lived: "Must be lived." (Maria, Apricot); "And then actually you would need to communicate top down and bottom up." (Klaus, Banana); and "It's important that they are LIVED and implemented." (Anki, Cherry). In contrast, groups that objected their visions' truthfulness, or failed any substantiation, had a lower congruence between self-constructed and official visions. Alignment between the official content and management practices was not observed by employees which hindered any mattering of the vision and led employees to attribute dishonest motives to management: "These goals, to me they are goals that companies use to show off in public." (Ella, Apricot); "It's just so that management has something to show, but it is not lived." (Xaver, Banana); and "Because the PEOPLE ON THE TOP fill their pockets." (Klaus, Banana).

Figure 2 illustrates the vents and figures present in the translation, substantiation and verification of the official visions.
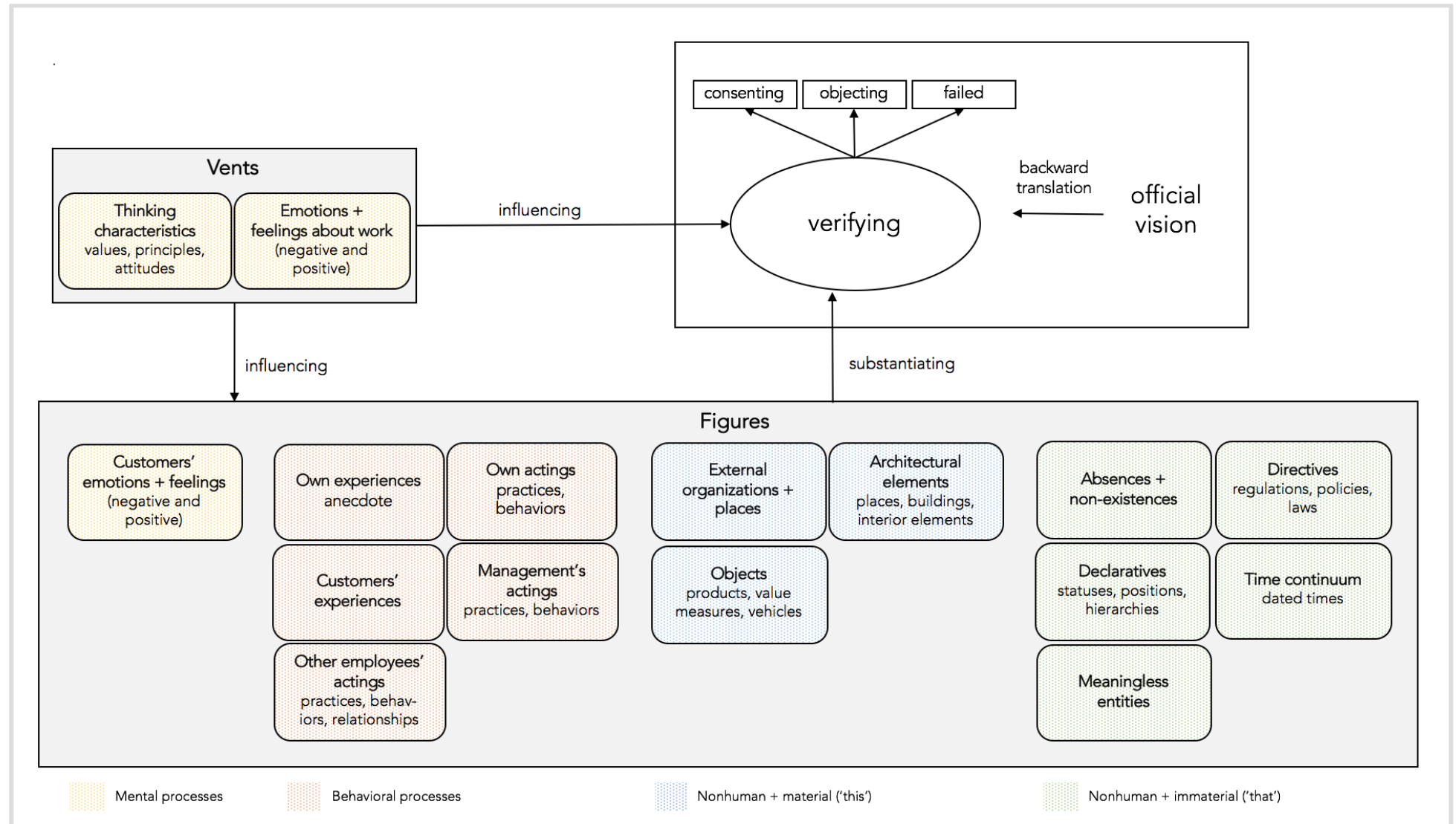
Figure 2: Vents and figures present in official vision translations of employees

