Unite the North – Exploring the Identities of an Inter-Organizational Collaboration

Renzo Besseling

Faculty Behavioural, Management, and Social Sciences (BMS), University of Twente

MSc Educational Sciences and Technology

1st supervisor: E. Nathues PhD

2nd supervisor: prof.dr. M.D. Endedijk

May 21, 2024

Abstract

The digital transformation poses a challenge for professionals and organizations to keep up with emergent technologies. Therefore, it is important that continuous learning and innovation take place, as this can provide the professionals and organizations with the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitude to understand, use and develop these emerging technologies. Boundary crossing proves to be essential in dealing with the challenges of the digital transformation and stimulating continuous learning and innovation. In response, the Dutch Top Sectors called for learning communities, or inter-organizational collaborations (IOC), as the solution to stimulate continuous learning and innovation through boundary crossing. These IOCs provide the ideal environment for boundary crossing, this does not ensure that boundary crossing will occur. Identity heavily influences the occurrence of boundary crossing and the success of IOCs. Based on theory, there are three identity levels within an IOC: the professional, organizational and the collective identity of the IOC. Unfortunately, research is lacking on identities in large IOCs, which is why this explorative case study aims to explore the identities of a large IOC through sixteen semi-structured interviews with 17 participants. The findings are presented by using a composite narrative approach. The study showed that there is an overlap between the professional and organizational identities in the IOC, yet there is a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity. Furthermore, it showed that there is another collective identity present in the IOC at the sector level. Finally, the participants shared the same view on the collective identity of the IOC.

Introduction

In recent decades there has been more digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation, than ever before (Verhoef et al., 2021). It is the rapid development of new technologies that characterizes the digital transformation, which greatly impacts our life and work (e.g. Dąbrowska et al., 2022; Imran et al., 2021; Lanzolla et al., 2020; Schwarzmüller et al., 2018). Furthermore, the challenges arising from the digital transformation are often highly complex an require novel, often multidisciplinary perspectives to tackle them (Hammerschmid et al., 2024; Yström et al., 2019). As a result, professionals must keep their knowledge and skills up to date (Bharatan et al., 2022; Lejeune et al., 2021), and organizations must be able to adapt quickly and effectively (Morris, 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021).

Developing their human capital is key for organizations to effectively adapt to the challenges of the digital transformation (Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2021). When organizations invest in human capital, they can help their professionals develop the right knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to understand, use, and develop emerging technologies (Harteis & Billett, 2023). A great way to develop human capital is through continuous learning, because it keeps the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of professionals up to date (Beausaert et al., 2011), which equips the organizations with the ability to adapt to and drive digital transformation (Harteis & Billett, 2023). In addition, research has argued that the ability to cross boundaries is essential in dealing with the challenges of the digital transformation and could even give professionals a competitive advantage (Farchi et al., 2023; Fortuin et al., 2023).

The Dutch Top Sectors recognized the need for new ways of supporting continuous learning and innovation, which led to them calling for the development of learning communities (Topsectoren, 2019). These learning communities are described as a collaboration where learning, working, and innovation come together. The goal of these learning communities is to stimulate and support continuous learning and innovation in the work context

by bringing together organizations on relevant topics. Learning communities can be viewed as inter-organizational collaborations (IOC), since they are a group of organizations that focus on the same issue and leverage shared resources to accomplish objectives they cannot reach alone (Koschmann, 2013; Kourti, 2021). These IOCs bring together different practices, disciplines, and fields, which provides professionals with the opportunity to engage with new knowledge, approaches, and perspectives. Essentially, it provides the ideal environment for boundary crossing, which stimulates continuous learning and innovation and is about navigating and bridging the differences between practices, disciplines, and fields (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Furthermore, boundary crossing equips professionals with novel and multidisciplinary perspectives (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016; Klein, 2020). By combining new knowledge, skills, and attitudes with the multidisciplinary perspectives acquired through boundary crossing, professionals and organizations are better equipped with the ability to tackle the challenges of the digital transformation (Hammerschmid et al., 2024; Harteis & Billett, 2023; Yström et al., 2019).

However, that an IOC is an ideal environment does not mean that boundary crossing will occur naturally or effortlessly because boundaries inherently cause a discontinuity in action and interaction (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Especially, within an IOC there are a significant number of boundaries because there are many organizations that come together, which will bring many sociocultural differences to the table. It has been shown that professional and organizational identities play a key role in the willingness to cross boundaries and effectiveness of boundary crossing (Lifshitz-Assaf, 2018). In addition, research has shown that the collective identity plays a significant role in achieving success in IOCs (Hardy et al., 2005; Olson et al., 2011; Ungureanu et al., 2020; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). Considering that multiple organizations take part in an IOC, there are several identities at play. Starting with the professional identities of the involved professionals, then the organizational identities from the

involved organizations, and finally the collective identity of the IOC itself. Considering the important role that identity plays it will influence the collaborative work and boundary crossing within the IOC, which affects continuous learning and innovation.

In summary, an IOC provides an ideal opportunity for boundary crossing, which means that it has great potential to stimulate continuous learning and innovation. However, the different identities play an essential role in achieving collaborative work and boundary crossing, which influences the continuous learning and innovation in an IOC.

The only study that explores different identities in an IOC is the study of Kourti (2021), however, she focused on identifying the tensions between the identities and not the synergy. Furthermore, there is other research that touches on similar topics, such as exploring the role of professional and organizational identities on inter-organizational teams (Nathues et al., 2023), the role of identity in opening the external boundaries of an innovative organization (Lifshitz-Assaf, 2018), and the role of the collective identity in establishing boundaries of an organization (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015). Other research looked at collective identity formation processes and their interplay with collaboration practices in IOCs (Ungureanu et al., 2020) or looked at the interaction between collaborative and non-collaborative identities through identity work (Kourti et al., 2018). Finally, there was one study that had insights on the relation between individual and organizational identity work, which showed that there likely is an overlap between the two identities (Fachin & Langley, 2023). Unfortunately, they did not address collective identities. So overall, there is a lack of research that focusses on the three identities that are present in an IOC.

By addressing this gap in research, the study can contribute towards a greater understanding of the identities at play within an IOC. In practice, the insights can be used to improve and further develop existing and new learning communities, which can support them in achieving successful stimulation of continuous learning and innovation. Furthermore, this

can help professionals and organizations with better equipping them to deal with the challenges of the digital transformation.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the different identities within a large IOC. This done by performing an explorative case study in a large IOC (103 organizations) in the Netherlands. The exploration is done through semi-structured interviews, which allows for in-depth exploration of the identities within the IOC (Langley & Meziani, 2020). In addition, the findings will be presented by making use of composite narratives (Willis, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

The topics that will be discussed in this section are inter-organizational collaborations, boundary crossing, identity, and the communicative constitution of organizations.

Inter-Organizational Collaborations and Boundary Crossing

An inter-organizational collaboration (IOC) is a collaboration between organizations that focus on the same issue and leverage shared resources to accomplish objectives that they cannot reach alone (Koschmann, 2013; Kourti, 2021). Looking at the concept of a learning community as presented by the Top Sectors (Topsectoren, 2019), the objective is to stimulate continuous learning and innovation by combining the efforts of a group of organizations. In that sense, a learning community can be considered an IOC. Considering that an IOC brings together multiple organizations, it provides a great environment for boundary crossing to occur. Boundary crossing is about navigating and bridging the differences between practices, disciplines, and fields (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Akkerman and Bakker (2011) stress in their paper that boundary crossing is not about removing boundaries, but it should be about identifying differences and working with them. In addition, research has shown that softening or breaking boundaries can hinder rather than facilitate boundary crossing (Farchi et al., 2023). Furthermore, boundary crossing stimulates continuous learning and innovation through

exposing professionals to different practices, perspectives, and knowledge (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). In addition, Lifshitz-Assaf (2018) showed that when R&D professionals at NASA engaged in boundary crossing that it significantly sped up the R&D process. This finding supports the claim of Akkerman and Bakker (2011), that boundary crossing stimulates continuous learning and innovation.

The same research from Lifshitz-Assaf (2018) highlighted the importance of identity in the willingness of individuals to engage in boundary crossing. In addition, research shows that the collective identity of an IOC has significant influence on reaching the intended outcomes (Hardy et al., 2005; Olson et al., 2011; Ungureanu et al., 2020; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). Therefore, identity plays a crucial role in an IOC, both in achieving successful collaboration and in stimulating continuous learning and innovation through boundary crossing.

Identity and Communicative Constitution of Organizations

The concept of identity is, in its simplest form, the answer to the fundamental question: "who am I?". However, a more academic approach would be that an identity is a set of attributes that individuals or entities use to define themselves and relate to others. Identities play at many different levels. The relevant levels of identity for this case study are the professional, organizational, and the collective identity of the IOC.

The professional identity is how we view ourselves in an occupational context and is based on occupational attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences (Ibarra, 1999). The organizational identity is how we perceive our organization and is based on central, distinctive, and enduring aspects of our organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Finally, the collective identity can be defined as a collective understanding formed by a group of individual entities that share a sense of belonging and understanding based on shared experiences, values, and goals (Ungureanu et al., 2020). More specifically, Koschmann (2013) elaborated that the

collective identity of an IOC can be defined as a set of statements that are based on similarities or common characteristics that represent the IOC.

Recent research has been focussing on conceptualizing collective identities, where organizational identities can be considered a collective identity, as a fluid accomplishment between involved entities, as opposed to earlier conceptualizations that consider identity a tangible entity or a quality that an organization has (Fachin & Langley, 2023). More specifically, collective identity is seen as an entity that is formulated through communication about what the identity is and what it is not (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015; Fachin & Langley, 2023), this is known as Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO). Essentially, the communication in relation to the collective identity is shaping and re-shaping the collective identity (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015; Fachin & Langley, 2023; Koschmann, 2013). Because of the communicative nature, Ernst and Jensen Schleiter (2021) have argued that an organizational or collective identity can be formulated based on narratives of the involved individuals.

In the context of an IOC Koschmann (2013) explains that the collective identity is more than a description; it becomes a fundamental aspect of the IOC and influences its mode of being. This essentially tells us, that the communication about the IOC will influence the outcomes of the IOC. As an example: if you repeatedly communicate about the IOC being a network organization, then the primary mode of being will be a network organization. On the other hand, if you communicate about the IOC being a platform to share knowledge, then the primary mode of being will be a platform where you share knowledge. This means that you can use communication to shape the collective identity to fit the desired outcomes (Koschmann, 2013), which is a core principle of CCO.

With this knowledge we can take another look at the identities that occur within an IOC. We can establish that each identity is formulated and defined by the individual that is a member of an organization that participates in an IOC. Starting with the professional identity, which is shaped by the individual themselves. Then the organizational identity is shaped by the individual and their colleagues. And finally, the collective identity of the IOC is shaped by the individuals that represent the organizations that participate in the collaboration. Furthermore, research has shown that overlap between the identities can be expected. First, Fachin and Langley (2023) demonstrated that the individual and organizational identity overlap, which suggests that professional identity, as a subset of individual identity, is likely to overlap with organizational identity. Second, Ungureanu et al. (2020) have shown that collective identities are often formed based on existing collective identities, such as industries or disciplines, and more specific identities, such as organizational identities. This suggests that there is a potential overlap between the organizational and collective identities within an IOC. Furthermore, when looking at the collective identity of the IOC it is important to recognize that the organizations might face a challenge. More specifically, the challenge involves balancing the diverse goals and needs of different organizations with the want and desire to work together (Ungureanu et al., 2020).

