

EMBODIED, RELATIONAL PRACTICES OF HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN IN A  
MATERIAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL NEXUS OF ORGANIZATIONS

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# Embodied, Relational Practices of Human and Non-Human in a Material, Social, and Cultural Nexus of Organizations

## Abstract

This article explores the significance of materiality and non- or other-human, especially the role of body and embodiment in relation to intra- and inter-practices in organizations and their culture from a phenomenological perspective and cross-disciplinary approach. Following a Merleau-Pontyan approach, the non-human is discussed in relation to cultural practices in organizational life-worlds. Based on a critique of physicalist empiricism and idealistic rationalism, impasses and limitations of naturalist and constructionist approaches towards culture are problematized. Showing the co-constitutive role of the in(ter)-between and inter-corporeality allows interpreting the corporeal nexus of material, social, and cultural phenomena of inter-practices within a continuum of the human and non-human, thus as an entangled 'non-+-human' web. Finally, the paper discusses some implications and perspectives on the 'non-+-human' in the study and practice of culture by particularly outlining an ethos of 'engaged releasement' ('*Gelassenheit*'). This orientation will be presented as a letting be-come in relation to things and thinking for mediating a living sustainable 'bodiment' of human and more-than-human dimensions.

## **1\_Introduction**

All beings inhabit an ineluctable physical-material world that is part of non-human and increasingly human spheres. However, despite or perhaps because of its ubiquity and the present ways it materializes in every-day life, for the most part the physical and so called non-human dimensions are taken for granted or perceived in a distorted way or humano-centric perspective. Likewise, concepts and realities of materialities and more-than-human dimensions are treated in problematic ways. Often these are dismissed or ignored in social and cultural studies of practices as well as in studies of organizational life-worlds in particular. Or they become objectified, instrumentalized and isolated by separating for example artefacts from actors. Turned into objects, the physical and the non-human material become relegated to functional roles as mere variables, constraints or resources. Concerted into useable material or reduced to manageable forces they are subordinated to human intentions, strategies and design in the received hierarchies of an anthropocentric universe and rational, purpose-centered orientation.

This article tries to develop a different more integral approach concerning the status and relevance of the material and the continuum of non-human and human, especially in organizational life-worlds. These life-worlds are those of embodied and so-

cio-culturally constructed institutions and companies that are composed of, surrounded by, and immersed in or consuming physical matter and non-human dimensions.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to overcome a dichotomist orientation, the following will emphasize the entanglements of non-human materialities<sup>2</sup> and social ‘culturalities’ — interpreted together as ‘materio-culture.’<sup>3</sup> This entwinement will be seen as a process that is plural and complex, as well as uneven and contingent, relational and emergent.<sup>4</sup> One focus will be on the embodied sensual and social dimension of the material<sup>5</sup> and its role in the formation and structuration of situations as they are enacted within organizational life-worlds.<sup>6</sup> These specific life-worlds are embedded in the so called age of the Anthropocene that marks the increasing impact of humans on the planet Earth and its evolution. Facing an unprecedented ecological crisis caused by an underlying anthropocentrism, a post-anthropocentric or anthro-de-centered orientation calls to re-situate the ‘anthropos.’ This re-situating places humans into a relational nexus that is co-constituted not only by its inherent animality as a kind of ‘*humanimity*.’ Rather, the connection between human and non-human is always already co-constitutive, including all those material dynamics of ‘physicalities-cum-culturalities’ involved, and vice versa.

Correspondingly, various strands of neo-materialism are aiming at a non- or post-anthropocentric mapping and an understanding of matter and what matters, also socio-culturally and as matters of concern as a generative power.<sup>7</sup> These new interpretations of materialities allow for conceptualizations of a wayfaring travelling of fluxes between matter and mind, body and soul/spirit, nature and culture. Moving into these and other in-betweens is opening up an active theory-formation that entails far-reaching implications with regard to cultural practices.

The intertwining and co-implications of distributed agential-performative ‘materialities,’ non-human and socio-cultural realities of practices with their symbolic and political meanings, implies a radical immanence. Such immanence can be interpreted as a kind of ‘living mattering’ of entangled and distributed agencies.

Importantly, this immanence of materiality and mattering, related to the non-human, is always already co-constituted and mediated through bodies and embodiment. Accordingly, this contribution proposes that phenomenology based on the philosopher of en fleshed bodies Merleau-Ponty allows considering the co-constitutive role of the body and embodiment in relation to the human and non- or other-human.

In particular this phenomenological approach helps exploring and rethinking the status of material physicality and the non-human as embodied nexus of material, social, and cultural dimension.<sup>8</sup>

The following will first offer a critique of reductive understandings of physicality and an extended interpretation of things. On this base then, the significance of living bodies and ‘non-/other-&-human’ embodiment are shown. As one specific focus, the connections of material, social, and cultural dimensions in organizational life-worlds and practices are explored. Furthermore, the paper will out-line in circular ways the role of a relational embodiment, especially the in-between of bodies-multitude and ‘bodied’ intra- and inter-practices in organizing. The final part provides some implications and perspectives, especially with regard to the role of an ethos of releasement or ‘*Gelassenheit*.’ This ethos refers to a letting be-come in relation to things and thinking, which is seen as highly relevant for a sustainable living ‘bodiment’ in organizations and beyond.

## **2\_Objects and ‘Dinge’ in Relation to the ‘Non-/Other-+-Human’**

The physical and non-human, with their connoted materiality, are ambiguous notions and concepts. If physicality, in the conventional sense, refers to a predominance of the physical at the expense of the mental, social or ‘spiritual,’ such a reductive understanding is systematically misleading. Based on a positivist paradigm, many physicalist approaches restrict meaningful statements to physical entities or processes that are in principle verifiable. Accordingly, physicalism is generally understood as the view that all facts, including those about consciousness, are nothing over and above the physical, factual. However, there is no consensus as to how the phrase ‘nothing over and above’ is to be cashed out, while different conceptual links from the physical to the mental and vice versa have been discussed and a re-descriptive physicalism offered.<sup>9</sup>

From a phenomenological perspective, the traditional terms physicality and non-human in an objectifying usage are limited and problematic, calling for an extended interpretation. Phenomenologically, physicality and the appearing of non-human things need to be per- and conceived in their open-ended and meaningful inter-connections with their density.<sup>10</sup> This implies that both are constitutive for what is

occurring as historically and wide-ranging ‘eventuality’ and meanings of phenomena.<sup>11</sup>

In general, the physical and the material as human and non-human cannot be reduced to being merely objects or ‘objectively’ as they are always already imbued with memories and imaginations as well as with social and cultural dimensions, including those that are ‘more-than-human.’