Discussion

In this study, I took a traditional and prominent element of organizations, vision, and added a new lens to investigate its constitution in employee interactions. By conceiving of vision as accomplished and performed in communication and by applying the concept of ventriloquism, this study, on a general level, introduced a constitutive methodology for the study of organizational realities and meanings. It added to the research stream of ventriloquism and evidenced its contributions for uncovering the actants and practices that constitute organizational realities and meanings. Thereby, this study also added to breaking up the disconnect between human, nonhuman, material and immaterial agencies and aspects of interaction. On the more particular level of vision, the study offered novel and detailed insights into how vision is constituted and made sense of in employee interaction. Here, visions are aligned with and lived and, consequently, it is essential to understand both the processes and actants partaking in vision constitutions. The study uncovered the crowdedness of vision conversations beyond the obvious interactants and shed light on the diversity of actants contributing to vision realities and meanings. Thereby, it supplemented the traditional rhetorical and managerial vision lenses that capture a partial and superficial image of vision only.

Ventriloquism and relational agency

This study widened the usage of a ventriloquial lens in organizational contexts and simultaneously evidenced the practicability of this rather new and abstract concept for traditional organizational elements such as vision. A ventriloquial lens allows us to uncover what substantiates organizational elements from below their surfaces, i.e., it reveals what stands under realities and meanings as enacted and lived in everyday organizational life. Here, organizational elements are made sense of, lived, and aligned with and, consequentially, is it essential to uncover how realities and meanings are accomplished,

performed and what constitutes them in communication and interaction. While this study specifically focused on vision constitutions, other organizational elements can be investigated from a similarly constitutive lens to also uncover the crowdedness of their constitutions; such as Cooren et al.'s study on organizational tensions (2013).

Further, this study conceived of agency from a relational ontology, i.e., as a hybrid and joint mediation that is shared among actants of various forms and appearances (Caronia & Cooren, 2014; Cooren, Fairhust, & Huet, 2012). It echoed calls to discover the totality of actants in organizational interactions beyond the obvious and human (Cooren, 2010d) and confirmed that various actants of diverse ontologies play into the constitution of organizational realities. In my vision case, it was not only the human voices that formed vision reality and meaning, but as well many different nonhuman voices, such as rule or regulation, an architectural element, a technology, or a principle or value. The number of actants multiplied beyond the obvious and human, confirming the passitivity of every action or interaction. There seems to be no fixed starting point for action and agency, but instead, it develops as a relation between the totality of actants. On a more specific note, the study further demonstrated that not only presences have agency, but so do absences and even non-existences. Absences and non-existences seem to always have a presence, too, from which they gain the authority to make a difference in interaction.

Vision

While most of current vision writings are skewed towards management responsibilities and rhetoric, my study confirms prior findings of Blanchard and Stoner (2004), Cole, Harris, and Bernerth (2006) and Kopaneva and Sias (2015) who emphasized the importance of vision adoption and their concomitant adaption by lower-level organizational members. According to these authors, for visions to become a reality they must be lived at all organizational layers. This study shed light on how visions are lived in lower organizational

levels by uncovering how visions are constituted and made sense of in employee interactions.