In summary, for an IOC to effectively stimulate continuous learning and innovation through boundary crossing it must understand the importance of the different identities at play. First, it must understand that professionals must be willing to cross boundaries for continuous learning to take place. Secondly, it must understand the challenge that organizations might face in finding the balance between their own wants and needs and the desire to collaborate. Third, it must understand that their communicative practices are fundamental in forming the collective identity and their mode of being. Overall, it shows the importance of each identity that is present in an IOC.

Research Question

As stated in the introduction, the aim of the study is to explore the different identities within a large IOC. I take a Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) approach, where I analyse the narratives that individuals provide as an indicator for professional, organizational, and collective identity of the IOC. This results in the following research question: *How do professionals within a large inter-organizational collaboration perceive and articulate their professional, organizational, and collective identities?*

Method

Empirical Context

I conducted the explorative case study in a Dutch IOC. The IOC brought together 103 organizations in a formal association structure; this means that it has a formal membership for which a contribution is paid. The IOC is situated in the North of the Netherlands and focusses on organizations in the provinces Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe. Their goal is to *"connect organizations and their employees who work strategically with IT and believe that sharing knowledge and scarce resources contributes to their professionalism and effectiveness."*

Since the IOC is a formal association, it has a clear organizational structure (see figure 1). All member organizations are divided into one of six sectors ('Education & Research', 'Governments', 'Health & Wellbeing', 'Housing Associations', 'IT Services', 'Transport, Energy & Service industries'). Within the sector each organization is represented by a spokesperson; in turn, the whole sector is represented by two sector chairs. The two sector chairs are part of the members' council that oversees the executive committee and the core-team. As for the executive committee, this consist of a chair, secretary, treasurer, and the chair of the members' council. The core-team consists of four program managers, a communications/marketing expert, and an event manager.

When looking at the sector names, it shows that the member organizations span a variety of industries, which creates a diverse group of organizations. However, each organization is affiliated with IT in one way or another; this means that if an organization is working with IT and on themes relevant to IT that the organization can become a member of the IOC.

Figure 1

Organizational structure of the IOC
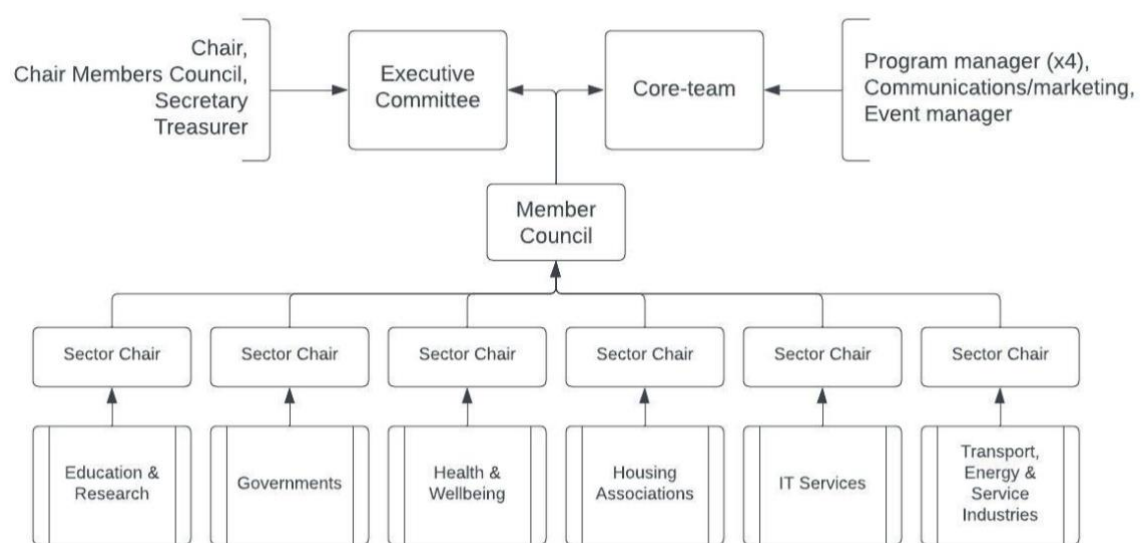
Data collection

To learn about the way that professionals perceive and articulate their professional, organizational, and collective identities, semi-structured interviews were conducted with spokespersons from the member organizations. The decision was made for semi-structured interviews because it provides rich qualitative data and it fits with the subjective nature of identities (Langley & Meziani, 2020).

The group of participants represented four sectors of the IOC. No spokespersons from the 'Housing Association' or 'Governments' sector participated. Overall, I interviewed 16 different member organizations, which represents 16% of the IOC. As for each individual

sector: we spoke with 4 organizations from 'Education & Research' (27%), 2 organizations from 'Health & Wellbeing' (22%), 5 organizations from 'IT Services' (25%), and 5 organizations from 'Transport, Energy & Service Industries' (36%). From each participating sector we spoke to one sector chair, except 'IT services' who had two sector chairs participate.

The participants joined the research on a voluntary basis and were reached through an announcement in the IOC or through direct email contact. Consent was either obtained in previous research related to this IOC or obtained before the interviews. In total, 17 spokespersons were interviewed in 16 interviews. The interviews were held and recorded via Microsoft Teams and ranged from 21 to 47 minutes, which resulted in a total of 474 minutes or roughly 8 hours of recordings. The interviews were then transcribed using the Amberscript transcription software with an intelligent verbatim approach, removing fillers and repetitions from the spoken word. The transcripts totalled up to 150 pages. In the two tables an overview of the interviews (table 1) and an overview of the sectors (table 2) is given.

Table 1

Overview of Interviews

Interview:	Time:	Pages:	Sector:	Remarks:
1	37 minutes	12 pages	IT Services	
2	27 minutes	8 pages	Education & Research	Sector Chair
3	25 minutes	9 pages	Health & Wellbeing	Sector Chair
4	24 minutes	6 pages	Transport, Energy & Services Industries	
5	34 minutes	11 pages	Transport, Energy & Services Industries	Sector Chair
6	25 minutes	9 pages	IT Services	Sector Chair
7	35 minutes	11 pages	IT Services	
8	47 minutes	13 pages	Education & Research	
9	28 minutes	8 pages	Transport, Energy & Services Industries	
10	23 minutes	7 pages	Health & Wellbeing	
11	22 minutes	7 pages	Transport, Energy & Services Industries	
12	21 minutes	8 pages	IT Services	Sector Chair
13	21 minutes	7 pages	Transport, Energy & Services Industries	
14	39 minutes	11 pages	Education & Research	
15	31 minutes	10 pages	IT Services	
16	35 minutes	13 pages	Education & Research	2 representatives
Total:	474 minutes	150 pages		

Table 2

Overview of Sectors

Sector:	Members:	Participants:	% of Sector:
Education & Research	15	4	27%
Governments	31	0	0%
Health & Wellbeing	9	2	22%
Housing Associations	14	0	0%
IT Services	20	5	25%
Transport, Energy & Service Industries	14	5	36%
Total:	103	16	16%

The interviews were based on the three levels of identity: professional, organizational, and collective identity. The interview consisted of three parts, which follows the same order of the identities, which means that first the professional identity was discussed, then the organizational identity, and finally the collective identity of the IOC. Each part would start with the following question: *"how would you describe your professional identity in 3-5 characteristics?"* Where "professional" would be interchanged with "organizational" and "collective". This question was followed by: *"how do these characteristics influence your day-to-day work?"* During the interview the researcher ensured that the conversation was natural and allowed room for exploring topics that the participants brought up. To ensure proper understanding, the researcher asked follow-up questions based on the answers that the participants provided.

During the interviews two instruments were used: an interview guide and a characteristics list. The interview guide was developed to provide guidance to the researcher in conducting the interview. It was written in both English and Dutch and both versions can be found in the appendices (A and B). Throughout the interviews I noticed that the interview guide was more extensive than necessary to collect the relevant data, which lead to primarily asking the questions mentioned in the previous paragraph and follow-ups on the answers.

The characteristics list was made to support the participants in describing their identities and was provided to the participant before the interview. The list was made with the help of ChatGPT and consists of twenty-five characteristics and ten examples of organizations and their organizational identity. The researcher made sure that the AI-generated list was accurate and did not contain any inconsistencies. Again, it was developed in both English and Dutch and both versions can be found in the appendices (C and D).

Data analysis

I used a composite narrative approach to analyse our data. A composite narrative is a way of presenting data from several interviews as if it were an interview with a single individual (Willis, 2018). It is important that this process is transparent to ensure the validity of the method. Willis (2018) explained that using this method has three benefits: First, it allows us to present complex data and ensures more generalized learning and understanding. Second, it provides anonymity. Third, it has future-forming potential by presenting findings in a way that is accessible to those outside academia. The data analysis of this case study consisted of four phases.

In the first phase, I got familiar with the data through transcribing the interviews. Considering that I conducted the interviews, this was the second time that I interacted with the data.

In the second phase, I devised individual profiles of all the interviews, these profiles consisted of their views and explanations of their professional, organizational, and collective identity. I distinguished between the different identities by analysing the answers of the interviewees and the context in which they were given. In other words, when the interviewees discussed their professional identity, I used that information to formulate their professional identity narrative. Furthermore, by using the ATLAS.TI qualitative data analysis software, I could highlight relevant quotes and easily find them back in the transcripts, which helped me

develop the profiles of the interviews. This resulted in the profiles that showed the professional, organizational, and collective identity narratives of the interviews, while providing references to specific quotes in the transcripts. In addition, during this phase I derived three primary topics in relation to the collective identity narrative of the IOC: connection, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. These three topics provide a categorization for the responses and perspectives on the collective identity of the IOC.

In the third phase, I attempted to form the composite narratives by dividing the individual profiles based on shared narratives or characteristics. The goal was to find a division that would accurately present the rich and complex data. During this process I went through several iterations of divisions before finding the final division. More specifically, I tried to develop divisions based on the following variables: professional identity, organizational identity, collective identity, provinces, bringers vs. takers, knowledge sharing vs. connection, and even odd vs. even numbered interviews (to ensure that there was no confirmation bias). Finally, the division was made based on the sectors because it provided a division that made it possible to present the richness of the data, while providing coherent and strong composite narratives. The division of the composite narratives can be found in table 3.

Table 3

Overview of Composite Narratives

Sector:	Name:	Interviews:
IT Services	Jack	1, 6, 7, 12, 15
Education & Research	Emma	2, 8, 14, 16
Health & Wellbeing	Jessica	3, 10
Transport, Energy & Service Industries	Rob	4, 5, 9, 11, 13

In the fourth phase, the composite narratives were developed. This was done by collecting all the relevant quotes from the transcripts into one document, which was followed by categorizing the quotes based on their topic. Then I made abstractions based on the information from the quotes to formulate the views of the composite narratives. An example of

an abstraction is: *"Jack is altruistic in nature; he cares for the people around him and wants them to reach their full potential."* The result was a document containing each composite narrative and their views on the professional, organizational, and collective identity, that were supported by quotes directly from the transcripts. At this point, I gave a fictional name to each composite narrative, which was purely based on intuition (i.e. "that feels like a Jack"). In addition, the name was combined with a keyword referring to their sector as a mnemonic aid to help the readers recall the composite narrative more clearly. As an example, 'Jack' is referred to as 'Tech Jack'.

In the next section the composite narratives are used to present the findings of the explorative case study, this is done in two parts. First, the composite narratives and their professional and organizational identity are presented on an individual basis. Second, to illustrate the depth and complexity of the data the composite narratives are presented in a hypothetical conversation using quotes from the interviews.

Findings

As discussed in the method section, the findings would be presented by making use of composite narratives. This section uses a combination of storytelling and quotes, where the quotes are italicized and followed by the interview number that indicates the source of the quote.

First, the narratives are introduced by their professional and organizational identity, this introduction consists of an overview of the composite narrative (in italics), which is followed by the composite narrative elaborating on their identities. An overview of the professional and organizational identities of the composite narratives will be provided in a table at the end.