For Heidegger<sup>12</sup>, the basic ontological dimension of being in the world with its everydayness is meaningfully structured by a commonly shared texture and contextuality of material and social practice that often remain unthought. With him, we can differentiate between objects and things or ‘*Dinge*.’

‘*Objects*’ are perceived as what stands before us as outer surfaces for our inspection, defined by a very ‘over-againstness’ in relation to the setting in which it is placed.<sup>13</sup> Thus objects function as externally bounded entities in space, set over and against the world. In a way, things are purified into a dichotomy of objects and subjects or nature and culture. Underlying this orientation is an unbalanced model of creation that puts form as that which is imposed by an agent with a particular end or goal in mind, while matter is rendered passive, as that which was imposed upon: passively subservient to human designs.

In contrast to objects and an objectifying way of thinking, ‘*Dinge*’ are interpreted as a ‘going on’ that is a placed, mediating occurrence through which several encounterable processes are on-going and become entwined. Phenomenologically, to sense, perceive, and observe a ‘*Ding*’ is not to be locked out, but to be invited into a gathering. This gathering is a kind of participating in things and thereby being-in-the world as a non-representational ‘*thinging*’ and ‘*worlding*.’<sup>14</sup>

Things as a ‘parliament of lines’<sup>15</sup> or collecting spirals, are more like gathering points or knots, whose constituent threads, far from being contained within it, trail beyond, only to become caught up with other threads in other knots and ‘networkings.’

Instead of reducing material things to static properties, like tangibility and inertia, or some other fixed attributes of a given resource, they can be differently understood as processual and relational. As such, material things are part of trans-form(ation)-giving nexus and practices, including those in organizational life-worlds. Thus, things are not reducible to objects; but are generated within and interwoven with processes

of organizational living and practicing as they relate to creative flows of materials. Accordingly, physical things — in German ‘*Gegen-stände*’ — are not only opposite and external to us, but are included in acting and thus practice and praxis.

We live with and between physical, non-human things, which are not just given, but in Heidegger’s terms ‘ready-to-hand’ (*zuhanden*).<sup>16</sup> The things of my context are my conditions, or in German ‘*Be-Dingungen*.’<sup>17</sup>

Since *Dinge* is a primary ontological determination, other determinacies, such as ‘nature’ and ‘artifice’ are subordinate ones, rather than guiding categories in terms of which things are classified. This leads to a suspension of the distinction between nature and artifice, while attending to how a ‘*Ding*’ gathers, spatializes, and temporalizes the beings around it. Importantly, *Dinge* are processing this in their own ways and after its own manner, rather than conceiving things as atomistic substances that can be abstracted from relata in a constructed system of information or forces. Subtracting from *Dinge* our own habitual representations allows letting them appear as very things. In this way, they can be approached as heterogeneous sites of gathering or world-assembly for a disclosure of meaning and potentially contributing to a more care-ful and sustainable human relation to them.

Instead of simply knowing how to use, instrumentalize or exploit things as resources, living in a physical, non-human world would be different. Dwelling with *Dinge* properly would ‘make’ or allow practical sense to happen as more integral forms of presence unfold. This implies for example that the primary relation of practitioners to the world of non-human things is not by way of representation, but rather through co-presentational forms and practical activities. These practices follow in task-scapes, a matter-flow in flux. As such, they are taking place within a horizon of projections and concerns within-time-ness and the presence of other beings. Thus, the physicality of non-human *Dinge* — as it is manifested, lay-outed, and arranged in artefacts and positioned ‘objects’ — is part of a performativity of inter-relational materials. As such it can be part of trans-formations of socio-cultural contextures and practices in organizations but, for this, considering the body and embodiment is required.

### **3\_Post-Cartesian Perspectives on Non-Human and Human Body and Embodiment**

Based on an “ontological rehabilitation of the sensible,”<sup>18</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the body and embodiment tries to overcome the Galilean-Cartesian-Kantian concepts of nature and the bifurcation in ‘objects’ as matter and ‘subjects’ as experiencing, observing, or reflecting. This can then lead to an understanding of nature as fluid, active, generative, expressive, interweaving, and inter-sensory. Such comprehension is based on recognizing the intelligibility and meaning of non-human nature in the visible and invisible. The latter can be interpreted as hidden latency and a lining that is part of the intrinsic, pre-reflexive sense of the world.

The implicit logos of the sensible natural, aesthetic world serves as a kind of silent language, mediated by a bodily knowing that resonates and generates meaning. This mute or invisible (pre-)meaning is calling for uttered visible expression. Correspondingly, within this implicit one there exists an explicit logos. This serves as a cultural articulation, and instituting expressions, with style elaborated within thickness of being.<sup>19</sup>

Not only are embodied senses co-constituting culture, but they are also culturally mediated, since although the sense experiences are situated on the level of pre-reflexive, they are not pre-cultural.<sup>20</sup> Rather, as embodied sensations are an intrinsic part of being-in-the-world; the body and the embodiment of senses are always already culturally mediated.<sup>21</sup> Language and symbolization in particular serve as a social and cultural media that brings to expression the ‘mute’ inter-corporeal perception of the sensible. As much as senses are co-constituting culture, they are also constituted and influenced by cultural worlds and domains of expressive sense-making.<sup>22</sup> Thus, sensual relations can be interpreted as socio-cultural, which is highly relevant for understanding embodied organizations and their likewise bodily and embodied members and processes.

Thus, non-humans and humans and the material, the social, and the cultural phenomena and practices are co-constitutively entwined with the senses, body, and embodiment as well as its expressions. This implies that as much as bodies are material, physical materializations are incarnated through cultivated and culturing bodies or forms of embodiments. In other words, there is an entwinement of the materialities of bodies and the embodiment of matter and culture.

Furthermore, qualities of the physical and designable world, for example, spatiality, temporality form, mediality, plasticity, contribute to lived bodies' multivalent sensuousness, lived physiology, and corresponding engagements and actions as they are enacted in organizational practices.