Particularly, Kopaneva and Sias were the first to apply a CCO lens on organizational visions to understand their constructions at the employee level. Their individual-centered study revealed a substantial incongruence between official and employee vision constructions which I could confirm along my interactional approach. In their as well as in my study official visions were broader, more abstract, and more complex than employees' understandings of them. Kopaneva and Sias concentrated on content constructions of vision and identified service and product excellence, leadership, and growth as the most relevant themes of employee vision constructions. Although my study was not centered on the content level, it points to similar themes content-wise. Moreover, my study adds further evidence to employees' ability to envision as pointed to by Kopaneva and Sias; and particularly, associates this envisioning ability with an emotional and ideological anchoring of visions. This is in line with prior, albeit sparse writings about the attachment between vision and values in which values described how a vision is acted towards and achieved (Mirvis et al., 2010; Senge, 1990). Employees' ability to envision stands in contrast to vision ownership perceptions of employees as demonstrated by another study of Kopaneva (2015) on mission and vision. While employees are able to envision, they attributed vision ownership to management, leaders, and marketing, both in my and in Kopaneva's study. Without this sense of ownership, becoming of matter for employees remains a challenge for visions.

Irrespective of vision authorship source (employees or management), understanding visions proved to be imperatively coupled with a process of translating the broader abstractions into tangible and comprehensible aspects of everyday practice. This translation was enabled by invoking a plentitude of figures that, consequentially, constituted vision reality and meaning. Figures were of various ontologies and included emotions and feelings, experiences and other persons' actings, external organizations and places, objects,

technologies, architectural elements, and writings as well as directives, informatives, declaratives, and recognitions. As in Kopaneva's study (2015), participants looked for substantiation of their or the official visions in their everyday experienced organizational reality. This translation process showed to be decisive for visions to either go on mattering for employees, or go lost in a choir of crowded, conflicting, complex, and confusing voices.

Management thinking is generally more abstract than employees' (Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014). However, knowing the human, nonhuman, material, and immaterial actants, vents, and figures that this study uncovered and that constitute vision reality and meaning for employees, management can align visions with these throughout the entire vision process. This should support the narrowing of vision meaning gaps between different organizational layers. For visions to satisfy their very purpose of aligning members, the co-constituted crowdedness or complexity of visions must be understood and considered.

Possibly, visions must finally be perceived as visionary in the truest sense of this word: As a real image or verbal portrait that is easily constituted in figures of the everyday practice by employees. This is in line with a call for more imagery-based visions by Carton, Murphy and Clark (2014) who observed an unfortunate trend of conceptual vision writings in a manner that its "abstractions […] will never materialize" (p. 39) for employees. Aspects of such an imagery-based vision were already present in earlier writings on vision, e.g., Collin and Porras' vivid description element (1996) and Kirkpatrick and Locke's (1996) study's conclusion that visions which included information that helped its translation into tasks led to greater understanding. However, these earlier writings considered verbal portraits only as a part of visions, not as their core, and focused too strongly on the vision attributes of abstractness and challenge (Baum, 2007; Kantabutra & Avery, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2016; Levin, 2000). My study contrasts these assumptions and highlights the importance of visions to be clearer and more specific to be more translatable and, thus, be of more matter.

Although middle managers were not explicitly referred to by participants, they might play an important role in enabling the translation and mattering of visions. Recent middle management research points to the essentiality of middle managers in influencing processes and outcomes of strategic matters, especially in lower organizational layers (Ahearne, Lam & Kraus, 2010; Huy, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Wooldridge, Schmid & Floyd, 2008). Middle managers' access to top management coupled with their knowledge of and adjacency to operations and frontline employees positions them as promising mediators between and interpreters of management's abstract envisioning and employees' day-to-day understandings and practices. In fact, the absence of middle managers from the focus group discussions might point to not yet utilized communicative practices in vision communication that might contribute to narrowing the gaps between top management and employees.