Second, the composite narratives will 'engage' in a hypothetical conversation on the identity of the IOC. This conversation is guided by three primary topics that are derived from

the interviews, which are connection, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. This part will also be concluded with a table that provides an overview of the professional, organizational, and collective identities. Finally, everything will be brought together in the end by giving a brief overview of the findings.

Composite Narratives

Tech Jack; IT Services

First, we have 'Tech Jack'. Tech Jack is a composite narrative formed from five interviewees. The interviewees work for IT organizations that either focus on software development or expertise. Given the nature of their organizations, they are all part of the IT services sector. Furthermore, the interviewees either hold a general manager position at their organization or they own the organization. Among the interviewees is a sector chair.

Tech Jack is a positive and altruistic man that likes to be around people and looks out for them, this is what makes him a great team player and a strong connector. Additionally, it is important to Jack that he gets to enjoy his work and its environment. Furthermore, he is very customer oriented. As for his organization, it is a customer-oriented organization with a decentralized organizational structure, where the responsibilities are distributed. Furthermore, the organization prioritizes the welfare and development of their employees. In addition, the organization is focused on building a healthy and long-term organization.

Tech Jack starts off with a strong statement that he *"hates negativity" (6)* and that he always tries to look for the positive. He explains that it is important to him that he enjoys his day-to-day. He adds to this that he *"knows why he does it (...) [he] just wants to go with a spring in his step to work. That really is a driving force for [him]." (7)* It is not about the money for him; Tech Jack likes to be challenged and is always looking out for others. He continues to explain that *"a large part of why I do the work I do, that keeps me busy every morning and every night, that is the people." (1)* He considers himself an altruistic person who takes care of

his people. He further explains that "*he always looks from a perspective of 'how can I realise a bit of improvement?', not in the sense of efficiency or results. No, really from the perspective of growth, trust, and looking forward.*" (12) It clearly is important to Tech Jack that he helps his people grow as a person, to develop themselves, in his own words: "*[he] wants to empower individuals.*" (12)

Since Tech Jack is talking so much about other people he is asked if he is a team player to which he replies: "*Everyone is a team player, and everyone likes to work alone, the same goes for me.*" (7) Then he chuckled and quickly adds: "*I am indeed a team player.*" (15) Furthermore, he shares that it is important to him that he does "*fun work, with pleasant colleagues and engaging clients.*" (7) He goes on to tell that he considers himself a connector. "*I build networks, maintain relationships, and create new relationships. I connect rather easily and quickly.*" (6) He specifically points out that he "*is very approachable, yet quite direct.*" (1) It seems that the combination of altruism and desire for a pleasant work environment make a great connector of Tech Jack.

Tech Jack then mentions that he has a background in consultancy, which makes him "*think very much from the customer's perspective.*" (15) He shares that he is very happy with the skill and that it is of great use to him. He tells us that he considers himself very much customer oriented. At this point Tech Jack takes the step towards his organization and shares that it is his customer orientation that makes him fond of the organization's aim to provide high quality and complete solutions to their clients. He summarizes the approach of the company as follows: "*It starts with sales, then we deliver services, and finally we provide support and maintain the services.*" (15) He stresses that "*we roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty*". To which he adds with a smile: "*we are both thinkers and doers.*" (12)

Tech Jack goes on to share that "*we are a rather flat organization, we're very decentralized.*" (7) To which he adds with a serious tone in his voice that "*[they] have very*

little rules within [organization], because we detest rules, we believe that rules make you stop thinking." (1) But quickly after, he starts laughing because he used the serious tone as a joke. He continues to talk about his organization and shares that they have an *"aversion against hierarchy, we don't wear suits, it's just jeans and a shirt." (6)* He shares that he likes working at his organization because it's so informal and easy going. In addition, he shares with us that within the organization everyone is considered as equal. *"We have people with 3 years of experience and people with 30 years of experience, but everyone is equal to each other." (6)* He also proudly shares that everyone gets *"a lot of responsibility and freedom" (1)* in doing their work. He considers this both as indicators for the fact that his organization is employee centred.

Continuing the topic Tech Jack said that *"if you look within [our organization], then you will find that the employee has the highest priority." (15)* The organization takes an active role in guarding the work-life balance of its employees. A great example that he gives is that *"we don't want to put our people for more than an hour [of commuting] in the car" (7)*, because we want their employees to be home in time to spend the evening with their family. He also points out that the company focusses on the personal development of its employees. *"We stimulate employees to develop themselves, [because we believe] that is the foundation of success." (1)* He shares that it is important for them that everyone reaches their full potential, which is something he personally cares for and likes to put effort towards.

At the end, Tech Jack discusses the long-term focus of his organization. He explains that *"the long-term [results] are more important than [short-term] profits." (1)* He shares with us that they are working on adapting a business model that makes it more like a family business, such that it is 'passed on' to the next owners. With that in mind Tech Jack concludes that *"today's profits are not irrelevant, but we should not extract the maximum out of your organization now." (7)*

Healthy Jessica; Health & Wellbeing

Second, we have 'Healthy Jessica'. Jessica is a composite narrative formed from two interviewees. The interviewees work for healthcare organizations. Given the nature of their organizations, they are all part of the Health & Wellbeing sector. Furthermore, the interviewees hold a manager position at their organization. Among the interviewees is a sector chair.

Healthy Jessica is a people-oriented person that is socially concerned and that highly values honesty and trust. In addition, she is very interested in innovation. As for her organization, it is an organization that is socially concerned and which tries to provide its patients with the best care possible by working on and with new innovations.

Healthy Jessica starts with sharing that she has *"worked in the commercial sector, but I made the step towards [health care] because I was done with profit maximization." (3)* She elaborates that she has made the decision that she *"wants to do something for others" (10)*, which is why she made the step towards the healthcare sector. Healthy Jessica shares with us that working in the healthcare sector has given her more satisfaction than the commercial sector did.

Healthy Jessica goes on to share that it is important for her that her colleagues and clients are satisfied and well taken care off. She characterizes herself as a real people person. She adds to this that honesty and trust are also very important to her, and she would also expect the same from her colleagues and organization. Before she starts talking about her organization, Jessica makes one last remark stating that *"Innovation is [part of the reason] why I made the step towards [health care]." (10)* She is in general interested in innovation, but particularly in the innovations in the healthcare sector and how it changes the industry.

When Healthy Jessica starts to talk about her organization, she characterizes it as *"patient driven and high quality." (3)* She elaborates that they are constantly working on or with innovation, which is driven by the aim to "*design the care as efficient as possible and do*

everything to give the patient a better and quicker treatment." (3) However, she also shares that it can be "a *challenge is to remain innovative" (3)*. But Healthy Jessica points out that they are working very hard to be innovative and progressive. A good example that she shares is that they are working on *"automation and robotizing, not because they want to but because it is a must." (10)* She adds to this that it is important that the *"quality of care is good and that the personal touch remains." (10)* Another point that she stresses is that her organization is very socially concerned. Especially, *"the people that work [at the organization], they don't work for the money, they work for a higher purpose." (6)* It is precisely this higher purpose that make *"the employees feel responsible for the patients" (3),* which fosters a great sense of unity within the organization.

Education Emma; Education & Research

Third, we have 'Education Emma'. Education Emma is a composite narrative formed from four interviewees. The interviewees work for either an educational institutes or a library network organization. Given the nature of their organizations, they are all part of the Education & Research sector. Furthermore, the interviewees hold a director, manager, or advisor position at their organization. Among the interviewees is a sector chair.

Education Emma is an energetic and social woman with strong integrity that believes in trust and honesty. In addition, she summarises her leadership style in three aspects: strategic thinking, innovation, and adaptability. As for her organization, it characterises as an innovative organization that positively impacts the region. Additionally, both the organization and its employees are required to be adaptive because of the dynamic environment.

Education Emma is very comfortable sharing her thoughts and opinions, which is quickly explained when she shares that she believes *"that a big part of [her] professional identity is connected to the fact that [she] know[s] a lot of people, that [she is] interested in people, and that [she] look[s] for connections, which results in a big network." (14)* She

elaborates on this statement and explains that within her network people *"are willing to do favours for [her] and that she is willing to do things for others" (8)*. She tells us that her network is very valuable to her as an individual and to her in her professional role.

Education Emma moves on to share that *"trustworthiness is very important for her own professionalism." (2)* In line with this she considers *"integrity an important [quality]." (16)* She seems like a principled woman, once this is pointed out to her, she responds that she knows what is important for her as an individual and she would not want to deviate from that. She openly shares her thought that it could maybe be the reason why she has got such a great network. After a moment of silent thought, Education Emma continues and shares that in her leadership style she has three key characteristics: *"strategic thinking, innovation, and adaptability." (8)* She summarizes it by explaining that she tries to be strategic in implementing innovations and that she can respond quickly if changes need to be made. She points out that these characteristics are essential for her to succeed in her organization.

Education Emma uses this to bridge to her organization. She explains that the environment in which they operate is constantly changing. She states: *"Maybe it does not look like it from the outside, but I guarantee [you] that it is a very dynamic world." (8)* Surprisingly, she adds that she *"likes a bit of friction [within the organization] because if you keep doing the same, then you are not innovative." (2)* She elaborates that it is important for her organization to keep growing, which is why she tends to hire people with new ideas that cause some friction within the organization. In this way she brings people outside of their comfort zone, which in her view ensures development and innovation. She goes on to share that within her organization they are preparing people for *"occupations that sometimes do not exist yet." (14)* Solidifying the impression that her organization is innovative.

Education Emma then brings attention to the fact that she would characterise her organization as *"an innovative [organization] with a large regional function, specifically for*

the north [of the Netherlands]." (14) She shares that *is important to us to have a [positive] impact on the region and that we do it together with the region, that means that we have a lot of connections with the corporate sector." (2)* She goes on to elaborate that it is part of her job to be aware of the wants and needs of the organization in her region, which is why the role suits her well.

Education Emma shares with us that her organization considers themselves a knowledge centre as opposed to a research and educational institute. She explains that she wants her organization to be a national knowledge centre on the themes that they specialize in, yet she acknowledges that they are a knowledge centre for the region. However, they are working hard *"to be a trustworthy partner"* (16) in the region and are aiming to be considered a source for reliable information.

Transport Rob; Transport, Energy & Service Industries

Fourth, we have 'Transport Rob'. Rob is a composite narrative formed from five interviewees. The interviewees work for a water company, an insurance company, a passenger transport organization, or vehicle authority. Given the nature of their organizations, they are all part of the Transport, Energy & Services Industries sector. Furthermore, the interviewees hold a director, manager, or advisor position. Among the interviewees is a sector chair.

Transport Rob is a results-oriented engineer with the associated qualities. Additionally, Rob aims to be trustworthy. As for his organization, the picture is a bit less clear, but it is described as a responsible and results oriented organization that aims to be trustworthy and transparent. This composite narrative is not as coherent as the others, which can be explained by the diversity of organizations that the composite is made off.

At the start Transport Rob shared that he is involved in different projects and holds different roles, so he does not have a clear idea on his professional or organizational identity. Then he shares that he is *"very results oriented." (9)* He shares that it is important to him that

his organization achieves results. He doubtfully adds that he also considers himself goal-oriented, but questions if that is not the same as results oriented. He waves his doubt away and goes on to the next point.

