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Sub-theme 3: Bringing space back in to the communicative constitution of organization and disorganization

‘Placing the organisation’: Studying the communicative constitution of organisation as the production of place

Abstract
In this paper I want to add to studies exploring how ‘organisations’ are ‘made real’, how they are made present and materialised (Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008) by focusing on the spatial dimension of such processes (Vásquez and Cooren, 2013). Leaning on Doreen Massey’s work on space and place (2005), I propose that the processes making ‘the organisation’ present may be studied as processes producing a specific (but contested) place (‘the organisation’) and I empirically explore such a possibility. This way, the relational and material character of such an achievement, the role played by co-evolving trajectories, is foregrounded. In my analysis I focus on how the production of an organisation as a place is strengthened through the ongoing production of other places (the ‘landscape’ (Cooren et al., 2008)). In particular, given the empirical case analysed, it is possible to see how the production of certain organisations (outdoors industry) is intertwined with the production of ‘Sweden’ as a place (or in other word, with ethnicity constructions). This enables to foreground also power dimensions that make such a process a ‘powerfull’ rather than neutral process.
Introduction

While traditional accounts tend to present ‘organisations’ as entities – having defined boundaries, possessing specific identities, taking specific actions, and so on – the so-called ‘process-turn’ in organisation studies has questioned such conceptions, by bringing to the fore the ongoing nature of organising processes and problematising the assumption that autonomous entities act on the world (cf Bakken & Hernes, 2006; Chia, 1995; Czarniawska, 2008). The world is, instead, conceived of in terms of an ongoing accomplishment, in which relational processes are crucial (Dachler & Hosking, 1995). ‘Organisations’ exist only in their making (see Latour, 1986). Such studies have thus highlighted the temporal dimension of the phenomenon ‘organisation’. The CCO approach, focusing on the constitutive character of communication, adds to such a stream of studies by increasing our understanding of how organisations are made to exist by foregrounding communicative events involving both human and nonhuman agents – as agency is seen as an open question rather than a given (see Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, 2006). Such ‘grounded in action orientation’, asks, ‘How is the “organization” anchored in . . . the durée or the continuous flow of discursive conduct?’ (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2004, p. 16, as quoted in Cooren, Brummons, & Charrieras, 2008)

Although the spatial dimension of such processes has been discussed (see for example Vásquez and Cooren (2013)), such a discussion needs to be enriched and widened. In this paper I will answer this call by leaning on geographer Doreen Massey’s work on space and place (2005; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). Her approach relies on considering space as the sphere of multiplicities, of co-evolving trajectories. Hence, not an empty container, but rather an ongoing relational achievement. Place is, in her view, a bounded, but always contested and re-negotiated space.

What I want to propose is that her work can thus be mobilised in order to study how ‘organisations’ are ‘made real’, how they are made present and materialised in interplays of performance and recognition (Cooren, Brummons, & Charrieras, 2008). The traditional idea of an organisation and of a place have several aspects in common. They are both taken-for-granted bounded entities, which are supposed to have a specific character or identity. Taking a processual view, their closure (in terms of boundaries and identities) is not to be taken for granted and is to be thought of as continuously negotiated. Therefore, it could be interesting to explore the thought that we could think of an organisation as a place and, subscribing to a CCO approach, we could discuss how the processes making ‘the organisation’ present can be
studied as processes producing a specific (but contested) place. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to add to our understanding of how ‘organisations become present’ by conceptualising the production of an organisation presence as the production of a place and by empirically exploring how such processes of production take form. This way, the relational and material character of such an achievement, the role played by co-evolving trajectories, is foregrounded. Co-evolution is here an important aspect. As noted by Cooren et al. (2008) in their study of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the organisation was presentified by making it ‘part of the landscape’. This paper further develops this line of inquiry by analysing how the production of an organisation as a place is strengthened by the ongoing production of other places (the ‘landscape’), which means that a number of trajectories become intertwined. In particular, given the empirical case analysed, it is possible to see how the production of certain organisations (outdoors industry) is intertwined with the production of ‘Sweden’ as a place (or in other word, with ethnicity constructions). This enables to foreground also power dimensions that make such a process a ‘powerfull’ rather than neutral process.

**Theoretical background**

*How organisation ‘takes place’*

This paper is grounded in a process ontology, which means taking the fluidity, interrelatedness and complexity of life and work into consideration (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van De Ven, 2013). Inspired by process theorists and philosophers, we turn our attention from stable and discrete entities to fluid and ongoing processes (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010, Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). To be noted is that the idea of process may be understood in different ways. One common understanding is that a process is a sum of a number of finite stages that follow each other in a linear sequence. This is not what process means in a strong ontology of becoming. Rather, process is a more profound idea:

> What is real for postmodern thinkers are not so much social states, or entities, but emergent relational interactions and patternings that are recursively intimated in the fluxing and transforming of our life-worlds. (Chia, 1995, p 582)