Practical implications: Vision

While ventriloquism broadens our understanding of visions and their constitution in communication, this knowledge must be translated back to practice. To create visions of matter and that engage employees, I encourage management to focus less on naturally vague and static how-to guides – that will naturally result in similarly vague and static visions – and more on what they and the entire organization in fact do, and how these practices relate to what they want to do and achieve. Having a more specific, genuinely visionary, and ideological vision will simplify translation for employees. For collective alignment and motivation to spring, employees need to be able to align their work and tasks with the vision and must feel that their work has an impact on the organization's overall goal. Moreover, as employees will inevitably translate vision back to action, management must act as a role model to accelerate the mattering of vision throughout the organization and avoid being attributed dishonest motives. Management needs to move beyond the rhetoric and static vision elements that literature is abundant of and include more authentic and dynamic aspects

that effectively constitute visions and bolster a shared, unified meaning of them among organizational members.

Here, it is worth referring back to my introductory vision example: '*We will be recognized in the world as the leader in knowledge generation and sharing whilst leveraging our brand value, delivering customer value, and building a profitable future.*' As elaborated before, this typical vision example is abstract, concept-bound, and, in fact, not very visionary. A more visionary, image-bound, and engaging version centered around the same claim is offered by Wikimedia founder Jimmy Wales: '*Imagine a world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.*' This vision focuses on the core of what the organization does and wants to achieve. It paints a clear picture of the ideal future that simplifies translation for, sparks motivation of, and strengthens vision's mattering for employees.

Limitations and future research directions

The study's exploratory character and methodological set-up come with a number of limitations and opportunities for future research.

A first limitation is the sample's small size and simultaneously broad set-up both in organizations' and participants' backgrounds. While this fitted the endeavor of this initial study, future research should conduct a higher number of focus groups within one organization to see if different organizational members constitute their organization's vision and its meaning in the same way (or, if the same actants are present). This study must be conceived of as a first snapshot that needs to be complemented with further insight of future research efforts. Further, future research should draw a clearer distinction in its sampling to gain deeper insights and allow for a comparison across both organizational variables (e.g., size, industry, or nationality) and participant variables (e.g., tenure or work identification). As collective vision constitution and sense-making probably occur most often with direct co-

workers, future research could also follow a stricter co-worker approach in the focus groups; thereby closer resembling natural interaction.

The second limitation of this study is its artificial set-up. While this set-up was decided for on purpose, natural organizational interactions in which vision plays a role should be observed as part of future research efforts. This will be more in line with the key premises of the CCO perspective I adopted in my paper. As noted earlier, such an attempt presents a challenging endeavor, especially among employees. Still, attending events or practices that are tangent to an organization's visions (such as a new product development or budget planning meetings) present promising and important entry points for further uncovering how vision is constituted in natural interactions.

Third, for this study, I assumed top management as the authors of and, thus, being aligned with the organization's official statements. Future research needs to investigate this assumption by shifting the level of analysis to top management. Uncovering the vents and figures present in management interactions will further complete our image of visions as co-constituted in communication. Moreover, comparing the vents and figures across actant level (management vs. employees) will support our understanding of meaning gaps between the levels, and ultimately, might support the closure of precisely these.

Fourth, this closure might be investigated along an additional level of analysis, i.e., the role and possible impact of middle managers in interpreting and enabling visions. For this endeavor, again I encourage researchers to observe events that are tangent to an organization's vision, this time with a particular focus on these events' participant set-ups (i.e., middle managers and employees). Alternatively, focus groups of mixed participants could be conducted.