How does the non-human make itself felt in practices of organizing? How does the body's materiality — for example, its anatomy and physiology — and other material forces actively matter to the processes of materialization, particularly in relation to organization and leadership? What does it mean to understand the body and material in organization and leadership as multiple as well as in relation to a continuum of bio-natural, 'individual,' and socio-cultural worlds of 'shared somatic states?'<sup>23</sup> For responding to these questions and exploring the relevance of physicality and non-human 'mattering' of the body and embodiment in organizational life-worlds, requires an approach that neither follows a naturalistic orientation, nor a textual-discursive interpretivism or social constructionism.

### **Impasses of Naturalism and Constructionism**

For naturalism and related naturalistic approaches, all phenomena can be explained factually in terms of natural causes and laws. It forms the basis for scientific materialism that takes physical non-human reality as all that exists, and anything else, including mental events, as reducible to matter within a single, all-embracing, spatio-temporal system. A naturalist approach tends towards a physicalist, biological or socio-biological reductionism and material determinism of physical or physiological causalities, while de-historicizing the body and underestimating cultural and symbolic dimensions in organizations.

Historically, the Cartesian-Newtonian understanding of matter yielded a conceptual and practical domination of nature as well as a specifically modern attitude or ethos of subjectivist potency. Although, that said, contemporary physics has explored forces, energies, intensities, charges, waves, virtual particles, random processes, and empty spaces as relationally foundational for matter in a way that is very different from the substantialist Cartesian or mechanistic Newtonian accounts of matter.

On the other hand, constructionist approaches tend towards a mentalist, disembodied orientation and an anti-realistic stance. Their post-structuralist view of the social, for example of organization and its leadership, as discursive practice im- and explicit-

ly tends to downgrade practical relations between embodied humans and their physical environment. While constructionism does not deny existence matters and material reality, it relegates it to an effect, a construction or product of something else which is, by implication, not material. It is not materiality as such that disappears in this approach, but the notion of human agents as material 'products' and 'producers' of their own physical world.

Social constructionist analyses of the ordered body view human physicality as an object produced and regulated by political, normative and discursive regimes: the body is a location for the transmission of these regimes to those subject to them.<sup>24</sup>

With their tendency to deny or undervalue the importance of the phenomenal world and by insisting on the textuality of and using a mentalist approach towards phenomena, many forms of constructionism are limited. They do not provide access to or a vocabulary for studying the pre-reflexive dimensions and depth of embodied human experience and creative practices in leadership and organizations. Disembodied discourses of constructionism tend to privilege symbolic signifying or semantic media, while neglecting or glossing over the corporeal that is somatic forms of signification. Social constructionism and its conceptualization of knowledge tend to be an over-socialized epistemology. They have also been criticized with regard to problems of social over-determination and unfounded relativism and the danger of losing the ability to supply credible and nuanced explanations.<sup>25</sup>

With its allergy to 'the real' that is characteristic of its more linguistic or discursive forms, overtures of material reality tend to be dismissed by constructivism as an insidious foundationalism, and thereby become "inadequate for thinking about matter, materiality, and politics in ways that do justice to the contemporary context of biopolitics and global political economy."<sup>26</sup> For per- and conceiving materiality critically, the challenge will be to recognize its "plural dimensions and its complex, contingent modes of appearing."<sup>27</sup>

Taken together, both naturalistic and constructionist approaches use problematic, impoverished conceptions that either retain a matter-inside-out (knowledge) or an outside-in (discourse) orientation. Equally they do not take into account sufficiently the lived experience of embodied procesuality and agency of practices, especially with regard to what it means and implies to lead and to follow in physical settings of organizations.

These reductive views of the phenomenal ‘*physic*’ do not adequately consider the same as being co-constituted by a living body (*‘Leib’*) and a relational em-bodiment also in organizational life-worlds and leadership. For Merleau-Ponty the body is not a physico-perceptually objectified ‘thing’ or physiologically resourceful system to be measured or assessed as physical capital. Nor does embodiment simply mean a mere physical manifestation of constructionist regimes and inscriptions. Rather, being a living body — not only having one! — and becoming embodied implies that also organizational members, as practitioners, are dynamically incarnated in and mediated through the nexus of material, social, and cultural phenomena and experiences. These experiential dimensions are in turn part of affective (inter-)actions, especially the receptive, situated affectedness of material and immaterial bodies that are neither simply ‘given,’ nor constructed.

Exploring post-constructivist reappraisal aspires to overcome the limitations of social constructivism, while retaining its virtues, in order to arrive at a more nuanced realism that includes an understanding of social and cultural processes within its conception of reality. Such realism recognized that the world is co-constructed and co-created by material, biological, social and discursive and other processes as a nexus.

Correspondingly, what renders Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of embodiment particularly important for a critical understanding of the physicalities and materialities in organizations is that it allows a critique of empiricist realism, with its underlying materialism as well as rationalistic idealism and intellectualism. Both reduce live-worldly phenomena, including the body, senses, perceptions, sensations, and other processes either to the realm of physical matter or to that of ‘meta-physical’ ideas.

With such reductionism, they are each failing to explain the expressive sense of emergent and creative practices that are mediating in between the physical and the non-physical, the material, and the immaterial. Neither behaviouristic-empiristic nor mentalistic-idealistic explanation can adequately approach and interpret the body of organizational members embodied in organizations. They assume them either to be an ‘object’ — that is a physiological corpus, passive receiver of sense impressions, respectively neuro-physiological mechanisms — or the body and embodiment are seen as representational and part of a rationally mastering and judging subject, controlled by the mind. Approaches that understand and treat physicality and the body in organizations as only material, biochemical or physiological substrates or representations

pass over embodied capacities of materialities, those occasioned and mediated through dwelling in meaningful worlds and relationships. Such reductionist approaches seem to be based on a prevailing mistrust of the actuality of our sensory knowledge traditionally judged by empiricists and rationalists as impoverished. They lead to appropriations that operate as behaviorist ‘framings’ into causal forms to make them measurable and predictable, or to rationalistic ‘tamings’ of reason that construct reliable representations of the world.

Following reductive orientations, the physical, the senses and bodies, as they occur, irreducibly, in organizational settings, are often reduced to a set of variables to be factored into calculations and instrumental applications. Similar to the given examples for taming and framing, they are used as resources for influencing or manipulating the self, employees or customers in organizations.