There are several ways of studying how organisation ‘takes place’. In this paper I subscribe to the CCO-approach that treats organisations as communicatively constituted. An organisation is thus no taken-for granted entity, nor are actors taken-for-granted entities that act on the world. Organisations, actors and the world are instead ongoing relational achievements that
need to be studied by focusing on communicative processes in which ‘the interplay of material and ideational worlds is continually “real-ized”’ (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 35). Communication literally creates realities (Searle, 1995) and is the site where organisation is constantly negotiated (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). The CCO movement also provides means for going beyond studying the creation of reality as a purely symbolic performance by including materiality into the analysis, drawing on a number of sources of inspiration (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). Thus CCO provides a coherent framework in which to consider the ideational and the material as they meet – the focus is on such ongoing processes (Ashcraft et al., 2009). Moreover, organizing is conceived of as a process of co-construction, an interactive achievement involving a plenum of organisational agencies (Cooren, 2006) and ‘organisational order “materializes” at the dynamic junction of objects, bodies, physical and spatial configurations, economic and institutional imperatives, and Discourses” (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 35). Agencies are not given, but can only be known as they play out in relation (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Cooren et al., 2011). Which actions become ‘the organisation’s actions’ depends on how the performance develops (Bencherki & Cooren, 2011).

As Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren write in a recent article summarising the development of CCO-related studies, there is a need for more research asking the question ‘*how do various human and non-human agencies constitute organization through co-participation in communication?*’ (2009, p. 37 italics in original). Communication is thus conceptualised as ‘the process through which human and nonhuman figures collide to “(re)con-figure” organizational existence’ (ibid, p 37). Such a definition introduces a spatial element: configuration. As the call for the stream also states, there is a need for bringing space back in, as the spatial dimension has clearly a potential of enriching our understanding of how ‘organisation takes place’.

*Space and place – following Doreen Massey*

There are several ways of conceptualizing space (cf Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; S. Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013; Yanow, 1998). With a process ontology, space is to be understood as ‘processual and performative, open-ended and multiple, practiced and of the everyday’, thus making us aware of provisional spatio-temporal configurations always in process (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012, p. 47). This paper answers the call for bringing space back in by referring to the work of geographer Doreen Massey (2004,
2005; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013), who argues against views of space as stable and ‘already there’, suggesting instead that space be considered as always under construction and as the sphere in which trajectories co-exist. Hence, my reading of such a view is that space is not a specific material place, but rather a sphere, a dimension, such as time – ‘if time unfolds as change then space unfolds as interaction’ (Massey, 2005, p. 61) – and space and time should be seen as intertwined in space-time (Massey, 2004). Without taking space into consideration, we only see one trajectory, we are not able to take into account plurality and the interconnectedness of the world. Space is the dimension of the simultaneity and multiplicity of trajectories and it is constructed as trajectories develop in relation to one another. A trajectory, or a ‘story-so-far’, has thus a temporal character in that it emphasizes the process of change in a phenomenon, but also a spatial character as a trajectory always develops in relation to other trajectories (Massey, 2005, p. 12). A phenomenon may be a living entity, a physical formation, a norm, etc. Thinking space allows us to think of a plurality of stories-so-far, of their relations and of such relations creating conditions that influence but never fully determine future developments. Hence, interrelations not only happen in space, but rather space is the ‘product of interrelations’ and ‘constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny’ (ibid, p. 9), always in the process of being made.

The idea of place as space ‘originarily regionalised’ (ibid, p 6), often mobilized in different kinds of political struggles (nationalism, working-class resistance to globalization, aboriginal groups claims, and so on), is also problematized. Massey therefore challenges the idea of place as the local, genuine, ‘real’, closed, authentic, coherent (something that makes her position different from others considering “place” as stable and pre-existing the individual). Even places are relationally constructed and their ‘boundedness’ is socially produced (and always contested), their cultural distinctivity maintained through connections rather than disjunctions. Such a view therefore implies a rejection of non-problematised notions of collective identities, identities that are supposedly formed by the place, by ‘the roots’ (for instance, being Swedish). Rather than essentially (I am Swedish because I come from Sweden), place changes us through the practicing of place (I become in interactions in which Swedishness is performed), which implies an ongoing negotiation of intersecting trajectories (ibid, p 154). It thus becomes interesting studying how places are produced and reproduced, made coherent (or contested), in connections. Instead of a billiard-ball view of place, in which definite places come in contact with each other, the idea is that of place “meeting place, where
‘the difference’ of a place must be conceptualized more in the ineffable sense of the constant emergence of uniqueness out of (and within) the specific constellations of interrelations within which that place is set (‘the impossibility of a position which is not already a relation’ – Kamuf, 1991, p. xv) and what is made of that constellation’ (Massey, 2005, p 68). Places may thus be thought of as spatio-temporal events (p 130), they are collections of stories-so-far – their specificity lies in the intersection of such stories, as well as in the non-meetings-up, the relations not established (ibid).