Within this paper, the application of a ventriloquial and constitutive lens on a commonplace organizational element demonstrated to be extremely valuable for uncovering

the unfolding and evolving constitutions of reality and meaning that take place within organizations. While I sketched a first structure for a ventriloquial analysis, I hope to see future papers that give ventriloquial analyses further structural refinement and detail. In particular, I encourage methodological papers to focus on a) the identification and manifestation of vents and figures and b) the presentation of the findings; as these phases appeared to be most decisive for performing a ventriloquial and constitutive analysis. Moreover, I encourage future research to broaden the application of ventriloquism to other organizational aspects, such as values and mission, and to organizational activities, such as strategy-making and brainstorming. This will not only help in advancing our understanding of the communicative practices that constitute organizational realities, but also contribute to further breaking up the perpetual disconnect between the human and nonhuman, material and immaterial aspects of interaction, conversation and meaning-making in organizations.

Conclusion

Visions are ubiquitous in today's organizations but, unfortunately, often miss out on their very purpose in lower organizational layers. Being arduously crafted by management, vision realities and meanings are constituted differently in the everyday interactions of employees as this study demonstrated. Precisely here, visions and vision meanings often and easily change, or get lost entirely. This study demonstrated that visions are not static scriptures but realities that evolve in communication and interaction. The constitutive approach of this study revealed the plentitude of actants beyond the obvious and human that substantiate vision in employees' perceptions, and that need to be taken into account to fully understand the reality and meaning of visions, enable their translations and, ultimately, accelerate their mattering throughout entire organizations.

References

Ashcraft, K., Kuhn, T., & Cooren, F. (2009). Constitutional amendments: "Materializing" organizational communication. *The Academy of Management Annals, 3*(1), 1-64.

Ahearne, M., Lam, K., & Kraus, F. (2010). Performance impact of middle managers' adaptive strategy implementation: The role of social capital. *Strategic Management Journal, 35*, 68-87.

Bartkus, B., & Glassman, M. (2007). Do firms practice what they preach? The relationship between mission statements and stakeholder management. *Journal of Business Ethics, 83*(2), 207-216.

Baum, J. (2007). *A longitudinal study of the relation of vision and vision communication to venture growth in entrepreneurial firms*. Washington, DC: The American Institute for Research.

Bencherki, N., & Cooren, F. (2011). Having to be: The possessive constitution of organization. *Human Relations, 64*(12), 1579-1607.

Benoit-Barné, C., & Cooren, F. (2009). The accomplishment of authority through presentification: how authority is distributed among and negotiated by organizational members. *Management Communication Quarterly, 23*(1), 5-31.

Berson, Y., Shamir, B., Avolio, B., & Popper, M. (2001). The relationship between vision strength, leadership style, and context. *The Leadership Quarterly, 12*(1), 53-73.

Bisel, R. (2010). A communicative ontology of organization? A description, history, and critique of CCO theories for organization science. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(1), 124-131.

Blanchard, K., & Stoner, J. (2004). The vision thing: Without it you'll never be a world-class organization. *Leader to Leader, 31*, 21-28.

Boswell, W., Bingham, J., & Colvin, A. (2006). Aligning employees through line of sight. *Business Horizons, 49*(6), 499-509.

Brummans, B., & Cooren, F. (2011). Communication as incarnation. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 8*(2), 186-187.

Caronia, L., & Cooren, F. (2014). Decentering our analytical position: the dialogicity of things. *Discourse & Communication, 8*(1), 41-61.

Caronia, L., & Mortari, L. (2015). The agency of things: how spaces and artefacts organize the moral order of an intensive care unit. *Social Semiotics, 25*(4), 401-422.

Carton, A., Murphy, C., & Clark, J. (2014). A (blurry) vision of the future: How leader rhetoric about ultimate goals influences performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 57*(6), 1544-1570.

Castor, T., & Cooren, F. (2006). Organizations as hybrid forms of life. *Management Communication Quarterly, 19*(4), 570-600.

Cole, M., Harris, S., & Bernerth, J. (2006). Exploring the implications of vision, appropriateness, and execution of organizational change. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 27*(5), 352-367.

Collins, J., & Porras, J. (1991). Organizational vision and visionary organizations. *California Management Review, 34*(1), 30-52.