Transport Rob shares that he considers himself *"analytical, trustworthy, and future-oriented." (4)* He seems a bit more confident in this statement. He adds to it that he also has *"an eye for detail." (9)* He tells us that by training he is a technician, which is why he is analytical and has an eye for detail. He continues to explain that it also makes him *"pragmatic (...) and good in organizing and keeping an overview." (13)*

Transport Rob moves on to discuss his organization and mentions that it is future oriented. He elaborates that within the industry that they are in it is important to keep analysing the current situation and how it will develop in the long term. He says that essentially *"we are building for the future." (13)* Transport Rob elaborates that it has to do with the limited resources at their disposal. As an example, he discusses that building sewer systems is much more complicated than you would think. It requires complex analysis and planning, because the sewers that we are building now must be operational long-term, because you can't easily update it.

Transport Rob goes on to elaborate that due to the nature of his organization it is important to be transparent and trustworthy. He explains that because his organization is governmental, that the people often have no choice but to be their clients. He continues to explain that there are *"authorities that test their quality plans". (4)* He concludes that his organization aims to be transparent and trustworthy. In addition, he shares that they are checked thoroughly to make sure that they are reliable. This also causes them to be results-oriented, he explains that it is simply because they are expected to have good results.

Then Transport Rob shares that within their organization *"[they] have to continue learning." (5)* He explains that when you are working with IT topics, that not learning is not

an option. He also shares that within his organization they primarily work *"together in teams."* *(5)* And as an organization they focus on keeping the responsibility with these teams, which results in having "*a very intrinsically motivated club of people." (11)*

Table 4

Overview of Professional and Organizational Identities

Composite Narrative:	Professional identity:	Organizational identity:
Tech Jack	*Tech Jack is a positive and altruistic man **that likes to be around people and looks out for them**, this is what makes him a great team player and a strong connector. Additionally, it is important to Jack that he gets to enjoy his work and its environment. Furthermore, he is very **customer oriented**.*	*As for his organization, it is a **customer-oriented** organization with a decentralized organizational structure, where the responsibilities are distributed. Furthermore, **the organization prioritizes the welfare and development of their employees.** In addition, the organization is focused on building a healthy and long-term organization.*
Healthy Jessica	*Healthy Jessica is a **people-oriented person** that is **socially concerned** and that highly values honesty and trust. In addition, she is very **interested in innovation**.*	*As for her organization, it is an organization that is **socially concerned** and which tries to provide its patients with the best care possible by **working on and with new innovations.***
Education Emma	*Education Emma is an energetic and **social** woman with strong integrity that believes in trust and honesty. In addition, she summarises her leadership style in three aspects: strategic thinking, innovation, and **adaptability**.*	*As for her organization, it characterises as an innovative organization **that positively impacts the region**. Additionally, both the organization and its employees are required to be **adaptive** because of the dynamic environment.*
Transport Rob	*Transport Rob is a **results-oriented** engineer with the associated qualities. Additionally, Rob aims to be **trustworthy**.*	*As for his organization, the picture is a bit less clear, but it is described as a responsible and **results oriented** organization that aims to be **trustworthy** and transparent.*

The first finding that is presented in that data can be seen in table 4. In this table the professional and organizational identities of the composite narratives is presented. Using bold font, the overlap between the professional and organizational identity is shown.

When looking at the composite narrative of Tech Jack, it shows an overlap between the professional and organizational identity on two characteristics. First, Tech Jack's customer orientation fits well with the organization's aim to provide complete solutions. Second, Tech Jack's altruistic nature and desire to empower others are aligned with the goal of the organization to develop its employees and to help them reach their full potential. Finally, Jack is excited to talk about his work and his organization, which shows that he enjoys working there. Furthermore, when looking at the composite narrative of Healthy Jessica it shows that her people-orientation and social concern combined with her interest in innovations makes her a great fit to work for her organization. Moreover, that Education Emma is a strong networker,

supports her organization in connecting and working together with the region, and her leadership styles helps the organization navigate the dynamic environment. Finally, in the case of Transport Rob there are two similarities, which are the results-orientation and the aim to be trustworthy.

The Inter-Organizational Collaboration

For each composite narrative their professional and organizational identities were just presented. In this part of the findings the hypothetical conversation between the composite narratives on the collective identity of the IOC is presented. As discussed previously, the topics that will be discussed are 1) connection, 2) knowledge sharing, and 3) collaboration. For each topic a brief overview of the discussion is presented (in italics) before one composite narrative 'starts' the conversation, this is the composite narrative that has the strongest opinion on the topic. Through storytelling the quotes of the composite narratives are presented in such a way that it can be read as if an actual interaction between the composite narratives occurred, which is not the case.

Connection

Education Emma and Healthy Jessica are primarily focussed on the network provided within the IOC. They both acknowledge that there is an aspect of learning together too. Specifically for Education Emma this view on the IOC aligns with her professional and organizational identity. For Tech Jack the network of the IOC is a means to facilitating knowledge sharing. As for Transport Rob, he did not share much on the topic of connection. The consensus on the topic of connection is that it is crucial for the IOC, albeit a means to an end or the end in itself. Specifically, the connection brings the northern organizations together and it provides more visibility of the organizations within the region and to others outside of the region.

Education Emma starts the conversation with stating that she *"finds it a great platform to connect to the northern corporate sector."* (2) For her *"it is a valuable [IOC], where networking is one of the key points."* (8) Considering Education Emma's background, being a networker and working for an organization that wants to impact the region, it is not a surprise that she adds that *"it is very important for [her] to have easy access to a large number of contacts for my people."* (2) she is also very impressed by *"the variety of organizations that are a part of [the IOC]."* (8) Healthy Jessica nods in agreement but adds that the IOC is *"a network organization first, then knowledge sharing follows."* (3) She elaborates that she *"sees [the IOC] as a network organization for organizations that do something with IT."* (10) Healthy Jessica then elaborates that *"[the goal] is to know each other in the Northern Netherlands and to learn together about relevant [IT] topics."* (10)

Tech Jack seems to agree with this notion of getting to know each other, while rob seems indifferent to the idea of connection. Jack breaks the silence and adds *"that is what I like about [the IOC]: it is an opportunity to connect with each other because you are working towards the same goal, to help each other in the North of the Netherlands."* (6) Education Emma responds with sharing that she considers networking the primary goal of the IOC, but *"[the IOC] is trying to make the region smarter, by retaining and broadening the knowledge."* (8) It shows that she recognizes that there is more to the IOC than the networking aspect.

Tech Jack builds on Education Emma her statement to share that before the IOC was founded, it seemed that knowledge was imported from outside of the Northern provinces. Then he exclaimed with a puzzled facial expression: *"but why?! We can do that in the North too!"* (12) He gave an example of how a big hospital was dealing with an IT issue, that he could've resolved for them, but instead they went with some 'big corporation' in Randstad. *"That's absurd! That they get their knowledge from some company in Amsterdam, while we have the*

knowledge right here." (6) Now, he explains, it is much more visible what the Northern organizations have to offer as a result from the connections that the IOC made.

This arouses a response in Rob. He shares that *"in the Northern provinces we have our own hidden gems that we can be proud of"* (11). He elaborates *"we are not too keen on marketing; we don't put our products on display and promote ourselves, we think it's unnecessary."* (11) Then he immediately adds that the IOC provides the right platform to showcase their capabilities. He ends his response with encouraging the others to be proud of the North and the community that they built and that *"they're jealous in the west [at what we have]."* (5)

Moving on Transport Rob shares the reason why he joined the IOC. He explains that it just makes sense to join because *"we simply have a good reputation, which is why already more than a hundred organizations joined."* (5) Education Emma responds and calls it *"some sort of social pressure, you just want to be a part of it."* (16) She elaborates that it is something that you feel you cannot miss out on. She continues to share that when she started her new job at the organization, she made them join the IOC precisely because of that reason. Healthy Jessica nods in agreement, she tells us that she did the same as Education Emma. Her and another colleague came over from an organization that was part of the IOC, and her new organization was not, they both said: *"it's weird that we are not a part of [the IOC]. We must join them because it will give us more than it costs, and it will be good for our organization."* (10) It is the last part of Healthy Jessica her sentence that seems to get Tech Jack thinking. *"Every year we critically evaluate if we're extending our membership because it must produce some return. Look, we're no governmental organization, where you get funding every year, that just sits in your bank account, that you can use for your operations."* (15)

At this point Healthy Jessica seems to be a little frustrated, however, before she elaborates Transport Rob says the following: *"When I get the bill from the IOC, I have to*

explain what it is for." (9) And when he looks at the value that he gets for his contribution, then Transport Rob can only come to one conclusion: *"It is worth the money!" (9).* Healthy Jessica seems to agree with Transport Rob and shares that the money is *"quite a significant commitment (…) but what you get in return makes it worth it." (3)*

Knowledge sharing

Tech Jack and Transport Rob consider knowledge sharing to be the primary focus of the IOC. Tech Jack approaches it in an altruistic way of wanting to share his expertise and capacity, which aligns with his professional identity. As for Transport Rob, he considers it a place to learn and improve together. For Education Emma the knowledge sharing is less of a priority, yet she ensures to contribute. Furthermore, Healthy Jessica shares that she is primarily a consumer of the IOC, yet she tries to contribute wherever she can. Overall, the consensus is that contributing to the IOC is important for it to work. Additionally, the IOC is considered a key player in learning and developing together in the region.

Additionally, in this part there is a brief discussion on the participation of commercial organizations in the IOC, which primarily shows a difference in understanding of their goal. Tech Jack, who works for a commercial organization, stresses that they are not participating for the commercial opportunities, whereas Healthy Jessica thinks they are.

Both Tech Jack and Transport Rob seem to take a more active stance, it is almost as if they are getting excited about the topic. It is Transport Rob that starts of the discussion this time. He explains that *"it is a platform of organizations that share 'lessons learned', that explore new technologies, and that support each other, which results in an informal network." (11)* He elaborates: *"I do not believe that we have to figure everything out ourselves. I really believe that we can learn how others have approached certain matters and find the best approach in this way." (9)* He explains that *"knowledge sharing is a big component of the IOC." (5)* Tech Jack responds in agreement. The IOC *"brings together regional organizations*

with a focus on IT to share knowledge and learn from each other." (12) He elaborates that the network connects the organizations with the aim to share knowledge and he explains that *"altruism is very important: you don't always have to expect something in return, but people sometimes struggle with that" (7).*

This statement seems to arouse some frustration in Jessica and the room gets a bit more tense. Jack continues to explain that for a "*network to work everyone needs to put in effort, instead of joining a network to only gain from it because then you're off to a bad start." (1)* This statement seems to be the final straw for Jessica as she exclaimed: *"if you are a commercial party, then you are only here for the commercial opportunities." (10)* She elaborates that it is how it works, being part of a network there is more opportunity to reach people as opposed to cold acquisition.

Tech Jack responds and explains that he always noticed the division in the IOC, they see us as *"the commercial cowboys and they want to keep us at a distance" (6)* because we are seen as a threat. However, *"We are very cooperative; we don't see the* IOC *as a cash cow." (15)* Before Jessica responds, Rob jumps in. *"We have struggled with this before with the commercial parties joining the* IOC. *Before it was just governmental or semi-governmental organizations, but we agreed that if they bring something to the table and take something from the table that it should be good." (5)* He further elaborates that it is about the balance of bringing to and taking from the table. Jack defensively responds that at some point he was called out in a positive manner, that he *"was already doing so much." (15)* He adds that he, and the IT services sector, know very well that the IOC is not the place to make sales. Jack shares that he has brought a lot to the IOC; *"we provide knowledge for the workshops, we are present [at gatherings], and we provide input on [the organization of the* IOC] *and that is important" (1) "And we like providing input, we often have knowledge around relevant themes,*

and we can offer guidance on those topics." (6) Finally, he remarks *"we have to keep bringing to the table, that is important now and will be important in the future." (15)*

After a moment of silence, the conversation continues and they discuss the role people play in the IOC. Education Emma starts and explains that for her the networking is the primary function of the IOC, but she is still happy to provide speakers and input if she can. She emphasises that it is a two-way street and that she happily walks both ways. Then it's up to Healthy Jessica to reflect. She shares that she is *"taking more than bringing right now." (10)* Yet she stresses that she tries to help wherever she can. Participating in this discussion, for example, is a way in which she tries to bring to the table.