Constituting organisation as the ongoing production of place

Having established how space and place can be conceptualised, what does it mean to bring space back in? Spacing organisation means to stop privileging time in our conceptualisations and analyses. One way of trying this path is to study how the organisation is spaced. One example is provided by Vásquez and Cooren (2013) that answer the call for going beyond local interactions and address the question of how collectivities are transported in/through space and time. They identify three spacing practices that produce the organisation across time and space, ‘here and there’, ‘now and then’. This way they show how communication is crucial in materialising organisations, in distributing actors, actions, means, etc, in space and time, as well as in creating coherence that assures continuity in space and time.

In this paper I want to advance such a line of inquiry and suggest that we could also study the communicative constitution of organisation in terms of the production of place. As Vásquez and Cooren argue in their discussion (2013), a fragmented and multiple space needs to be assembled in the singularity of a ‘we’ that grants coherence and continuity to organising – this ‘we’ is what I would call ‘a place’. In fact, an organisation may be treated as a place since it may be viewed as a ‘bounded’ space. In traditional accounts it is a bounded space since there are supposed to be boundaries and the organisation is supposed to have an identity that influences its members. Speaking with Massey instead, an organisation is a place since it may be treated as a collection of trajectories in which negotiated uniqueness emerges as such trajectories co-evolve producing constellations of interrelations in which ‘a place’ (the organisation) is continuously shaped and its boundaries continuously materialised.

Hence the call ‘how do various human and non-human agencies constitute organization through co-participation in communication?’ can be partially answered by asking ‘how is a specific place, the organisation, constituted in the co-evolution of collections of trajectories
Such an enterprise entails to follow trajectories as they co-evolve over time, but also ‘over space’, and to analyse how the organisation is ‘real-ised’ as relational configurations develop in communicational events. In this sense, the organisation is not a place that is limited to the physical location of the formal organisation. Rather, it is a place that is re-produced in a number of meetings between trajectories that contribute to re-shape the collection of stories-so-far that the organisation is. Looking at organisations in this way means that a number of humans and nonhumans are constantly co-constructing the organisation, simultaneously and relationally. The organisation is made real in similar/different ways in different meetings through space and time. There is no ‘organisational identity’, but there are evolving configurations that shape different (converging or diverging) meanings – there is always place for plurality and no absolute meaning closure is possible to achieve. There are no easy identifiable boundaries, as the organisation as a place is constructed in relation to other places, not in isolation, and is ‘happening’ whenever the organisation is being presentified (Cooren et al., 2008; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013) – precisely as Sweden is not constructed only by interactions happening within the geographical borders of Sweden.

Such a take is coherent with the work of Vásquez and Cooren, as the spacing practices they identified are relevant in how place is produced, but the centre of attention is moved to other aspects of the phenomenon. In particular, in this paper I want to focus on the production of place happening outside the offices of the companies studied. This allows me to more clearly focusing on what happens when ‘place-meet-place’ in analysing the empirical material and will lead me in the discussion to talk of ‘anchoring place in place(s)’ or strengthening of the production of one place through the simultaneous re-production of another place. Giving that the empirical material comes from the outdoor industry in Sweden, such a discussion enables me to discuss the production of organisation as anchored in and re-constructing ‘Sweden’ as a place. In other words, the interplay of organising and ethnicity is discussed.

Method and analysis
In this study I take an abductive approach, which means that the theoretical parts presented at the beginning of this paper have emerged as relevant in an interplay between fieldwork and search for literature that made sense of the empirical observations. For clarity reasons, though, the theoretical part comes before the empirical material is presented. In this section I discuss the method used and roughly present the empirical work done.
As previously stated, my approach is grounded in process ontology and in considering communication as constitutive of organisations and reality. The aim of coming close to the unfolding of the phenomenon by being present during instances of ‘constitution of organisation’ was what guided the planning of fieldwork. As common in CCO-inspired studies, closeness to interactions is crucial (Ashcraft et al., 2009). Therefore, I use observations as the central means for coming close to practice and for how organisations are made real as a ‘lived’ experience, in time and space, rather than a ‘reported’ experience, as in interviews ( Alvesson, 1996; Samra-Fredericks, 2003). Particular situations are analyzed in depth with the help of a more contextual understanding ( Alvesson, 1996), which in my case was developed through observations, but also through a number of interviews.

This paper is part of a larger project in which I study the outdoors industry (clothing and equipment) in Sweden. The choice of this industry has been based on the theoretical aim of discussing how the production of organisational presence is intertwined with the construction of ethnicity (and more in general the intersection of ethnicity, gender, body ableness and class) – and problematizing processes in which norms are enacted, rather than studying, as often done, ‘minorities in organisations’. For the purpose of this paper only ethnicity will be discussed. The outdoors industry provides an interesting ‘case’ to analyse as ‘doing outdoors’ is intertwined with a long history of production of national identities (the romantic view of nature in Sweden, for example, but also the later project of assuring a healthy population, (Emmelin, Fredman, Lisberg Jensen, & Sandell, 2010)) and of production of authenticity (being nature constructed as the ‘stable’, the ‘sublime’ for those people that need/afford it, leading outdoors to be an ethnically exclusive practice, (Drennig, 2013)).