Collins, J., & Porras, J. (1996). Building your company's vision. *Harvard Business Review September-October* 65-77.

Cooren, F. (2004). Textual agency: how texts do things in organizational settings. *Organization Articles, 11*(3), 373-393.

Cooren, F. (2006). The organizational world as a plenum of agencies. In F. Cooren, J. Taylor, & E. Van Every (Eds.), *Communication as Organizing* (81-100). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cooren, F. (2010a). *Action and agency in dialogue*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V.

Cooren, F. (2010b). Figures of communication and dialogue: Passion, ventriloquism and incarnation. *Intercultural Pragmatics, 7*(1), 131-145.

Cooren, F. (2010c). Ventriloquie, performativité et communication [Ventriloquism, performativity and communication]. *Réseaux, 163*(5), 33-54.

Cooren, F. (2010d). Comment les textes écrivent l'organisation : figures, ventriloquie et incarnation [How texts write an organization : figures, ventriloquism and incarnation]. *Études De Communication, 34*, 23-40.

 Cooren, F. (2012). Communication theory at the center: ventriloquism and the communicative constitution of reality. *Journal of Communication, 62*(1), 1-20.

Cooren, F. (2013). Incarnation, sensation and ventriloquism. For a sensitive and constitutive view of pragmatics. *Journal of Pragmatics, 58*, 42-45.

Cooren, F., & Bencherki, N. (2010). How things do things with words: Ventriloquism, passion and technology. *Encyclopaideia, XIV*(28), 35–62.

Cooren, F., Brummans, B., & Charrieras, D. (2008). The coproduction of organizational presence: A study of Médecins Sans Frontières in action. *Human Relations, 61*(10), 1339-1370.

Cooren, F., Fairhust, G., & Huet, R. (2012). Why matter always matters in (organizational) communication. In P. Leonardi, B. Nardi, & J. Kallinikos (Eds.), *Materiality and Organizing: Social Interaction in a Technological World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cooren, F., Kuhn, T., Cornelissen, J., & Clark, T. (2011). Communication, organizing and organization: an overview and introduction to the special issue. *Organization Studies, 32*(9), 1149-1170.

Cooren, F., Matte, F., Benoit-Barné, C., & Brummans, B. (2013). Communication as ventriloquism: a grounded-in-action approach to the study of organizational tensions. *Communication Monographs, 80*(3), 255-277.

Cooren, F., & Sandler, S. (2014). Polyphony, ventriloquism, and constitution: in dialogue with Bakhtin. *Communication Theory, 24*, 225-244.

Fairhust, G., Jordan, J., & Neuwirth, K. (1997). Why are we here? Managing the meaning of an organizational mission statement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 25*(4), 243-263.

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal, 204*(6), 291-295.

Halkier, B. (2010). Focus groups as social enactments: integrating interaction and content in the analysis of focus group data. *Qualitative Research, 10*(1), 71-89.

Huy, Q. (2011). How middle managers' group-focus emotions and social identities influence strategy implementation. *Strategic Management Journal, 32*, 1387-1410.

Jing, F., Avery, G., & Bergsteiner, H. (2013). Enhancing performance in small professional firms through vision communication and sharing. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 31(2)*, 599-620.

Kantabutra, S. (2008). What do we know about vision? *Journal of Applied Business Research, 24*(2), 127-138.

Kantabutra, S. (2009). Toward a behavioral theory of vision in organizational settings. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 30*(4), 319-337.

Kantabutra, S., & Avery, G. (2010). The power of vision: statements that resonate. *Journal of Business Strategy, 31*(1), 37-45.

Kirkpatrick, S. (2016). *Build a better vision statement*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A. (1996). Direct and indirect effects of three core charismatic leadership components on performance and attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*(1), 36-51.

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: introducing focus groups. *BMJ, 311*(7000), 299-302.

Kopaneva, I. (2013). *Employee constructions of organizational mission and vision*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3587126)

Kopaneva, I. (2015). Left in the dust: employee constructions of mission and vision ownership. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 1-24.