Then it is Transport Rob's turn, it becomes clear that Rob is struggling in reflecting on the matter. *"I think [we] are a consumer, rather than a supplier to [the IOC]." (4)* On the other hand, *"we also try to bring a lot [to the IOC]." (5)* Looking at Rob's complicated and diverse background, it is not surprising that he is struggling to form a proper reflection. He takes another moment and rephrases it as follows: At times I am a taker, at other times I am a bringer, yet I think that I currently take more than I bring to the table. Healthy Jessica raises the final point on this topic, which is that the IOC is a great facilitator of connections and *"a driving force behind the knowledge sharing on IT topics." (3)* To which the group, almost in sync, nods in agreement.

Collaboration

It is primarily Tech Jack and Healthy Jessica that contributed to this topic, they are both looking for collaborations that go beyond their own sector. Additionally, the discussion showed that everyone appreciates and values the time and effort that the core-team of the IOC puts in, which is considered essential to achieve the goals of the IOC. Finally, the consensus is that collaboration happens within the sectors and primarily concerns knowledge sharing.

However, there is a desire to advance the collaboration beyond knowledge sharing and the boundaries of the sectors.

Healthy Jessica starts the discussion. *"I think that we, [the Health & Wellbeing sector], can find each other very well, especially on specific cases, we also share knowledge with each other. But now I would like to go to the next level."* (3) The next level is collaboration beyond knowledge sharing, she wants to work together with other members on specific topics. She also points out that *"everyone wants to and now is the time to make a difference."* (3) Tech Jack responds to Healthy Jessica: *"it happens too little, [working together], especially across the sectors. If you look at the individual sectors, then you can see that they are working on their own agenda but there are topics that concern each sector."* (12) He adds that *"there are several topics that are happening in our field, that also happen in the [Health & Wellbeing sector], that we could share, for example, with the [Transport, Energy & Service Industries sector] or the other way around."* (7) Healthy Jessica adds that *"We want more cross-sector [collaboration]."* (10) Tech Jack agrees and shares that as an IOC *"we are increasingly striving for more cross-sectoral collaborations."* (6)

Tech Jack continues that it would be cool if there would be a spin-off from the IOC. *"I like fantasizing about something that originates from within [the IOC] that becomes its own thing."* (1) Unfortunately, he comes back to reality quickly and shares that *"the collective consensus is that the Northern ecosystem doesn't take full advantage of her synergy."* (1) Tech Jack concludes it with sharing that he believes that there is a lot of potential in the IOC, especially if they would move beyond the sectors. Education Emma adds to this and shares that she feels that there are plenty of ideas to collaborate on, but it's the follow-up that often lacks. She thinks it has to do with the fact that each member is participating in the IOC next to their regular job, which results in a lack of action on ideas. She further elaborates: *"I am happy with all the activities that are organized, but I am noticing that they don't turn into mutual actions."*

(8) She adds that you can't blame the IOC for it, as it seems to be something that does not come natural with such an organization. She quickly adds that this is in no way an attempt to disregard the core-team of the IOC because they are essential in the pursuit of the goals of the IOC. *"The core-team is working very, very hard [for the* IOC*]." (2)* if they have the slightest idea about how someone or something can be helpful, then they reach out immediately. She finally adds *"I just see a lot happening" (14)* and that is to be credited to the core-team.

Transport Rob speaks up now too, sharing that *"a lot of time and effort is being invested to achieve results." (4)* He also shares that starting a core-team for the IOC is considered *"a crucial moment, and [he] thinks that it has paid off very well." (5)* Healthy Jessica clearly agrees and shares that the IOC has made significant steps forward since foundation of the core-team. Finally, Tech Jack adds that the core-team consists of *"people that are highly dedicated to organizing a range of different activities." (6)* He elaborates that *"since they have [a core-team] it has been much more professional, and the quality of the events has improved. This is reflected in the high turnouts, which I believe to be the highest yet. So, it pays off and that is good." (15)*

Table 5

Overview of Professional, Organizational, and Collective identities

Composite Narrative:	Professional identity:	Organizational identity:	Collective identity:
Tech Jack	Tech Jack is a positive and **altruistic** man that likes to be around people and looks out for them, this is what makes him a great team player and a strong connector. Additionally, it is important to Jack that he gets to enjoy his work and its environment. Furthermore, he is very customer oriented.	As for his organization, it is a customer-oriented organization with a decentralized organizational structure, where the responsibilities are distributed. Furthermore, the organization prioritizes the welfare and development of their employees. In addition, the organization is focused on building a healthy and long-term organization.	For Tech Jack the network of the IOC is a means to facilitating knowledge sharing, which he considers the primary focus of the IOC. **He approaches it in an altruistic way of wanting to share his epxertise and capacity.** Additionally, he is looking forward to advanced collaboration beyond knowledge sharing and the boundaries of the sectors.
Healthy Jessica	Healthy Jessica is a people-oriented person that is socially concerned and that highly values honesty and trust. In addition, she is very interested in innovation.	As for her organization, it is an organization that is socially concerned and which tries to provide its patients with the best care possible by working on and with new innovations.	For Healthy Jessica the network of the IOC is her primary focus. She knows there is an aspect of knowledge sharing too and tries to contribute to it. Additionally, she is looking forward to advanced collaboration beyond knowledge sharing and the boundaries of the sectors.
Education Emma	Education Emma is an energetic and **social** woman with strong integrity that believes in trust and honesty. In addition, she summarises her leadership style in three aspects: strategic thinking, innovation, and adaptability.	As for her organization, it characterises as an innovative organization **that positively impacts the region**. Additionally, both the organization and its employees are required to be adaptive because of the dynamic	For Education Emma **the network of the IOC is her primary focus**. She considers knowledge sharing less of a priority, yet she ensures that she contributes.
Transport Rob	Transport Rob is a results-oriented engineer with the associated qualities. Additionally, Rob aims to be trustworthy.	As for his organization, the picture is a bit less clear, but it is described as a responsible and results oriented organization that aims to be trustworthy and transparent.	For Transport Rob the primary focus of the IOC is knowledge sharing, more specifically, he considers it a place to learn and improve together. In addition, he both consumes from and contributes to the IOC.

In recapping the inter-organizational collaboration discussion there are three things worth mentioning. First, even though there is a clear overlap between the professional and organizational identities, there is a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity. There are however two exceptions: Education Emma and Tech Jack. For Education Emma there is an overlap between all her identities, as shown in bold in table 5. On professional level she is a social woman that has a great network, her organization aims to positively impact the region by actively connecting to them, and within the IOC her priority lays with the network

aspect, showing overlap on all three identities. As for Tech Jack, there is an overlap between the professional and collective identity. He has an altruistic nature that shows in the group discussion where he shows that he wants to share his expertise and knowledge in the IOC (as shown on page 30). When we look at his organization, then we see that they care for their employees and their development, but there is no clear indication of an altruistic character, which means that there is a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity. This lack of overlap could be influenced by the next finding.

Second, based on the composite narratives and the collected data there seems to be another identity nested in between the organizational and collective identity, namely the sector identity. This would be a collective identity that is formed based on the sectors within the IOC and therefore consists of an identity that is based on similar organizations. There are three indicators for this identity. The first indicator is the division of interviews for the composite narratives. After trying out several compositions, the one that provided the strongest and most coherent composite narratives was based on the sectors. If we consider the sector identity to be true, then it would explain the coherence and strength of this division. The second indicator can be found in the discussion between Tech Jack and Healthy Jessica on the participation of commercial organizations in the IOC (as seen on page 30). Both composite narratives speak on behalf of their sectors and seem to view the other sector as a separate part of the IOC, rather than considering the IOC as a whole. The third indicator is the composite narrative of Transport Rob, when looking at the interviews it's based on there is a lot of diversity in types of functions and organizations, yet there is a coherent narrative about the IOC. Considering that most of the interaction occurs between the organizations in a sector, it would not be a surprise that a separate identity would be formed at the sector level.

Third and final, there is a consensus on what the IOC is, which can be synthesized as a group of organizations, that are in the Northern provinces of the Netherlands, with the goal to

connect and share knowledge on IT topics to strengthen and connect the region. However, even though in general the composite narratives agree, there is a difference in priorities for the IOC. Throughout the discussion it shows that Healthy Jessica and Education Emma prioritize the connection aspect more than the knowledge sharing, whereas Tech Jack and Transport Rob prioritize the knowledge sharing more. In addition, Tech Jack and Healthy Jessica are the only ones that expressed interest in more advanced collaboration that goes beyond knowledge sharing and the boundaries of the sectors.

In summary, the composite narratives and the group discussion have shown us four things: 1) there is a clear overlap between professional and organizational identities, 2) there is a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity, 3) there seems to be another identity level between the organizational and collective identity, the sector identity, and 4) there is a consensus on the collective identity of the IOC, which is based on the connection, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, yet there are different priorities between the sectors.

Discussion

I have explored how professionals within a large inter-organizational collaboration perceive and articulate their professional, organizational, and collective identity. By gathering data through semi-structured interviews and analysing the data with a composite narrative approach. The composite narratives showed an overlap between the professional and organizational identity, which does not extend to the collective identity of the IOC. In addition, the composite narratives showed a coherent picture on how participants perceive and articulate the collective identity of the IOC. Furthermore, there is a suggestion of another nested identity, the sector identity. In the following discussion I reflect on the findings, share the limitations of my research, suggest new research directions, and discuss practical recommendations.

Findings

Looking at the first finding: the overlap between the professional and organizational identities of the composite narratives. It is Fachin and Langley (2023) that showed that an overlap between these two identities can be expected. The approach they used in their research is similar to this case study, since they looked at the communication in relation to the organization, however, the difference is that they looked at interactions between people. Essentially, the data of both projects is similar as it looked at the way people communicate about the identities, yet Fachin and Langley (2023) could analyse the interaction between people on the topic of organizational identity. The first finding of this case study gives merit to the claim of Fachin and Langley (2023) that there is an overlap between the professional and organizational identity. Keeping in mind the communicative constitution of organization, a more general conclusion that can be made is that the professionals that you hire will influence the identity of your organization, which will impact the results that the organization can achieve (Fachin & Langley, 2023; Koschmann, 2013; Lifshitz-Assaf, 2018).

Moving on to the second finding: there is a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity in the large IOC that has been analysed. This opposes the argument of Ungureanu et al. (2020) that collective identities, in the context of an IOC, are formed based on existing collective identities, such as industries or disciplines, and more specific identities, such as organizational identities. However, the data did show that there is a minor overlap between identities in the Education Emma composite narrative based on the connection goal. However, because this is the only composite narrative that shows an overlap between the organizational and collective identity it seems coincidental. A possible explanation for this phenomenon could be the size of the IOC that this research looked at. With a total of 103 organizations that participate in the IOC the challenge of balancing the diverse goals and needs

of different organizations and the want and desire to work together must be significant, I would say almost impossible.

When looking at the key aspects of the collective identity of the IOC: connection, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. The argument could be made that by keeping them broad it provides freedom of interpretation, and it likely diminishes the challenge of balancing different goals and needs with the want and desire to work together. It is then the shared experiences and goals that creates the collective identity and less the values of the individual entities, which creates the shared sense of belonging and understanding. This both opposes and supports Ungureanu et al.'s (2020) definition of an IOC identity, which they describe as a collective understanding formed by a group of individual entities that share a sense of belonging and understanding based on shared experiences, values and goals. Since there is a shared sense of belonging and understanding but it is based on the shared experiences and goals, not so much the shared values. Overall, the lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity can be explained by the size of the IOC. On the other hand, the collective identity that is formed does create a shared sense of belonging and understanding, likely by formulating it in broad terms, which gives organizations the freedom to interpret the key aspects, this could explain the coherent view on the collective identity of the IOC. In addition, this finding suggests that there is a limit to the number of entities that can formulate a detailed and specific collective identity.