Fieldwork has, so far, consisted of observations of meetings, events and workshops where people and objects from several companies meet. For instance, the European Outdoor Summit in 2013 (a conference with people from the industry), the annual meeting organized by Scandinavian Outdoor Group in 2014 (a conference with people from the industry but also occasion for meetings), the Nordic Outdoor in 2014 (a fair/event for consumers), ISPO 2013 (the largest trade fair for outdoor and sportswear in Europe, and one of the two largest in the world), Swedsport 2013 (a national trade fair), the Norrlandsgatan functional week in 2012 (an event along a street where several flagship stores are located – event for consumers but also occasion for a number of meetings between suppliers and outdoor brands/retailers) and
‘Chatting about training with Steve House’ (an event organised by an outdoor store, with a lecture given by a famous adventurer). During these occasions, I have also interviewed a number of actors from the industry, as well as participated to meetings, lunches and dinners. These events and interactions have been documented via pictures, sometimes videos, recording of interviews and accurate notes of speeches (as well as pictures of the slides being presented) and notes of informal interactions. I have also spent one week at Icebug, one company, following their daily work and meetings. Moreover, I have collected printed material, and in particular a large number of product catalogues (more magazines than catalogues in many cases), as well as downloaded webpages (including movies of the brands’ ‘friends’). Pictures are particularly significant in order to bring materiality to the fore in analyzing/presenting the material.

Making organizational presence I - Travelling within/to Sweden
In this section, I present three different events in which organizational presence is done by people and objects within the physical borders of Sweden. These three events show instances of ongoing practices in the outdoor industry and they have been chosen as they exemplify such practices in three different ways. The first event is the Fjällräven Classic, which is an internationally established race held in the north of Sweden, that is in the landscape that more typically represents Swedish outdoors. The second event is the Icebug Experience, which is a relatively new race in the less typical west coast landscape. The third event is the Outdoor Academy of Sweden, which targets people in the outdoor business (while the first two events target both people in the business and consumers). Hence, these three examples provide some diversity although being all, in my analysis, instances of the same kind of phenomenon, when it comes to make organizations present. Let me first briefly introduce them, before turning to analyzing what is taking place.
Fjällräven Classic

Picture 1. Images coming from the Fjällräven classic website http://www.fjallraven.se/classic (retrieved Oct 2015)

Fjällräven classic is a nowadays traditional race attracting 2000 participants for one week each summer (tickets are sold already in October and sold out long before the event) organized by the Swedish outdoor company Fjällräven in cooperation with some other companies belonging to the same concern, STF (the Swedish tourist association providing accommodation in hostels and activities, 300 000 members), Save the Kungsleden initiative and other companies or local associations. This race takes place along the Kungsleden hiking trail in Lapland, in the north of Sweden. The Kungsleden trail is the most traditional hiking trail in the country, 100 km long and passing some of the most famous landmarks, as for instance the highest mountain (Kebnekaise). Picture 1 shows some images presented on the website, with some famous landscapes and a situation in which equipment plays an important role. The emphasis in how the race is presented is not on covering the trail as fast as possible,
but on experiencing Swedish mountains at your own pace. While the trail is always open and free of charge, Fjällräven classic makes it easier to make this experience by providing some logistics support along the way. The participants have anyway to provide for the basic equipment and there is a list of compulsory items to be carried in the backpack.

Hence, during this week, the physical formations of this part of Lapland are enacted in a particular way. They become the setting and means for experiencing nature, adventure, authenticity, freedom, challenge, fatigue. Such an experience is shaped by the evolving configuration provided by the physical formations, the people gathering and their activity, the objects brought by the participants and by the organizers. Hence, the practice of hiking, for instance, is a sociomaterial practice. The physical formations provide a setting that is enacted in a particular way given that a certain trail is shaped by artifacts (for examples the signs and the check-points), given that people equipped with certain artifacts walk along the trail (certain items being compulsory, others chosen by the participants) and given that local Sami people are also mobilized, together with their traditional artifacts (clothes and tools) along the trail. Hence, the relation between the people and the physical formations (and the resulting experience) is not possible to understand without looking at what the artifacts do, it is no “natural” relation. This also means that the Fjällräven Classic is not only taking place in this region, it is also re-constructing this region as it brings together a number of trajectories that would otherwise not have met, in a specific way.