#### **4\_The Incarnated Nexus of Material, Social, and Cultural Dimensions in Organizational Practices**

Manifesting the physical non-human and being-embodied implies that the organizational members and their practices are dynamically constituted in and mediated through situated, material conditions, experiences of indispensable and elusive living. Practitioners are exposed and interrogate materially co-constituted perceptions, receptive affectedness, emotions, and being-at-tuned in moods, as well as cognitions and actions in their daily living with artefacts. Various physical non-human and particularly corporeal, mediating modalities of relating the artefacts are situated within the nexus of material, social, and cultural dimensions, which are horizons co-determined historically, technologically, and with respect to gender.

The sensual, physical non-human with its tactile, visual, olfactory or auditory processes materializes meanings for practitioners within a synchronized field of interrelated senses and ‘syn-aesthetic’ sensations.<sup>28</sup> It is through being embodied in the midst of living in a sensually physical world of touch, sight, smell, and sound that organizational members experience and share their own actions and their interactions, as well as ‘make sense.’

Correspondingly, physical non-human realities of organizations are constituted by embodied sensations and inter-sensory relationships of bodies that are culturally interceded. In other words, the visible, audible, touchable, expressive or libidinous bodies of organizational members in movement are media for sensual experiences, and

socio-cultural responses and actions within the leadership nexus. Rather than being a non- or epi-phenomenal mental mechanism, the inter-sensations of luminosity, tactility, and sonority become a symbiosis of the material and socio-cultural in what happens in their practices. This kind of integration becomes livingly manifest in a physiognomically expressive intertwining and co-emerging, co-evolving unfolding of bodies in a phenomenal field of life-worlds of practicing in organizations.

Expression and the physiognomic features — for example, facial dominance — may be linked to leadership status due to acquiescent or submissive responses by other group members rather than by group assent. Interestingly, while charisma is channeled through face and body status cues, masculine faces, in addition to looking dominant, also appear untrustworthy.<sup>29</sup> Materio-sensually based and mediated, perceived and felt experiences, as full-bodied activity and physiognomic expressions have important implications for the creation and maintenance of leadership relations. Accordingly, organizational members are in their material-bound practice where neither exists without the other, as they are ontologically inter-related as an involvement through their very embodied materialities.

With Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, the role of embodied senses, sensation, and perception, but also incorporeal and e-motional we-mode-intentionalities and responsiveness — as well as further modalities in relation to physicality and material and socio-cultural practices in organizations and leadership — can all be explored.

It is in and through the embodied, bodily actors and agencies of organizations and their leader- and followerships that the nexus of the material, social, and cultural are incorporated and enacted. This form of entwined practices of the material and socio-cultural — which could be called '*materio-socio-cultural*' — can be exemplified by 'artefacts-in-use' in organizations.

For example, material artefacts that are used in embodied, everyday practices for organizing include desks, flipcharts, whiteboards, post-its, spreadsheets, information- and communication technology, and other equipment and tools, functioning as boundary-objects. Importantly, while they are shaped by and also shape the embodied practice and meanings for various forms of work in organizations, these artefactual media in their co-evolving connections with other artefacts are continuously changing and acquiring new properties during their situated use.<sup>30</sup> Embodied organizational members and their practices are dynamically constituted in and mediated through

situated, material, gendered, and tendered conditions and experiences in relation to these artefacts-in-use as they embrace the human and non-human. The sensual, non-human qualities of human and non-human, with their tactile, visual, olfactory or auditory processes, materialize meanings for practitioners within a synchronized and synesthetic field of sensations. It is through being embodied in the midst of living in a sensually physical world of touch, sight, smell, and sound that organizational members experience and share their own actions and inter-actions as well as make sense.<sup>31</sup>

### **‘Bodiment’ and Inter-Corporeity of ‘Self-Other-Things’ in and of Organizing**

For further exploring the role of material bodies and embodied materialities while trying to overcoming Cartesian separating habits of mind with the inner-outer distinction and supposed separation of body and its environment as well as mind and matter, culture, and nature, etc. that abide in the more familiar term of em-bodiment, the alternative term ‘bodiment’ may be more adequate. Instead of marking an em-bedding enviroining ‘outer,’ which em-bodiments connotes, the henomenal living body *is* the ‘em-’ of embodiment and the ‘en-’ of the en-vironment. The body is not separate, but of the same stuff that it en-virons.

Accordingly, the living or phenomenological body is not a detached physical, fixed entity in a world external to it, but immersed, constantly, emerging out of an ever-changing, indeterminate weave of relations con-natural with the world and its others. This understanding of bodiment invites the consideration of socio-materialities and embodied, material sense-making, and of its materialized enactments in organization.

The significance of bodiment in organizational situ that has been investigated by looking at ‘bodies at work’<sup>32</sup> includes forms of somantic or sensory work as well as affective, emotional, and aesthetic labor.<sup>33</sup> During ‘somatic work’<sup>34</sup> members of organizations craft, negotiate or manipulate sensory experience and artefacts for a desired impression, management in staged affective dramas for specific forms of genuine or faked performance in occupational areas, ranging from fashion to fitness.<sup>35</sup>

Investigating how organizational members enact agency through socio-material practices and material sense-making and storied matter calls for considering an extended and more integral understanding of body and bodiment as an ‘*inter-event*’ that is a relational processing. This is mediated through flesh as matrix of the natural and

cultural, as intertwiningly co-belonging and co-functioning, being conjugated with difference, indivisibility within being, with its specific depths and verticalities.<sup>36</sup>

For Merleau-Ponty's post-dualistic, proto-integral philosophy, human and non-human beings are integrated as 'non-+-human' composition of the physical (material) and the mental (immaterial), of the natural and the cultural that are mutually crossing into one another as ongoing and reversible movements. Accordingly, selves and worlds as well as cultures and natures, as part of what is happening in organizations, intertwine with each other in all embodied relationships that unfold through them. The '*Ineinander*' ('one-in-another') of this kinship reconceives the relationship between life and spirit as body and in the spirit and immersion of mind in corporeal situations as part of a primordial, enfleshed in-division.<sup>37</sup> This 'one-in-another' happens through and catalyzes life and its connective 'inter-subjective' and 'inter-objective' fabrics di- and converge along multiple spirals of unfoldment. Inspired by this enfleshed ecology of '*Ineinander*,' such interpretation enables a different kind of understanding of non-human and human beings as parts of a relational nexus<sup>38</sup> in and through organizations. As for Merleau-Ponty, "the concern is to grasp humanity, not as another substance, but as *inter-being* ..." (my emphasis, WK).<sup>39</sup> This relational being is one that is interrelated with the concrete material and living nexus of entwined nature and culture that is of stones, plants, organisms and animals, but also material and socio-cultural fabrications and practices, all present in or affected by practices of organizations. Moreover, all inter-relational 'non-+-human' and socio-cultural phenomena in organizations are always on the move between an order and a disorder that is always becoming — and never complete. Processually expressed: to be 'non-+-human' is to inter-be(come)! This implies an active and ambiguous 'immanent transcendence' and 'transcending immanence;' carrying potentials of utopian movements towards different practices.<sup>40</sup>

The primordial field of becoming, with its embodied, inter-relational material and socio-cultural spheres is a generative principle or style of being that exists in latency among non-human and human 'process-entities' as fluid ties of the world.<sup>41</sup> This latency that appears as seemingly absent or invisible in the everyday-life of organization is part of the very present and visible, but remains concealed if perceived in reductive terms.