Furthermore, based on the findings and the composite narratives there seems to be another identity nested between the organizational and collective identity, the sector identity. I believe that it is a collective identity that is formed based on the sectors of the IOC. Considering research on the formulation of identities through communicative practices (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015; Fachin & Langley, 2023; Koschmann, 2013) and the fact that most of the interaction between organizations within the IOC occurs within their own sector, it can easily

be explained that there is another identity level within the IOC. In addition, considering the similar nature of the organizations in the sectors it makes it more likely that there is a shared sense of belonging and understanding based on shared experiences, values, and goals (Ungureanu et al., 2020). The data also showed clear similarities on how participants viewed the collective of the IOC, which lead to the division of the composite narratives. In addition, this could possibly explain the lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity of the IOC. If there is a sector identity, then it is likely formed based on the organizational identities (Fachin & Langley, 2023; Koschmann, 2013; Ungureanu et al., 2020), which means that another step needs to be taken for it to become the collective identity of the IOC. With each step, as shown in the composite narratives, an abstraction is made to form an identity that fits each individual entity that is part of it.

Moreover, when looking at the collective identity of the IOC, which revolves around connection, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, then it seems that the identity aligns well with the goals of the IOC. As research has shown, the collective identity has a significant influence on the outcomes of the IOC (Hardy et al., 2005; Olson et al., 2011; Ungureanu et al., 2020; Zhang & Huxham, 2009). From the interviews it has become clear that the IOC is successful in connecting organizations and supporting knowledge sharing. However, one aspect of the collective identity of the IOC is not yet realized, which is the collaboration aspect. It is no surprise, because collaboration did not have a prominent role in the discussion on the collective identity of the IOC, with only two composite narratives having a clear perspective on it. Overall, this finding shows support for the argument of Koschmann (2013), which points out that the collective identity becomes a fundamental aspect of the IOC and influences its mode of being. In this specific case it is the connection and knowledge sharing that is the mode of being, but if more attention is being paid to collaboration, then it is likely to become part of the mode of being too.

In summary, this case study showed that the professional and organizational identity will overlap and even influence each other through communicative practices. Furthermore, it showed a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity, for which are two possible reasons: first, the sector identity that is nested between the organizational and collected identity. Second, the size of the IOC, which calls for a more broadly formulated collective identity. Finally, the case study showed that there is likely another identity level present in the IOC, the sector identity that is formed based on the sectors within the IOC.

Furthermore, this explorative case study has contributed to research in three ways. First, all three different identity levels in the IOC were analysed, which has not been done before in a similar manner. Second, the context of this case study is unique in size and set-up of the IOC, which sets it apart from other research. Third, having the composite narratives 'engage in a conversation' in the findings section demonstrated a novel approach to present findings.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this explorative case study. First, the participants of this explorative study joined on a voluntary basis. Considering that the participants volunteered their time it is likely that they were already invested in the IOC and their activities, which could result in an overly positive view on the IOC. It could also have been interesting to talk to people who were not keen on donating their time, as they might have different views on the IOC and could potentially be more critical on it. Furthermore, all participants held a manager or even C-level position at their organization and were the spokesperson of their organization for the IOC. This meant that they were directly involved with the IOC. It could have been interested to see the narratives from employees of the organization on what the IOC entails, as this might show different experiences. Moreover, there were no representatives among the participants of the 'Governments' and 'Housing Association' sectors. Even though, 16% of the members were present, this could still have affected the findings and have given an incomplete narrative on

the IOC. Finally, when looking at the full size of the IOC, so all the organizations and their employees, then the number of participants was very small. However, in light in representation of the members, the group can be considered representative, and the size of the group fits the explorative aim of the study.

Secondly, the limitations in relation to the semi-structured interviews are that the interviewer could unintentionally introduce a bias through questions and responses. To reduce this an interview guide was developed and reviewed by experts. Furthermore, during the interviews I focused on staying objective by keeping a neutral attitude, by actively listening, and asking for clarifications.

Third and final, Willis (2018, p. 1) indicated that "the main limitation of composite narratives is the burden of responsibility upon the researcher, to convey accurate, yet anonymized, portrayals of the accounts of a group of individuals." To convey accurate accounts of the group of individuals I took different approaches in making divisions for the composite narratives. In doing so, I formulated the composite narratives based on the transcripts from the interviews. While working on the composite narratives I held discussions with my supervisor to reflect on potential biases that I had. In addition, I attempted other divisions of the interviews for the composite narratives to ensure that the final division was the most accurate one. As a result, I believe that I have conveyed accurate portrayals of the composite narratives based on the accounts of a group of people.

Future Research

Based on the findings there are two suggestions for new research directions. First, we suggest exploring the theory that there is another identity level present in the IOC that was researched. This could provide new insights into the development of collective identities and the potential limit of entities for which you can make a detailed and specific collective identity. This could be done by taking a similar approach as this study, but then specifically including

the sector identities in the semi-structured interviews. Another approach could be to take a more open-ended approach in which the participants are well-informed on the topic of identity and the different levels and let them individually or in a group setting identify the different identities within the IOC.

Second, the notion that there is a limit of entities that can make up a detailed and specific identity could be explored. I can think of two contexts in which you could explore this notion. First, you can look at organization with a significant number of employees that is divided in departments. In this case you can explore identities of the individual, team, department, and organizational identity, which could provide insights in the maximum number of individuals that could support the same and specific collective identity. Second, you could look at an IOC that divided organizations into sectors. This would be similar to this case study, yet you would make a more elaborative division of the identity levels.

Third, another direction for future research could be the influence of existing collective identities, for example based on the location of the IOC. During the interviews, I noticed several references to the so-called 'Northern sobriety'. Especially, considering that research showed that collective identities are formed based on existing collective identities (Ungureanu et al., 2020), it is likely that collective identities based on the location could influence the formation of the collective identity of an IOC. This could be explored by researching organizations in a specific region and identifying the existing collective identities and comparing them to an IOC that is active in the same region.

Practical Recommendations

When working with an IOC or when starting an IOC, there are few recommendations based on theory and research. First, it is key to understand that the way you communicate about the IOC will directly influence what the IOC will become and what its outcomes are. It is important to have a clear idea on what the purpose and goal of the IOC is, which should be

implemented in the communicative practices on the IOC. Second, it is important to be aware of the different levels of identity that are present in an IOC. It can provide valuable insights into the interactions between the participants. Third and final, consider the size of the IOC in relation to the goals. Having a bigger IOC, does not guarantee that it will achieve better outcomes. It might be better to focus on a smaller group of organization because then efforts can be more specific and go more in depth on relevant topics or projects.

Conclusion

The aim of this explorative case study was to explore the professional, organizational, and collective identity in a large IOC. Data on this matter was collected through semi-structured interviews and presented using a composite narrative approach. The composite narratives showed us that there is a clear overlap between the professional and organizational identity, yet there was a lack of overlap between the organizational and collective identity of the IOC. Moreover, it suggested that there is another collective identity level present in the IOC, between the organizational identity and the IOC collective identity, the sector identity. Finally, the collective identity of the IOC was supported by all composite narratives, however, they all had a different focus on what the IOC is intended for, which could possibly be influenced by the sector identity.

Acknowledgements

References

Akkerman, S. F., & Bakker, A. (2011). Boundary Crossing and Boundary Objects. *Review of Educational Research*, *81*(2), 132–169. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311404435

Akkerman, S. F., & Bruining, T. (2016). Multilevel Boundary Crossing in a Professional Development School Partnership. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, *25*(2), 240–284. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508406.2016.1147448

Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *7*, 263–295.

Beausaert, S., Segers, M., & Gijselaers, W. (2011). The use of a personal development plan and the undertaking of learning activities, expertise-growth, flexibility and performance: The role of supporting assessment conditions. *Human Resource Development International*, *14*(5), 527–543. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2011.620782

Bharatan, I., Swan, J., & Oborn, E. (2022). Navigating turbulent waters: Crafting learning trajectories in a changing work context. *Human Relations*, *75*(6), 1084–1112. https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267211010366

Dąbrowska, J., Almpanopoulou, A., Brem, A., Chesbrough, H., Cucino, V., Di Minin, A., Giones, F., Hakala, H., Marullo, C., Mention, A.-L., Mortara, L., Nørskov, S., Nylund, P. A., Oddo, C. M., Radziwon, A., & Ritala, P. (2022). Digital transformation, for better or worse: A critical multi-level research agenda. *R&D Management*, *52*(5), 930–954. https://doi.org/10.1111/radm.12531

Dobusch, L., & Schoeneborn, D. (2015). Fluidity, Identity, and Organizationality: The Communicative Constitution of *Anonymous*. *Journal of Management Studies*, *52*(8), 1005–1035. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12139

Ernst, J., & Jensen Schleiter, A. (2021). Organizational Identity Struggles and Reconstruction During Organizational Change: Narratives as symbolic, emotional and practical glue. *Organization Studies*, *42*(6), 891–910. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619854484

Fachin, F. F., & Langley, A. (2023). The Patterning of Interactive Organizational Identity Work. *Organization Studies*, 01708406231208358. https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406231208358

Farchi, T., Dopson, S., & Ferlie, E. (2023). Do We Still Need Professional Boundaries? The multiple influences of boundaries on interprofessional collaboration. *Organization Studies*, *44*(2), 277–298. https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406221074146

Fortuin, K. P. J., Gulikers, J. T. M., Post Uiterweer, N. C., Oonk, C., & Tho, C. W. S. (2023). Developing a boundary crossing learning trajectory: Supporting engineering students to collaborate and co-create across disciplinary, cultural and professional practices. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *0*(0), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2023.2219234

Hammerschmid, G., Breaugh, J., & Rackwitz, M. (2024). Intergovernmental collaboration in the context of digital transformation: State-of-the-art and theoretical notions. In K. Verhoest, G. Hammerschmid, L. H. Rykkja, & E. H. Klijn (Eds.), *Collaborating for Digital Transformation* (pp. 31–51). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803923895.00011

Hardy, C., Lawrence, T. B., & Grant, D. (2005). Discourse and Collaboration: The Role of Conversations and Collective Identity. *Academy of Management Review*, *30*(1), 58–77. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2005.15281426

Harteis, C., & Billett, S. (2023). Knowledge and Learning at the Workplace in Times of Digital Transformation. In K. Evans, W. O. Lee, J. Markowitsch, & M. Zukas (Eds.), *Third*

International Handbook of Lifelong Learning (pp. 163–182). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19592-1_4

Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional Selves: Experimenting with Image and Identity in Professional Adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(4), 764–791. https://doi.org/10.2307/2667055

Imran, F., Shahzad, K., Butt, A., & Kantola, J. (2021). Digital Transformation of Industrial Organizations: Toward an Integrated Framework. *Journal of Change Management*, *21*(4), 451–479. https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2021.1929406

Klein, J. T. (2020). Sustainability and Collaboration: Crossdisciplinary and Cross-Sector Horizons. *Sustainability*, *12*(4), Article 4. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041515

Koschmann, M. A. (2013). The Communicative Constitution of Collective Identity in Interorganizational Collaboration. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *27*(1), 61–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318912449314

Kourti, I. (2021). Managing the identity paradox in inter-organisational collaborations. *European Management Review*, *18*(4), 445–459. https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12485