Taking a step back, one could ask how the hiking practice in Sweden, of which the studied practice is an example, comes into being in the first place. Although there may be many aspects to be taken into consideration, one important dimension to consider is how such a practice interplays with doing ethnicity, “whiteness” in general and Swedishness more specifically. Outdoors practices, and hiking practices more specifically, may be argued to be the product of a specific way of constructing wilderness, in terms of search for the sublime in certain geographical areas (nature – the wild) as an antidote for urban life in order to return to an authentic self, although this requires advanced equipment, making this thus a commodified escape (Drenning, 2013). This is a specific way of constructing nature and wilderness may thus be seen as a whiteness project, as long as the need for the uncontaminated as escape from modern life can be argued to have been a construction related to the construction of whiteness. For example the creation of natural parks can be seen as a manifestation of such a construction, thus actively making nature “clean” and “uncontaminated” for white people to enjoy as leisure activity, for those who can leave their behind. Still today, the imaginary
produced when showing outdoors is dominated, if not exclusively composed by, white bodies. (Drenning, 2013) More specifically, close relation to genuine nature has been one of the construction on which Swedish national identity has been shaped. Hence, in Sweden (but also in other countries) the promotion of outdoor recreation was right from the start part of a project directed towards establishing national unity and common identity (Emmelin et al, 2010), also by mobilizing the Sami people symbolic repertoire (for example clothing, see Larsson, 2013): being truly Swedish is loving (Swedish) nature. Ethnicity is still a relevant category when it comes to who practices outdoors activities and how, and both norms and material constrains must be taken into consideration (ibid). Just as in the STF brochure about Kungsleden trail, the text highlights how this region may be considered as Europe’s last wilderness, Sweden’s own paradise, where you may see the king of Swedish nature, the elk, or meet the Sami people. Different symbolic resources referring to Swedish national identity are thus visible, revealing how the construction of this region as outdoor setting is still part of re-producing national identity – this is, in other words, an important part of the production of Sweden as a place. Summarizing, the construction of outdoor practices, in particular those analyzed, may be argued to be intertwined with the doing of ethnicity and Swedishness in particular. Hence, doing whiteness, and doing Swedishness in particular, is one of the practices that make Fjällräven Classic possible.

Given such premises, the landscape and the artifacts make it possible to make one week into one week of relatively safe adventure and challenge for the participants. The participants are thus made into “real” outdoors hikers (although not extreme ones). Not only, but “green hikers” who should strive for leaving no trace. Although one motive for participating is to come in contact with nature, such contact is performed through a number of, at times relatively technological, artifacts. The more technology into the artifacts (and, one could say, the stronger the mediation to “real nature”) the more the expert the hiker becomes. Many of these artifacts bear the logos of the producing companies well visible, so the entire week makes the outdoor industry present by means of the artifact involved. But Fjällräven has a special position, being the entire event in their name and possibly a rather high number of artifacts (given equipment recommendations to be found on the event homepage, for instance).

These practices are going always going on, but during this week they particularly intensify given the large number of people and objects brought together by the race. These practices are
always involving certain artifacts, but during this week the configurations involving physical formations, people and artifacts are constructed in a particular way. They also become inscribed in videos and pictures shared on the net, thus making them available during the rest of the year too.

Fjällräven, the company, makes the trail more accessible to people by providing support and guidance along the way. Fjällräven makes the trail and the experience real for those people participating. Fjällräven is thus presentified as part of experiencing the landscape. One could say that two thousand people do a week of adventure in the name of Fjällräven, thus reproducing the trail and the region – and Sweden– and, at the same time, presentifying Fjällräven.

Hence, the production of Lappland, and of Sweden, and the presentification of Fjällräven “feed on each other”. The production of the place “Fjällräven” is strengthened as more trajectories become part of the collection of trajectories that presentify Fjällräven. Not only, but such trajectories form such configurations that re-produce “outdoors” and Sweden, thus contributing to the negotiation of meaning closure around the place “Fjällräven”. This is no linear process and the result of the week is not coherent meaning closure, but rather a multiplicity of constructions of outdoors and Sweden. Still, through this multiplicity, the place Fjällräven and the place Sweden have been re-enacted, made present and connected to each other.
The second event analyzed, the Icebug Xperience, has been launched more recently (two years ago) and is a race along a less known trail in a region less linked to traditional outdoors, the West coast. The event is organized by the company Icebug, based in Gothenburg, which is specialized in shoes with bugs (for the winter) and with good traction properties also on wet surfaces (for the summer). Hence the interest in organizing an event that takes place on the west coast (near to Gothenburg) and requires you to run/walk at times on possibly wet cliffs for three days. The event provides an example of the “new outdoor”, where traditional adventure and challenge are combined with leisure, here in the form of good food served to the participants in the evening and nice accommodation. The trail runs through different kinds of landscape, also including picturesque villages (see picture 2) – thus not being limited to
“wilderness” but also including other symbols of local and national identity as the local villages. This is an extract from how the trail is described on the race webpage:

The Bohuslän archipelago in September is something very special. The summer tourists have gone home and left this barren and stunning landscape in a soothing quiet. In the region of Sotenäs, where the race is being run, the best concentration of the west coast is found here. The trails that head inland are rolling and wind through impressive forests and up towards spectacular lookouts. Towards the sea, the trails take you along untouched coastal stretches with polished, red granite slabs, where you can feel the sea breeze and smell of the ocean. You will also pass picturesque coastal communities such as Hunnebostrand and Smögen and carefully preserved cultural and historical landscapes. [http://icebug.com/icebugx/the-event/introduction/, retrieved Oct 2015]

Hence, a description including the traditional imaginary of the sublime and genuine, but combining it with other elements of Swedishness. As in the case of Fjällräven Classic, constructions of Swedishness (the wild as well as the typical picturesque villages) are what makes the construction of this place and of the event in this specific way possible (together with other premises). At the same time as the event re-constructs the place, and Sweden more in general. Also in this case artifacts play a central role, with the difference that in this case we also have other kinds of trajectories being brought together, as for example the typical red houses, the fishermen boats and the genuine food. Hence, this is a different kind of outdoor experience, but still made possible by artifacts and by construction of Swedishness.

What is interesting compared to Fjällräven Classic is that this is a new event and that the trail is not as well known as the Kungsleden. Hence, during my stay at the company, I observed how the race organizer and a journalist together authored one page for each stage, describing the trail and the experience along the trail, as well as choosing which picture to put with the text. In this way, this event may be contributing to construct this region on the west coast, and Sweden more at large, even more heavily than in the first event analyzed. Although the “voice” of this event may be not as strong (yet), the company contribution to construct the trail, and hence the region, is even stronger (for Kungsleden, you can find other actors also constructing what the trail is about). And the other way around, meaning closure around Icebug as a place may become more strongly achieved in the production of this west coast trail.
Finally, the last event is the outdoor academy of Sweden. Initiated by the Scandinavian Outdoor Group (gathering the most famous brands) under the name Outdoor Academy of Scandinavia and now organized, in Sweden, in cooperation with Visit Sweden (hence the new name), the academy has gone from being directed to retailers to include press and tour operators too. Hence, not only promoting brands but locations too, which I think is indicative of the dynamics I have outlined, of intersection in the production of place and organizational presence. The original idea was for retailers to spend 5 days in the wild in order to test the equipment, have an adventure and take part in clinics (when the manufacturer explains the properties of the equipment). I observed the preparation of one week when the academy was directed only to retailers. The aim was then to provide them with some challenging days (stories were recalled of people having had serious problems in keeping the pace during such training weeks) and to create a full wilderness experience, for instance by having dinners around the fireplace with storytelling in the most classical fashion. Now meetings with local companies are also included.

These are two extracts from the program of one of the weeks they organize:

- Join us in exploring this invigorating, magical natural world. Walk through hills and valleys with stunning views, listening to the silence and drinking pure, clean
water straight from bubbling streams. Spend days learning new skills and discovering the deep sense of relaxation inspired by this incredible landscape, storing up memories for life.

Over these days you’ll find out more about Swedish outdoor culture, learn more about Sweden’s unique indigenous population, the Sami, stop off for photo opportunities, with tips on how to become a better outdoor photographer, and experience the fascinating art of cooking food out on the fells.


The academy “alumni” are also now called “outdoor ambassadors of Sweden” and there is a blog for sharing news (although most of the content is produced by a journalist). What is interesting about this event, compared with the other two presented, is that it is directed towards people in the industry. Hence, while the first two events were directed even towards consumers, this event is more exclusively focused on the industry. And there is a very explicit effort to connect the companies artifacts to be promoted to Swedish wilderness and to a challenging, but positive, experience of such kind of outdoors. To this purpose, other artifacts and people are mobilized, together with the physical formations. So we have for instance the fireplace, the pure water, the bubbling streams, the Sami people. Hence, also in this case, traditional constructions of Swedishness make it possible to shape this experience in this particular way, presentifying the companies by bringing together a number of trajectories that re-produce the place Sweden and thus contribute to meaning closure around the organizations involved, to their negotiated uniqueness (in terms of them being places). Sweden as a place is also re-constructed – even more so now that the press is involved with the aim of inscribing these constructions in different kinds of media.

**Making organizational presence II - Sweden travelling**

While in the previous section people and artifacts were travelling to Sweden, in this section I turn to one event in which the place Sweden is travelling and being enacted in Munich, Germany, at the annual ISPO sports tradefair, the largest in Europe and one of the leading in the world (the material comes from ISPO 2013). Two of the large halls are dedicated to outdoors. In one of them, a number of Scandinavian companies have gathered around the
“Scandinavian village” concept. This is the only example of companies collaborating to create a common “environment” (with the only exception of the Czech Village that was introduced at ISPO after the Scandinavian one and is focused on climbing) and to carry out a number of initiatives, as a special press conference and special awards.