With Merleau-Ponty, we can acknowledge the in-between of this being and becoming as a processual gap that concretizes, as corporeal differences — also of practices — between organizational members and other stakeholders. This living in-between — where out- and inside movements cross — is materializing entanglements that are serving as a kind of creative, ‘fulfilling emptiness’ as a speaking and knowing silence. This emptiness that allows other relations to emerge is pregnant with meaning to be revealed and experienced in the very practicing in organizations and their embodied, non-human and human members as well as material and socio-cultural dimensions.

A plurality of bodies and embodiments in their reversible inter-relationships and inter-somatic exchanges are mattering, moving, interrogating, and negotiating phenomena, while being inter-placed and inter-temporally dwelling. Members of organizations, who are bodily ‘in-relation’ are relationally placed and paced, thus attuned within and towards an embodied world they share.

Merleau-Ponty explores this bodied inter-relationship as a relational embodiment that refers to a shared bodiment of corporeal existence. This inter-corporeality simultaneously foregrounds the material and social nature of the body and the bodily nature of social respectively socio-material relationships. All relating of practitioner in organization to others is always already something tangible and bodily and incorporates non-human dimensions. Through living in a situation of inter-corporeality, with its overlapping, other bodies that is ‘alter-bodies,’ there exist primordial, carnal bonds between embodied practitioners and practices. They are connected in their ‘belonging’ to a common world of things, too, and mediate ‘inter-objective’ and intersubjective qualities and significations.

With Merleau-Ponty, we can say, if a practitioner is an embodied being turned towards things, s/he can meet in things the actions of another and find in them meanings, because they are themes of possible activities for her/his own body.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, practices as embodied call, afford or disclose the co-constitutive and co-equimordial of these meanings.

Things disclose not only other possible perspectives on practitioners’ living bodies, but possible perspectives on and for other living bodies. The thing as a ‘theme’ for possible perspectives or intentions and responses of her/his own is where s/he immediately meets the same in Others situated in the world. Thus, every-thing physi-

cal, non-human is a nexus of meanings and relations of ‘self-other-things,’<sup>43</sup> things that are always already present and through which moving projects are inextricably enmeshed. This irreducible fact shows that corporeity is always already ‘*inter-embodied*.’ Being embedded in a primordial inter-corporeality within the intertwining of shared em-bodiment, this corporeal inter-subjectivity of and between practitioners and practices preserves asymmetry, heteronomy, and alterity of the other, while situating him, her or them in a context that integrates the material, social, and cultural nexus and its contexts. Therefore, intentions, feelings, thoughts, and responses of practitioners and of practicing are co-constituted by physicality and the non-human. Thus all of them can be understood as assuming embodied and thus publicly experiential and visible forms through manifested expressions and shared, responsive, immanent inter-activities.

### **Inter- & Intra-Action and the In(ter-)between**

Things do not merely precede interactions of practitioners; rather they emerge through iterative material-discursive ‘intra-actions,’ understood as materialized relations and ongoing reconfigurations.<sup>44</sup> As the universe is an agential intra-activity in its becoming,

the primary ontological units are not ‘things’, but phenomena — dynamic topological refigurings / entanglements / relationalities / (re)articulations. And the primary semantic units are not ‘words’, but material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted. This dynamism *is* agency. Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfiguring of the world.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, members of organizations only exist through particular, materialized or materializing relations in their ongoing, iteratively intra-active re-configuring. It is through these specific agential intra-actions that boundaries and properties of all acting and actors in relation to physical non-human phenomena are co-constituted. Even more, it is by intra-actional processes that particular material articulations become meaningful. Separations or differentiation in organizations, including those between leaders and followers, as well as exterior parties like stake-holders, exist only within these ‘intra-material’ relations. Correspondingly, organizational phenomena are defracted patterns of mattering that are dispersed across differently entangled spaces and times.

By embodied inter- and intra-actions, worlds of meaning and relations in organizations are created. At the same time, through the context of these relations, intra-

actively involved bodies are themselves acted upon. Somatic sensations, semantic interpretations — and with this perceptions, emotions, cognitions, and actions emerge from an in(ter-)between of embodied, material, and socio-cultural relationships, where meanings are co-created with others and as physical sensori-motoric inter-bodily resonances and responsiveness.

From an integral perspective, the material world of organizations can then be seen and treated as continuous with and in fact embedded in the material and immaterial as well as the human and the more-than-human. All things in this world of life and matter of organizing are situated within a continuum of human and nonhuman. This includes hybrids and their parts, knowledge and systems, etc. that are all materialized processes and effects of body-mediated or ‘bodied’ connections and relational activities.

The material non-human is formed, and per- and transformed into other existences in webs of inter-relationships. In other words, materiality matters for organizing and organizations as a co(i)mplication in and consequence of its relational nexus and movements that it enables. Accordingly, organizations are specific experiential fields, where non-human and the human come together to gather a bodied event. Ontologically, non-human and human members in organization and as its stakeholders are cohabiting agentic bodies of corporeal inter-subjectivities as embodied agencies and inter-practices that are part of the ‘Flesh’ of organization and leadership.<sup>46</sup> This en-fleshed world and its practices become manifest in embodied presencing<sup>47</sup> as well as in ecstasies of things and atmospheres<sup>48</sup> calling for an ethos of an engaged letting-go as outlined in the following.

### **Ethos of Engaged Letting-Go or ‘*Gelassenheit*’ as Relational Practice**

As we have seen, non-human things and physicality matter because they are not merely neutral or passive objects before or for means toward ends. Rather, they always already embody in some ways particular qualities and values in hybrid entangled human and non-human net-works.