Kopaneva, I., & Sias, P. (2015). Lost in translation: employee and organizational constructions of mission and vision. *Management Communication Quarterly, 29*(3), 358-384.

Langley, A., & Abdallah, C. (2011). Templates and turns in qualitative studies of strategy and management. *Research Methodology in Strategy and Management, 6*, 105-140.

Levin, I. (2000). Vision Revisited. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 36*(1), 91-107.

Mirvis, P., Googins, B., & Kinnicutt, S. (2010). Vision, mission, values: guideposts to sustainability. *Organizational Dynamics, 39*, 316-324.

O'Connell, D., Hickerson, K., & Pillutla, A. (2010). Organizational visioning: an integrative review. *Group & Organization Management, 36*(1), 103-125.

Reed, M. (2009). Is communication constitutive of organization? *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(1), 151-157.

Ritche, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice*, (77-108). London: SAGE.

Rouleau, L. (2005). Micro-practices of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving: How middle managers interpret and sell change every day. *Journal of Management Studies, 42*(7), 1413-1441.

Rouleau, L., & Balogun, J. (2011). Middle managers, strategic sensemaking, and discursive competence. *Journal of Management Studies, 48*(5), 953-983.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency.

Sosik, J., & Dinger, S. (2007). Relationships between leadership style and vision content: The moderating role of need for social approval, self-monitoring, and need for social power. *The Leadership Quarterly, 18*(2), 134-153.

Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care, 19*(6), 349-357.

Thyssen, O. (2009). Business ethics and organizational values: A systems-theoretical approach. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vásquez, C., Schoeneborn, D., & Sergi, V. (2016). Summoning the spirits: organizational texts and the (dis)ordering properties of communication. *Human Relations, 69*(3), 629-659.

Wooldridge, B., Schmid, T., & Floyd, S. (2008). The middle management perspective on strategy process: Contributions, synthesis, and future research. *Journal of Management, 34*(6), 1190-1221.

Zaccaro, J. (2001). *The nature of executive leadership: A conceptual and empirical analysis of success*. Washington DC: APA Books.

Appendix

Focus Group Protocol and Topic Guide

Demographic survey

Participant# (to be filled out my researcher)	Date
Your pseudo names	Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female
Age	Nationality
Position in organization	Tenure in organization
Department	Industry

Questions

The overview below includes a list of question to guide the focus groups. They serve as general guidelines to keep discussions on track.
- *General order of discussion*: future goals – values –existing vision

General questions about the future

(1) If you think about an ideal future state of your organization towards which it strives, what is it?
(2) We're sitting here in this organization 10 to 20 years; what would you love to see? (Collins & Porras, 1996)
- What should the organization look like?
- What should it feel like?
- What should it have achieved?

Questions about values

(1) Which values are practiced in your organization? (Kirkpatrick, 2016)
(2) What values should your organization practice to reach its ideal future state?
(3) Are the values-in-practice the same as the values your company should practice?

Questions about existing vision

(1)   Does your company have a vision statement? Can you image what it says?
(2)   Is it formally written down and communicated to employees? (Kirkpatrick, 2016)
(3)   How do you feel about the vision? How do you feel about visions in general? (Kirkpatrick, 2016)
(4)   Do you understand what it says? What key messages does it convey to you? (Kirkpatrick, 2016; Levin, 2000)
(5)   Do you encounter your company's vision in your everyday work? When?
(6)   Do you align your work with the vision? In how far?
(7)   Who wrote the vision?
-    Do you think that other persons should have been involved, too? Who are these other persons?
-    Do you think that employees like you should have been involved more? Why?
(8)   If you had a chance, would you somehow change the vision or keep it the way it is? Why? How? (Kopaneva, 2013; Levin, 2000)
(9)   What do we need to do to translate this vision into action and make it a reality for your organization? (Levin, 2000)