Kourti, I., Garcia-Lorenzo, L., & Yu, A. (2018). Managing the interactions between multiple identities in inter-organizational collaborations: An identity work perspective. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *27*(4), 506–519. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2018.1484728

Langley, A., & Meziani, N. (2020). Making Interviews Meaningful. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *56*(3), 370–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886320937818

Lanzolla, G., Lorenz, A., Miron-Spektor, E., Schilling, M., Solinas, G., & Tucci, C. L. (2020). Digital Transformation: What is New if Anything? Emerging Patterns and Management Research. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *6*(3), 341–350. https://doi.org/10.5465/amd.2020.0144

Lejeune, C., Beausaert, S., & Raemdonck, I. (2021). The impact on employees' job performance of exercising self-directed learning within personal development plan practice. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *32*(5), 1086–1112. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1510848

Lifshitz-Assaf, H. (2018). Dismantling Knowledge Boundaries at NASA: The Critical Role of Professional Identity in Open Innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *63*(4), 746–782. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839217747876

Morris, T. H. (2019). Self-directed learning: A fundamental competence in a rapidly changing world. *International Review of Education*, *65*(4), 633–653. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-019-09793-2

Nathues, E., Endedijk, M. D., & Van Vuuren, M. (2023). Perk or Peril? Making Sense of Member Differences When Interorganizational Collaboration Begins. *Small Group Research*, *54*(5), 708–748. https://doi.org/10.1177/10464964221148682

Nicolás-Agustín, Á., Jiménez-Jiménez, D., & Maeso-Fernandez, F. (2021). The role of human resource practices in the implementation of digital transformation. *International Journal of Manpower*, *43*(2), 395–410. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-03-2021-0176

Olson, C. A., Balmer, J. T., & Mejicano, G. C. (2011). Factors contributing to successful interorganizational collaboration: The case of CS2day. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, *31*(S1), S3–S12. https://doi.org/10.1002/chp.20143

Schwarzmüller, T., Brosi, P., Duman, D., & Welpe, I. M. (2018). How Does the Digital Transformation Affect Organizations? Key Themes of Change in Work Design and Leadership. *Management Revue*, *29*(2), 114–138.

Topsectoren. (2019). *Roadmap Human Capital Topsectoren 2020—2023*. https://www.topsectoren.nl/human-capital/documenten/kamerstukken/2019/november/12-11-19/roadmap-hc-topsectoren

Ungureanu, P., Bertolotti, F., Mattarelli, E., & Bellesia, F. (2020). Collaboration and identity formation in strategic interorganizational partnerships: An exploration of swift identity processes. *Strategic Organization*, *18*(1), 171–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127019840148

Verhoef, P. C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Bhattacharya, A., Qi Dong, J., Fabian, N., & Haenlein, M. (2021). Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, *122*, 889–901. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.022

Willis, R. (2018). The use of composite narratives to present interview findings. *Qualitative Research*, *19*(4), 471–480. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118787711

Yström, A., Ollila, S., Agogué, M., & Coghlan, D. (2019). The Role of a Learning Approach in Building an Interorganizational Network Aiming for Collaborative Innovation. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *55*(1), 27–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886318793383

Zhang, Y., & Huxham, C. (2009). Identity Construction and Trust Building in Developing International Collaborations. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *45*(2), 186–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886309333327

Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide (EN)

Interview Guide [learning community] Identity research

This document contains the interview guide for the interviews with members/employees of the organisations that are a part of the IOC [learning community]. The interviews will likely be held through Microsoft Teams, as this provides flexibility for the interviewer and interviewees. Additionally, it also supports the data collection process as it has a built-in recorder.

Introduction

- Welcoming the interviewee and thanking them for their participation
- At the start of the interview the interviewee will be informed about their rights and the audio-recording.
    o ***Right to withdraw*** *from the interview at any time without giving a reason*
    o ***Audio-recording*** *via Microsoft Teams, audio-recorded will later be **transcribed**.*
    o *In transcription, the data will be completely **anonymized**.*
    o ***Confidentiality***: *the data collection information sheet has provided the interviewee with information on the data handling.*
- Introducing the topic of the interview i.e. identities on different levels.
    o Here the interviewee will be introduced to the different levels of identities and what they entail:
        ▪ ~~Personal identity: who they are as a person.~~
        ▪ **Professional identity**: who they are as an expert/professional.
        ▪ **Organisational identity**: the identity as shaped and defined by the organisation.
        ▪ **Collective identity**: the identity as shaped and defined by a collective.
    o The interviewee will also be provided with a list of around 20-25 values and/or characteristics that can be used to define an identity, this list will be used during the interview. The aim of this list is to make it a bit more interactive, while working within the constraints of an online interview.
- It is checked with the participant if everything is clear to them.

Part A: Professional and Organisational Identity (internal)

In the first part the interviewee will be asked about their professional and organisational identity with the guidance of the values/characteristics-list. The following questions will be asked:

1. How would you describe your professional identity using 3-5 characteristics?
2. Could you give an example showing how these characteristics are embodied by you?
3. How do these values/characteristics influence your day-to-day work?
4. How would you describe your organizational identity using 3-5 characteristics?
5. Could you give an example showing how these characteristics are embodied by your organization?
6. How do these characteristics influence your day-to-day work?

This part is crucial for getting a clear picture about the interviewee, this will make the second part of the interview easier. To get the clear picture make sure to probe by asking for examples, more details, elaborations, etcetera.

Part B: External Identity

In the second part of the interview, it will be discussed how the interviewee represents/portrays their professional and organisational identity outside of their own organisation.

7. How would you represent/portray these characteristics to the outside world (outside of your organisation)?
8. *Have you experienced instances in which you collaborated with professionals outside of your organisation or with other organisations?*

[Learning community]

There are some specific questions for [learning community] that are relevant to be asked, as this is the primary focus of the research. Bolded questions have a priority over the others.

9. For how long have you been a member of [learning community] as organisation?
10. Are you familiar with [learning community]? How familiar are you?
    a. *Fill in the participant on [learning community] if they are not too familiar.*
    b. How would you describe [learning community] using the values/characteristics-list?
    c. How would you describe the goals of [learning community]?
11. Do you feel connected to [learning community]?
12. Do you think [learning community] plays a vital role in the region?
13. Does [learning community] provide you with opportunities to learn and develop?
14. What role do you or your organisation play in [learning community]?
15. Does [learning community] influence your work? If so, how does it influence it?
16. Does [learning community] play a role in how you identify as a professional?
17. Does [learning community] play a role in how you would identify your organisation?
18. How does [learning community] add value to you as an individual? (both personal and professional level).
19. Does [learning community] support you in fulfilling your job?
20. Does [learning community] support your organisation in fulfilling their goal?

Below are some additional questions that can be considered:

- What do you think [learning community] can do different and why?
- How would [learning community] be able to reach you better/easier?

Others:

Below I added the list of extras that I considered valuable from the example that Ellen sent me (I did remove the difference-specific questions).

<u>Extras</u>: probes, reflective questions, etc.

- Can you say more about that?
- What do you mean by …?
- Do you mean that …?
- Have you ever experienced other situations like …?
- Do you have specific experiences in mind, or is this a general opinion?
- Can you tell me about …?
- Could you give me an example?
- What would that look like?
- Why is that important to you?
- Why does that stand out in your memory?
- Why do you think you noticed that?
- Why does that matter?
- I'm beginning to get the picture but some more examples might help.

Appendix B – Interview Guide (NL)

Interview guide [learning community] Identiteit Onderzoek

Dit document bevat de interview guide voor de interviews met de leden/medewerkers van de organisaties die onderdeel zijn van de inter-organisatorische samenwerking [learning community]. De interviews zullen gehouden worden door middel van Microsoft Teams, aangezien dit de interviewer en deelnemer voorziet van flexibiliteit. Bijkomend ondersteund het ook het data verzamel proces, omdat het een ingebouwde opname software bezit.

Introductie

- Verwelkom de deelnemer en bedankt hen voor de bijdrage.
- Aan het begin van het interview zal de deelnemer geïnformeerd worden over hun rechten en de audio-opnamen.
  - ○ *Het recht om zich terug te trekken uit het interview op ieder moment zonder het geven van een reden.*
  - ○ *De audio-opname via Microsoft Teams, de opname zal worden omgezet in een transcriptie.*
  - ○ *In de transcriptie zal de data worden geanonimiseerd.*
  - ○ *Vertrouwelijkheid: het document met informatie over het verzamelen van data is gedeeld met de deelnemer.*
- Introduceer het onderwerp van het interview, namelijk de identiteit op verschillende niveaus.
  - ○ De interviewer zal de deelnemer vertellen over de verschillende niveaus van identiteiten en wat ze inhouden.
    - ▪ ~~Persoonlijke identiteit: Wie je bent als persoon/individu.~~
    - ▪ **Professionele identiteit:** Wie je bent als expert/professional.
    - ▪ **Organisatie identiteit:** De identiteit als geschapen en gedefinieerd bij de organisatie.
    - ▪ **Collectieve identiteit:** De identiteit als geschapen en gedefinieerd bij een collectief.
  - ○ De deelnemer zal worden voorzien van een lijst met 20-25 waarden en/of karakteristieken die gebruikt kunnen worden om een identiteit te omschrijven. Deze lijst zal gebruikt worden tijdens het interview. Het doel van de lijst is om het interview een interactief aspect te geven, terwijl er rekening wordt gehouden met de limieten van de online omgeving.
- De deelnemer wordt gevraagd of alles duidelijk is.

Onderdeel A: Professionele en Organisatie Identiteit (Intern)

In het eerste gedeelte wordt de deelnemer gevraagd naar hun professionele en organisatie identiteit aan de hand van de lijst met waardes en karakteristieken. De volgende vragen zullen worden gesteld:

21. Hoe zou jij jouw professionele identiteit omschrijven aan de hand van 3-5 karakteristieken?
22. Zou je een voorbeeld kunnen geven hoe deze karakteristieken door jou worden belichaamd?
23. Hoe beïnvloeden deze karakteristieken je dagelijks bezigheden?

24. Hoe zou jij jouw organisatie identiteit omschrijven aan de hand van 3-5 karakteristieken?
25. Zou je een voorbeeld kunnen geven hoe deze karakteristieken worden belichaamd door jouw organisatie?
26. Hoe beïnvloeden deze karakteristieken je dagelijkse bezigheden?

Dit onderdeel is cruciaal om een duidelijk beeld te krijgen van de deelnemer, dit zorgt ervoor dat het tweede gedeelte van het interview makkelijker is. Door goed gebruik te maken van doorvragen zorg je ervoor dat het beeld goed duidelijk wordt, dit kan je bijv. doen door naar voorbeelden, meer details of meer uitleg te vragen.

Onderdeel B: Externe Identiteit
In het tweede gedeelte van het interview wordt de externe identiteit van de deelnemer besproken. Oftewel, hoe die hun professionele en organisatie identiteit vertegenwoordigd buiten hun organisatie.

27. Hoe vertegenwoordig je deze karakteristieken van je professionele/organisatie identiteit naar de buitenwereld (buiten je organisatie)?
28. *Heb je ervaring gehad met samenwerkingen met andere professionals buiten jouw organisatie of met andere organisaties?*

[Learning community]
Aangezien het onderzoek over [learning community] gaat zijn er ook een aantal vragen die relevant zijn over [learning community]. Dikgedrukte vragen hebben prioriteit over de anderen.