Being part of inter- or respectively intra-actions, and interests as well as inter-practices, materio-physical phenomena and cultural practices are eco-socio-political manifestations and ‘locations’ for negotiations and co-creating emergent realities that give rise to post-dualistic, inter-relational incarnations.

For dealing with and cultivating ‘bodied’ relational and complex actions and practices an ethos of letting-go (*‘Gelassenheit’*) might be helpful. *‘Gelassenheit,’* translated as releasement, serenity, composure or detachment, refers to a non-objectifying ethos of active and ongoing passivity. This ethos entails an attitude of accepting by a careful ‘letting’ that is an abandonment of habitual, representational, and appropriating orientations as well as corresponding actions. This bearing appears as very challenging in contemporary organization with its performance-driven ‘practicalism’ and corresponding constraints. But it is exactly because of this increasingly unviable form that *Gelassenheit* is and will become even more urgently needed for a more sustainable present and future.

In this letting-be also of things, practitioners in organization do not attempt to manipulate, master or compel. Instead, in a post-heroic mode, leaders and leadership let things appear and process in their revealing and vital ways. Importantly, this is not indifference or lack of interest in things, but rather an ‘engaged letting.’ This letting orientates towards ‘rescuing’ things and experiences from appropriating projection and totalizing closures of enframing.

Entering a modus of letting-be is realized through a receptive waiting and listening, thus more an ‘active non-doing’ in relation to things and what ‘matters,’ rather than a willing and controlling business as usual.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, it moves from a representational and calculative mode, towards more poetic relations, intermediated via a presencing, atmospheric sensitivity and proto-meditative tuning, as enacted in mindfulness practices.<sup>50</sup>

Seeing things as poetic and calling for a ‘poetry of things’<sup>51</sup> proposes an ethos of dwelling *with* things. This can cultivate an embodied ethics of things as material and socio-cultural hybrids through a lettingness that serves as an abandonment of representational and calculative thinking or compartments and forms. This ethos is a kind of dwelling place or, better said, a mindful way of dwelling, where phenomena may be encountered in openness towards the beingness of their becoming.

An embodied minding, one that is proto-contemplative, calls for patience and silence, being in relation to doing and relating. It presupposes that organizational members step back and re-collect themselves. Furthermore, it requires practical conditions in which these members can experiment and practice forms of ‘open-minded’ sensing, listening, and looking as well as sharing.

A creative ‘thinging’ and thinking depends upon being open to whatever happens and how encountering phenomena appear and thereby entering disclosures of revealing perceptions and realizations. In this way, organizational members can learn to perceive and relate to things they are affected by and deal with, while relating to other members and stakeholders, not only as resources to be exploited, but inspiring sources to be explored. In the spirit of *Gelassenheit*, the form of a thing or material appearances of non-human are no longer only limiting or enclosing. Instead the non-human can be sensed as radiating, filling, and moving into and through embodied, co-creational (atmo-)spheres of presences of some-thing or someone to be-come.

Through *Gelassenheit* it may be possible to suspend or at least become aware and redirect instrumental modes of thinking and routinized behaving. Thereby, it becomes possible to receive promptings that come from the uplifting depth of other beings in their otherness. This receptive ingenuousness clears a space and time for the be(com)ing of an othering to emerge. In preserving the other’s irreducible otherness, organizational members preserve their own integrity, while deepening their experiences also in relation to things and what they mean.

By stepping back away from or out of customary and habitual representations within the horizon of objectivity with its limited, quick-fixing hastening operations, *Gelassenheit* allows them to enter into a letting mode that is not in a hurry to impose its ordering and grasp on things. Thus, such orientation is not on a mission to pursue the modernist project of putting questions to phenomena and forcing them to answer or being exploited or ill-treated.

While viewing things and others not in a biased or appropriating way, cultivating releasement towards them enables one to say care-fully ‘yes’ and/or ‘no’ to what happens in organizational practices. Thereby, it discourages mindless organizing or exploitive misusing practices as they are manifest in dark sides of bad leadership that is, among others, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular<sup>52</sup> or violent innocence.<sup>53</sup>

Developing a relatively free relationship to what appears does not mean aspiring for a life free from usages of resources or devices, for example of information- and communication technologies, but instead leading a life that is not pervasively ordered or penetrated or, respectively, addicted to them.

Designated times for email or email sabbaticals, respectively, deliberate time spent away from your devices, as well as more mindful usages of mobile-phones and other media are practical ways of realizing this.

The practical side of *Gelassenheit* denotes an incarnated and collective attitude and attunement that express a mode of comportment towards reality that does not reify the world into a containable totality. Rather, as creative nexus of a 'form-media' it engenders a poetic sense of (be-)longing together based on heterogeneity, rather than symmetry, and of the disclosive nature of the physical with its self-showing dynamisms and sensuous particularities in all its appearances.

## **5\_Conclusion**

As this paper has shown, realities in particular and also in organizations are more and different than what can be explained physically in naturalist or constructionist ways. Likewise, things as part of the nexus of nature-and-culture that integrate non-human and human are no longer passively waiting for a concept, a theory or a sovereign subject to arrange them in ordered ranks of 'objecthood.' Instead of an ontological monism that follows a reductive 'one-stuff-view' with regard to the nature of non-human and human realities of organizations, we need a pluralistic, more agential, integral 'many-stuff-perspective.'

One main insight of the presented phenomenological understanding of things and physicality within a continuum of the 'human-non-human' in general and related to organizations in particular is that this undermines or traverses dichotomizing separations, like those between object(ivist) and subject(ivist) or naturalist and culturalist as well as other dualisms.

Also, within organizations, the non-human and human things are soma- and semantically irreducible, neither to 'objects' or 'objectivities,' nor to the mastering reaches of 'subjects' or 'intersubjectivities.' Rather, both have their inter-relational and agentic forms and per-formativity as a capacity to morph and metamorphose. Non-human material and human socio-cultural processes and practices are full of excesses, forces, vitalities, relationalities or differences. These render what 'matters' active, and co-creative, but also unavailable and unpredictable in conventional ways of control and manageability.

What matters is evincing immanent modes of transformation and recognizing that phenomena are caught in a multitude of interlocking processes, systems and powers. This is calling to consider anew the status of capacities for agencies and interdependencies and movement-processes in them. Poetically expressed, meshed non-human matter entwined in an-organic, organic, and human forms as well as interwoven formations of nature and culture (*'natureculture'*) display an enactive dance.<sup>54</sup>

Importantly, as this paper has shown, an extended and more integrative understanding of the matter(ing) requires incorporating the body and bodiment as media for phenomena and relational practicing of and in organizations.