Let me start by looking at the hall in general and then at the Scandinavian Village in particular. This hall is a place that becomes enacted in a particular way during the three days the ISPO goes on as a number of trajectories meet creating a specific configuration. Picture 4 below presents some of these trajectories and the way they meet creating a place that is rather different from what other forms of tradefair are made into. We can see a stage for presentations and award ceremonies surrounded by bouldering walls and an area for the audience in which bean bags are spread around “taking care” of people needing a break. The bouldering walls are used for an international competition taking place during the afternoon, as the second picture shows. We can also see one of the presentations held on that stage, in which new collections are showed by dancing models at the rhythm of loud pop/rock music.

Finally, one picture showing some people wearing typical outdoors clothing. While not all people were going around in traditional flannel shirts, no one was wearing suit or other kinds of formal clothes, everyone was wearing different kinds of casual or outdoors clothes. These pictures provide therefore examples of trajectories that meet. The bouldering wall, the people competing on that wall with their outfit and equipment, the bean sacks, the people in the bean sacks, the music, the dance, the clothes (whether on people or on display), the people, and so on. The hall is in itself a huge “empty” space confined by four walls and a roof. It is not empty in itself but rather constructed as an empty space that is then enacted in different forms for a few days in a row at regular intervals. Hence, while, speaking with Massey, all places are temporary in the sense that they are continuously re-constructed as trajectories co-evolve, this kind of place is particularly ephemeral, being there just a few days (but being inscribed in the web all year long and being re-enacted each year). And it becomes particularly evident how it is the performance being carried out that produces the place. Hence this becomes a place for experiencing outdoors through some practices, for instance bouldering, and through artifact, for example the clothes. This is also produced as a relaxed, “young” and casual place, for example through the bean bags and the dance. As discussed before, such practices are possible given how outdoors and whiteness have been constructed and they at the same time reproduce such constructions.
Hence this is the setting in which another, “tighter” place is being enacted. The second set of images, in picture 5, shows parts of the Scandinavian Village. In particular those parts in which Swedish companies have their stands.
The first photo shows a man from the Ice Hotel in the north of Sweden working on a large ice block – he is making a sculpture out of it representing the Haglöfs (the company owning the stand) logotype. The second photo shows the Lundhags stand, with large photos showing a foggy landscape. The third one shows on the left handside a red-cross sign (there were several such signs along the corridors) which is the sign that marks winter trails in Sweden. At the mannequin feet there are some cones with some snow on them. In the fourth picture, in the middle, we see also mannequins and artifacts presenting an outdoor setting with birch trunks and with some snow on the ground, as well as a person with a flannel shirt. Next comes another picture with birch stocks in the Light my fire stand. Finally, in the lower row we see two pictures with prams/child carriers (one belonging to one person working this day, the other one being one of the award winning products) and one picture with the bar of the Scandinavian village, where people come for a coffee or a beer. In the Scandinavian Village we see Scandinavia, and in particular Sweden in the considered pictures, travelling to Munich. Sweden is enacted by the practices, people and objects. We have parts of Swedish nature that are reproduced through photos or objects, as the stocks. And parts of Swedish outdoors as for
example the red signs. We have practices as drinking coffee, drinking beer, having children around (at work, as at this fair, or in outdoors activities, as the awarded child carrier witnesses), caring for safety (as in some of the awarded equipment). We have the practice of sculpting ice coming from the North of Sweden by a person coming from the Ice Hotel and the resulting artifact around which people will eventually drink beer in the evening. We have practices represented by the mannequins around some artifacts, as the fireplace.

Organizational presence is thus enacted by bringing together a number of sociomaterial trajectories. It is enacted by the companies people speaking in the companies name, but it is also enacted by other trajectories brought together, and how they are brought together, as they make such presence more tangible and contribute to meaning closure around the different organizations (as places) by enacting Sweden as a place, thus making the organizational presence anchored in a “landscape”, in another place, Sweden. Also, the other way around, these practices are possible given how outdoor and Sweden is constructed (it would otherwise make no sense to rise red cross signs or trunks). One could argue that drinking beer is not done only in Sweden, or that birch trees are found even in other countries, and so on. This is of course correct, but it does not mean that the collective construction of Sweden is not based on such practices and objects, among others. Other researchers show that this is actually often the case – what is mobilized as national “core practices/elements” is often fairly similar, for example loving mountains and forests (Ehn et al., 1993).

Hence, humans and nonhumans make the organization present by constructing this (temporary) place in certain ways, that is, among others, as outdoors in general, and Sweden in particular.