29. **Hoe lang zijn jullie als organisatie al lid van [learning community]?**
30. **Ben je bekend met [learning community]? Zo ja, hoe bekend ben je met de organisatie?**
    a. *Geef een kleine introductie als de deelnemer niet bekend is met [learning community].*
    b. Hoe zou je [learning community] omschrijven aan de hand van de waardes/karakteristieken lijst?
    c. Hoe zou je de doelen van [learning community] omschrijven?
31. **Voel jij je verbonden met [learning community]?**
32. **Denk je dat [learning community] een belangrijke rol vervult in de regio?**
33. Biedt [learning community] jouw kansen aan om te leren en jezelf te ontwikkelen?
34. Welke rol speelt jouw organisatie binnen [learning community]?
35. Heeft [learning community] invloed op jouw werk? Zo ja, hoe beïnvloedt dit het?
36. Speelt [learning community] een rol in hoe jij je identificeert als professional?
37. Speelt [learning community] een rol in hoe jij jouw organisatie zou identificeren?
38. Hoe voegt [learning community] waarde toe voor jou als individueel? (Zowel persoonlijk als professioneel)
39. Helpt [learning community] jou in het vervullen van je taken als professional?
40. Helpt [learning community] jouw organisatie in het behalen van haar doelen?

Hier zijn nog een paar vragen die je zou kunnen stellen:

- Is er iets dat [learning community] anders zou kunnen doen? Waarom?

- Hoe zou [learning community] jou beter of makkelijker kunnen bereiken?

Iets Anders:

Hieronder heb ik een lijst met extra's die ik erg nuttig vond uit het voorbeeld dat Ellen had gestuurd (ik heb wel de specifieke vragen weggehaald).

- Zou je daar meer over kunnen vertellen?
- Wat bedoel je met …?
- Bedoel je dat …?
- Heb je ooit vergelijkbare situaties ervaren zoals …?
- Heb je een specifiek iets in gedachte of is dit een algemene mening?
- Kan je me vertellen over …?
- Zou je me een voorbeeld kunnen geven?
- Hoe zou dat er uit zien?
- Waarom is dat belangrijk voor jou?
- Waarom is dit bijzonder in jouw herinnering?
- Waarom denk je dat je dat opgemerkt hebt?
- Waarom is dat belangrijk?
- Ik begin het te begrijpen, maar ik denk dat een paar voorbeelden goed kunnen helpen.

Appendix C – Characteristics List (EN)

Characteristics list
Retrieved from ChatGPT

Work values
1. **Integrity**: Upholding honesty and ethical principles in all actions.
2. **Teamwork**: Collaborating effectively with colleagues to achieve common goals.
3. **Adaptability**: Willingness and ability to adjust to changing circumstances.
4. **Resilience**: Bouncing back from setbacks and maintaining a positive attitude.
5. **Initiative**: Taking proactive steps to address challenges and find solutions.
6. **Leadership**: Demonstrating the ability to guide and inspire others towards shared objectives.
7. **Innovation**: A commitment to creativity and introducing new ideas or processes.
8. **Accountability**: Taking responsibility for one's actions and their impact on the organization.
9. **Reliability**: Consistently delivering quality work and meeting deadlines.
10. **Communication Skills**: Effectively conveying information both verbally and in writing.
11. **Professionalism**: Presenting oneself in a manner that reflects competence and credibility.
12. **Work Ethic**: A strong commitment to hard work and dedication to achieving goals.
13. **Problem-solving Skills**: Analysing situations and finding effective solutions.
14. **Flexibility**: Being open to different perspectives and adapting to various work conditions.
15. **Inclusivity**: Valuing diversity and fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment.
16. **Customer Focus**: Prioritizing the needs and satisfaction of customers or clients.
17. **Continuous Learning**: A commitment to ongoing personal and professional development.
18. **Efficiency**: Maximizing productivity and minimizing waste of time and resources.
19. **Attention to Detail**: Thoroughness and precision in completing tasks and projects.
20. **Empathy**: Understanding and considering the perspectives and feelings of others.
21. **Strategic Thinking**: Planning and executing tasks with long-term goals in mind.
22. **Resourcefulness**: Finding creative and practical solutions with available resources.
23. **Cultural Competence**: Understanding and respecting diverse cultural perspectives.
24. **Collaborative Decision-making**: Involving others in the decision-making process when appropriate.
25. **Goal Orientation**: Aligning efforts with organizational objectives and achieving desired outcomes.

Examples of Organisations

1. **Google (Alphabet Inc.):**
   a. Innovative and dynamic work culture.
   b. Emphasis on creativity and continuous learning.
   c. Commitment to diversity and inclusivity.
   d. Focus on creating products that improve users' lives.
2. **Tesla, Inc.:**
   a. Pioneering sustainable and eco-friendly technologies.
   b. Embracing a startup mentality within a larger organization.
   c. Commitment to pushing the boundaries of electric vehicles and renewable energy.
3. **Microsoft Corporation:**
   a. Strong emphasis on innovation and cutting-edge technology.
   b. Commitment to empowering individuals and organizations.
   c. Inclusive work environment and diversity initiatives.
4. **Amazon.com, Inc.:**
   a. Customer-centric approach and obsession with customer satisfaction.
   b. Continuous focus on operational efficiency and optimization.
   c. Embracing a culture of experimentation and risk-taking.
5. **Apple Inc.:**
   a. Design-focused and user-centric philosophy.
   b. Cultivating a brand associated with premium quality and innovation.
   c. Commitment to simplicity and seamless user experiences.
6. **NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration):**
   a. Pioneering space exploration and scientific discovery.
   b. Emphasis on collaboration and international cooperation.
   c. Fostering a culture of curiosity and pushing the boundaries of human knowledge.
7. **Walt Disney Company:**
   a. Creativity and storytelling at the core of the organization.
   b. Focus on entertainment and creating magical experiences.
   c. Strong commitment to family-friendly content and values.
8. **UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund):**
   a. Humanitarian and child-centred mission.
   b. Global collaboration for the well-being of children.
   c. Commitment to advocating for children's rights and development.
9. **Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement:**
   a. Humanitarian and neutral approach to providing aid.
   b. Global network of volunteers and a commitment to alleviating human suffering.
   c. Adherence to fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.
10. **World Wildlife Fund (WWF):**
    a. Environmental conservation and sustainability focus.
    b. Collaborative efforts to protect endangered species and ecosystems.
    c. Advocacy for a planet where people and nature thrive together.

Appendix D – Characteristics List (NL)

Karakteristieken lijst
Opgehaald van ChatGPT

Werkwaarden
1. **Integriteit**: Eerlijkheid en ethische principes handhaven in alle handelingen.
2. **Teamwerk**: Effectieve samenwerking met collega's om gemeenschappelijke doelen te bereiken.
3. **Aanpassingsvermogen**: Bereidheid en vermogen om zich aan veranderende omstandigheden aan te passen.
4. **Veerkracht**: Terugveren van tegenslagen en een positieve houding behouden.
5. **Initiatief**: Proactieve stappen nemen om uitdagingen aan te gaan en oplossingen te vinden.
6. **Leiderschap**: Het vermogen tonen om anderen te leiden en te inspireren naar gedeelde doelstellingen.
7. **Innovatie**: Toewijding aan creativiteit en het introduceren van nieuwe ideeën of processen.
8. **Verantwoordelijkheid**: Verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor eigen acties en hun impact op de organisatie.
9. **Betrouwbaarheid**: Consistent leveren van kwalitatief werk en deadlines halen.
10. **Communicatieve Vaardigheden**: Effectief informatie overbrengen, zowel mondeling als schriftelijk.
11. **Professionaliteit**: Zichzelf presenteren op een manier die competentie en geloofwaardigheid weerspiegelt.
12. **Arbeidsethos**: Sterke toewijding aan hard werken en toewijding aan het bereiken van doelen.
13. **Probleemoplossende Vaardigheden**: Situaties analyseren en effectieve oplossingen vinden.
14. **Flexibiliteit**: Openstaan voor verschillende perspectieven en aanpassen aan verschillende werkomstandigheden.
15. **Inclusiviteit**: Waardering voor diversiteit en bevorderen van een inclusieve en ondersteunende werkomgeving.
16. **Klantgerichtheid**: Prioriteit geven aan de behoeften en tevredenheid van klanten of cliënten.
17. **Continue Leren**: Toewijding aan voortdurende persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling.
18. **Efficiëntie**: Maximale productiviteit nastreven en verspilling van tijd en middelen minimaliseren.
19. **Oog voor Detail**: Grondigheid en precisie bij het voltooien van taken en projecten.
20. **Empathie**: Begrip en overweging van de perspectieven en gevoelens van anderen.
21. **Strategisch Denken**: Plannen en uitvoeren van taken met langetermijndoelen in gedachten.
22. **Vindingrijkheid**: Creatieve en praktische oplossingen vinden met beschikbare middelen.
23. **Culturele Competentie**: Begrip en respect voor diverse culturele perspectieven.
24. **Samenwerking in Besluitvorming**: Anderen betrekken bij het besluitvormingsproces wanneer dat passend is.
25. **Doelgerichtheid**: Inspanningen afstemmen op organisatorische doelstellingen en gewenste resultaten.

Voorbeelden van Organisaties

1. **Google (Alphabet Inc.):**
   a. Innovatieve en dynamische werkcultuur.
   b. Nadruk op creativiteit en continu leren.
   c. Toewijding aan diversiteit en inclusiviteit.
   d. Focus op het creëren van producten die het leven van gebruikers verbeteren.
2. **Tesla, Inc.:**
   a. Baanbrekende duurzame en milieuvriendelijke technologieën.
   b. Omarmen van een start-up mentaliteit binnen een grotere organisatie.
   c. Toewijding aan het verleggen van de grenzen van elektrische voertuigen en hernieuwbare energie.
3. **Microsoft Corporation:**
   a. Sterke nadruk op innovatie en geavanceerde technologie.
   b. Toewijding aan het empoweren van individuen en organisaties.
   c. Inclusieve werkomgeving en diversiteitsinitiatieven.
4. **Amazon.com, Inc.:**
   a. Klantgerichte benadering en obsessie met klanttevredenheid.
   b. Voortdurende focus op operationele efficiëntie en optimalisatie.
   c. Omarmen van een cultuur van experimenteren en risico nemen.
5. **Apple Inc.:**
   a. Designgerichte en gebruikersgerichte filosofie.
   b. Cultiveren van een merk dat geassocieerd wordt met premium kwaliteit en innovatie.
   c. Toewijding aan eenvoud en naadloze gebruikerservaringen.
6. **NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration):**
   a. Baanbrekende ruimteverkenning en wetenschappelijke ontdekking.
   b. Nadruk op samenwerking en internationale samenwerking.
   c. Cultiveren van een cultuur van nieuwsgierigheid en het verleggen van de grenzen van menselijke kennis.
7. **Walt Disney Company:**
   a. Creativiteit en verhalen vertellen staan centraal in de organisatie.
   b. Focus op entertainment en het creëren van magische ervaringen.
   c. Sterke toewijding aan gezinsvriendelijke inhoud en waarden.
8. **UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund):**
   a. Humanitaire en kindgerichte missie.
   b. Wereldwijde samenwerking voor het welzijn van kinderen.
   c. Toewijding aan het pleiten voor de rechten en ontwikkeling van kinderen.
9. **Rode Kruis/Rode Halve Maan Beweging:**
   a. Humanitaire en neutrale benadering bij het verlenen van hulp.
   b. Wereldwijd netwerk van vrijwilligers en toewijding aan het verlichten van menselijk lijden.
   c. Vasthouden aan de fundamentele principes van menselijkheid, onpartijdigheid, neutraliteit en onafhankelijkheid.
10. **World Wildlife Fund (WWF):**
    a. Focus op milieubehoud en duurzaamheid.
    b. Samenwerkingsinspanningen om bedreigde soorten en ecosystemen te beschermen.
    c. Pleiten voor een planeet waar mens en natuur samen gedijen.