However, a critical reflection calls for considering various difficulties, limitations, and problems involved in realizing bodied intra- and inter-practices of and in organizations. Returning to these ways of bodied practicing requires remaining vigilant against falling prey to a pre-modern longing for monistic, neo-materialistic unity and retro-romantic fallacies. A historio-graphically and culturally informed account of the nexus of matter and embodiment prevents relapsing into a kind of non-humanist or physicalist neo-sensualism or neo-sensationalism, respectively escapist retro-regression.<sup>55</sup>

While being aware of dangers of the retro-romantic backwards move, the challenge will be to develop and enact an integrative eco-socio-cultural-logical orientation in embodied organizing. Such orientation approaches of non-human, material and human, socio-cultural processes as constituting a corporeal presence beyond or 'this-sidedly' of materialist and spiritualist understandings.

For further explorations of the material and symbolic landscapes of organizations, it will be important to inquire which specific embodied, non-human, and human practices are realized and with what kind of effects. The challenge for this is to explicate the implicated entanglements of material and socio-cultural practices and how they are created and impactful in different processes and materializations of embodied action. In other words, research is called investigating what sorts are these things and a 'mattering' of non-human, material, and socio-cultural issues and concerns that are made present and effective in organizational life-worlds.

Furthermore, a guiding question might be: how are bodies and forms of embodiment configured by non-humans and humans in relation to organizational practices, things, and artefacts?<sup>56</sup>

As such it can contribute to a rehabilitation also of living materialities, like animal and other ‘more-than-human’ lives and eco-sustainable practices. In this sense, ‘sustainability’ can be re-grounded in a materially enfolded sense of responsiveness and responsibility for the in-habited en-vironing. This also includes a qualitative de-centering of hyper-individualism of conventional human-centered approaches. Eco-phenomenologically, such enlarged sense in the integrative nexus of a living in-betweenness that embraces the ‘earthly’ others as part of the same fleshly interconnection of be(com)ing can lead to developing more responsive and responsible relationships.

In our contemporary context, unprecedented things are currently being done with to matter and life as a nexus of nature-and-culture through organizations on a micro-level as well as and on a socio-economic macro-level and between both of them. When nature-and-culture are no longer regarded as distinct realms — as both have material effects upon an ever-changing world — then this has far-reaching consequences and implications. These range from issues of identity, social justice, and liberation<sup>57</sup> to global economics and society<sup>58</sup> as well as to regional and local development and projects in which ‘*natural-cultural*’ projects are realized.

The outlined ideas here invite a sensitivity to these contemporary shifts in the material bio- and eco-spheres, as well as to changes in local and global organizational, economic, cultural, and societal structures and (bio-)technologies and then again to pressing ethical and political concerns. What is at stake is nothing but a challenge to some of the most basic assumptions that have underpinned the modern and postmodern worlds of organizing, including beliefs about mattering human and non-human agencies and its material practices, such as the ways we labor on, exploit, and interact with inner and outer nature.

The perspectives offered here call to imagine and per- and conceive in new ways the non-human and human together, thus ‘*non-+-human*’ nature of matter, especially in relation to organization and its material and socio-cultural embedments in living.

Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy can support forms for practical engagement and enactment that integrate material and socio-culture dimensions. This integration can contribute to an ‘enlivening’ that situates all human and non-human beings as entangled in a ‘non-+-human’ web of physical, sensual, and socio-cultural dynamics, one that is unfolding through a creative inter-relating. Such an orientation mediates a re-

habilitation and realization of an integrative continuum and a post-dualistic ecology of be(com)ing. Things and material and socio-cultural practices mediate a potential and even an aspirational immanence to be-come more sustainable in and through organizational life-worlds. Considering various stakeholders and future generations, such sustainable be(com)ing can then be part of a more embodied, planetary eco-noosphere,<sup>59</sup> ignored only at our peril.

It is hoped that the perspectives as outlined here provide possibilities for re-assessing and re-viving the relevance of the ‘non-+-human’ in relation to em-bodied, material, and socio-cultural dimensions and practices in, through and beyond organi-zations. Enacting this bodied, performative practicing in and beyond organizational life-worlds, pursued in the spirit of a well-understood engaged *Gelassenheit*, may then mediate an incarnation and unfoldment of ‘alter-native’ that is ‘other-birthly’ of economic, societal, socio-cultural, thus political, and ethical inter-ests and inter-relationships of ‘non-+-human’ to be-come.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For an overview of embodied organization see Wendelin M. Küpers, *Phenomenology of the Embodied Organisation: The Contribution of Merleau-Ponty* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Parts of this paper have been published in relation to the materiality of leadership in Wendelin M. Küpers, “Embodied Inter-Practices of Leadership,” special issue on ‘The Materiality of Leadership: Corporeality and Subjectivity,’ in *Leadership* 9.3 (2013), 335–357.
- <sup>2</sup> Following neo-materialist research, assemblages of materials are comprehended as energetic forces that move, transform, damage, mutate or form alliances in more or less durable ways and how as such they constitute parts of animated things, including humans, with their affects, flows, and micro-politics. See Nick J. Fox and Pam Alldred, “New Materialist Social Inquiry: Designs, Methods and the Research-Assemblage,” in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* (2014), 1–16. In this way ‘cultured’ humans are always already in ‘nature,’ and how ‘nature’ in sensu of a ‘multi-naturalism’ is always already, necessarily, ‘cultured.’
- <sup>3</sup> Victor Buchli, “Introduction,” in *The Material Culture Reader*, ed. Victor Buchli (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2002), 1–22.
- <sup>4</sup> Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–43, here: 29 (hereafter abbreviated as ‘Coole and Frost 2010’), and Matthew Jones, “Untangling Socio-Materiality,” in *How Matter Matters: Objects, Artifacts and Materiality in Organization Studies*, eds. Paul R. Carlile et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 197–226, here: 223.
- <sup>5</sup> For sociality of materialities see Paul Graves-Brown, ed., *Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000). For ‘socialness of things’ see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