**Discussion**

This paper deals with how organizations are communicationally ‘real-ised’ in situated, but dispersed, interactions involving both humans and nonhumans. By thinking of organization as ‘place’ it is possible to foreground the multiplicity of meetings in which the organization is ‘real-ised’ and the ‘bounded plurality’ of meanings that are produced. Even though at first sight the idea of ‘a place’ might suggest the opposite, given that we usually think of places in closed terms, it is instead a way of spacing organisations and bringing to the fore possible parallel presentifications of the organization as they emerge when trajectories meet (or not).
The three events presented as “travelling within/to Sweden” may be treated as communicational events, occasions for negotiating meaning, in which organizations such as Fjällräven, Icebug and others are made present in the “collision” of people (employed by the companies, potential consumers, outdoors interested people, retailers employees, local population) and nonhumans (artifacts, physical formations, weather, etc). In such a collision certain practices are enacted. Practices that produce the place Sweden as an outdoor place with certain kinds of characteristics. Practices in which outdoors organizations presence is enacted by anchoring the organizations in the landscape (Sweden), which is, as said, also being produced. In other words, the construction of Sweden makes the presentification of such organizations in this way possible; and as these sociomaterial practices re-produce Sweden, they contribute to meaning closure around Fjällräven, Icebug and other outdoors organizations as places, that is, they contribute to negotiating the uniqueness of such places. A uniqueness that is thus produced in the connection and relation to Sweden as a place, not by means of isolating the company as a place from other places. This is not to say that there is any convergence on some kind of shared meaning, there is a multiplicity of meanings and of practices, but this a bounded multiplicity and it is through such bounded multiplicity that the “uniqueness” of these companies is being produced.

The communicational event presented as “Sweden travelling” happens as humans (companies employees, potential buyers, journalists, etc) and non-humans (the products on display, the other artifacts, the hall, etc) meet. During this event, company employees perform in the name of the organization by interacting with other people and telling certain stories about the organization, they repeatedly presentify their organization. But one could argue that the presence of artifacts and the performance of the described practices make presentifications more tangible and situates them, thus adding to meaning production. In my analysis, I have in particular focused on how the enactment of Sweden anchors the organizations in a “landscape” and thus contributes to meaning closure.

In all cases, the described practices are truly sociomaterial as it would make no sense to try to think of them considering only humans (or only nonhumans), rather, their peculiarity resides in how humans and nonhumans together produce a certain kind of experience that adds to the reconstruction of the place. By participating to these practices, humans and nonhumans make organizations present, either by doing things in the name of the organization – people running the race and thus making the connection between the organizing company, the name of the
race, which includes the company name, and the place more stable, for instance, or the ice
block showing Haglöfs logo – or by people doing things through companies artifacts – thus
making the connection between the company and the place more stable by re-enacting
specific ways of experiencing the place through the companies artifacts – or by artifacts
situating companies – as for example the trunks that provide a “landscape” for the company.
To be sure, I am not claiming that what I presented is the only way of giving meaning to
Sweden or to the organizations, but aspects of multiple ways of giving meaning to such
places.

This paper therefore explores ways in which organizations are made present in sociomaterial
processes in which we witness the re-configuration of how trajectories coming from outdoors
organizations (objects they produce and/or people they employ) interact and co-evolve with
other trajectories. Physical formations together with travelling artifacts and people produce
what we could consider “temporary spaces” (with the caveat that all spaces are temporary, but
here they are specifically limited in time) in which organizations are presentified. This paper
thus illustrates how presentifications and the construction of meanings connected to such
presentifications may go on in “temporary spaces” to which people and objects travel and in
which certain practices are performed/represented. Hence, negotiation of meaning around an
organization also take place in such temporary spaces. To be noted is that the events studied
may be considered as “frontstage” instances of presentifications, in which the formal aim with
the event is partly to presentify the organization.

Not only, the paper also shows that constructions of ethnicity and nationality are important for
producing organizational presence. While nationality and ethnicity are often focused on in
studies of immigrants working in organizations or starting their own businesses, they are often
not problematized when studying “normal” organizations. Hence, in this paper I want to
question such an approach and argue that the production of organizational presence is not a
“neutral” process, but a rather powerful one, connected to power-related practices as the
doing of ethnicity.

When it comes to considering organizations as places and conceiving them as collection of
trajectories, I want to argue that this take offers one way of foregrounding the “permeability”
of an organization and the spatiality of processes of presentification. While some trajectories
and configurations may be argued to be repeatedly doing things in the name of the
organizations – as for example an employee or a logotype of a product or an annual report –, other do things only more or less temporarily, or more intensely at time. It is such examples I have showed. Examples in which organizational presence is negotiated outside the formal premises of the company. It is negotiated through material manifestations that do things in the name of the organization. As the trajectories come together in specific ways, they become trajectories that are part of these organizations as places.

Concluding, thinking of organizations as places allows for including a number of trajectories and performances in what “makes the organization”, thus providing a “permeable” conceptualization of the boundaries of this place. It means seeing organizations as permeable collective spatio-temporal events. This provides an alternative to conceiving of organizations as confined entities and highlights the temporary nature of presentifications, at the same time as it also recognizes the continuity of organizations, as there are more permanent spaces in which the organization is also enacted. It also enables for foregrounding how the organization is situated and, in as showed in this paper, performed through the re-construction of other places, such as Sweden – which leads to seeing the production of organizational presence as a process connected to constructions of ethnicity and nationality, and thus power relations in society at large.

Selected references