- <sup>6</sup> The link between matter and agency as well as practice-related transformative understanding of materialities resonates with neo-material and ‘anthro-de-centering’ quests, also in social science (Coole and Frost 2010), and an agential realism with its post-humanist performativity. Cf. Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of how Matter Comes to Matter,” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28.3 (2003), 801–831. Contemporary discussions of so-called post-ANT studies have shown the importance of exploring the multiplicity of objects and their propensity to enact different realities. Cf. Christopher Gad and Casper Bruun Jensen, “On the Consequences of Post-ANT,” in *Science, Technology & Human Values* 35.1 (2009), 55–80, and Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
- <sup>7</sup> For an overview see: Adrian Ivakhiv, “On Matters of Concern: Ontological Politics, Ecology, and the Anthro(s)cene,” accessed November 15, 2016, <<https://syntheticzero.net/tag/cosmopolitics/>>. Besides thinkers like Deleuze, DeLanda, Haraway, Harmon, Latour, and Pickering, Braidotti’s new materialism is interesting. Cf. Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) (hereafter abbreviated as ‘Braidotti 2002’), Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006) (hereafter abbreviated as ‘Braidotti 2006’), and Rosi Braidotti, *The posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) (hereafter abbreviated as ‘Braidotti 2013’). Her neo-materialism, which she also terms a bodily or carnal materialism (Braidotti 2002, 2006: 182) is part of her agenda for a ‘critical post-humanism’ (Braidotti 2013). In this approach the exterior and the interior, the subject(ive) and the object(ive), the individual, the social, and the symbolic are conceptualized as co-constitutive instead of pre-determined levels or layers. Affirming a radical immanence, matter is seen as an ongoing metamorphosis that is a transformative force in itself, while embracing of a liberating post-human subjectivity, ethics, and politics for a sustainable and creative becoming-Earth (ibid.: 12). This can be processed via a post-humanist secular cosmopolitanism, including a post-eurocentric and post-humanist Europe (as medium of transformation) in an age where global capitalism is both triumphant and clearly deficient in terms of sustainability and social justice (ibid.: 52). It supports “non-profit” experiments with contemporary subjectivity that show what “contemporary, biotechnologically mediated bodies are capable of doing” while resisting the neo-liberal appropriation of living entities as tradable commodities, by possessive individualism and capital accumulation tied to the profit principle.
- <sup>8</sup> Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 263.
- <sup>9</sup> Robert Kirk, *The Conceptual Link from Physical to Mental* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- <sup>10</sup> Charles E. Scott, *Lives of Things* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 19.
- <sup>11</sup> Originally, the term ‘*phusis*’ refers to a power to ‘growth’ or force that is ‘growing into itself’ of the environment in things, while ‘*phuein*’ implies ‘to bring/coming forth’ and ‘*phunein*’ is linked to ‘be born,’ bringing forth, coming to presence and passage, to the early Greek word for Being itself. These historical meanings are reconsidered by Heidegger: “In the age of the first and definitive unfolding of Western philosophy among the Greeks, when questioning about beings as such and as a whole received its true inception, beings were called *phusis*. This fundamental Greek word for beings is usually translated as ‘nature’. We use the Latin translation *natura* which really means ‘to be born’, ‘birth’. But with this Latin translation, the originary content of the Greek word *phusis* is already thrust aside, the authentic philosophical naming force of the Greek word is destroyed... Now, what does the word ‘*phusis*’ say? It says what emerges from itself (for example,

- the emergence, the blossoming, of a rose), the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding and holding itself and persisting in appearance — in short, the emerging-abiding sway.” (Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 14–15).
- <sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- <sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (cf. note 12), 167.
- <sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (cf. note 12), 181.
- <sup>15</sup> Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.
- <sup>16</sup> For Heidegger this ready-to-hand mode (German: ‘*zuhanden*,’ readiness-to-/at-hand, handiness: *Zuhandenheit*) refers to an engagement that is a concerned dealing with equipment as encountered within the world. In this mode practical activities do not consist of a separation between subject and object, while *Dasein* is available for action. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962 [1927]) (hereafter abbreviated as ‘Heidegger 1962 [1927]’). Practitioners acting in this engaged mode of an ontological-categorical readiness-to-hand are aware, handling, and enacting interrelated resources, tools, tasks, projects, and potentialities according to the coherence and connection (*Bewandtnis*) of their situated and instituted applicability (Heidegger 1962 [1927]: 83–88). Furthermore, this acting manifest is an ‘*Umgang*’ that is actual involved in activities and dealings with the world. To be pragmatically immersed in a worldly context and dealing with equipment is to have a certain knowing relation to the world with a particular concern (*Besorgen*) and circumspection (*Umsicht*) as modes of awareness. Seeing things as ready-to-hand entails the pre-predicative way that *Dasein* relates to entities in the world within a configuration of practical involvements that is an equipmental totality in use. This relating is showing our understanding of inherent possibilities while unthematically processing a usage, practical care or coping. However, when experiencing an interruption an ‘*unready-to-hand*’ mode appears. In this mode, Being becomes for example, conspicuous (unusable), obtrusive (missing) or obstinate (standing in the way). Experiencing unreadiness-to-hand as a deficient mode of readiness-to-hand can also be triggered by discoveries or mediate awareness for the need to shift relevancies or priorities and thus take the shape of a ‘*neediness-to-hand*’ mode (Heidegger 1962 [1927]: 103).
- <sup>17</sup> Vilém Flusser, *Dinge und Undinge: Phänomenologische Skizzen* (München: Hanser, 1993), 9. Things con-constitute the relationship to the world (*Weltbezug*) of humans.
- <sup>18</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 166–167.
- <sup>19</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 119.
- <sup>20</sup> Thomas J. Csordas, “Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology,” in *Ethos* 18.1 (1990), 5–47, here: 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (cf. note 19), 147. Things and senses are situated and processed in a sensual, performative and symbolic interplay (*Wechselspiel*), as these are participating in human living bodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) and emotionality, in a way that we can speak of ‘thing-bodies’ (‘*Dingleiben*’) and ‘body-things’ (‘*Leibdingen*’). Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Sinne und Künste im Wechselspiel: Modi ästhetischer Erfahrung* (Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp, 2010), 353. Böhme argues for an open ontology of things which understands reality ecstatically which the self-presenting of things is expressed, or with Soentgen hidden. Cf. Gernot Böhme, “Das Ding und seine Ekstasen: Ontologie und Ästhetik der Dinghaftigkeit,” in *Atmosphäre*, ed. Gernot Böhme (Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 155–176, Gernot Böhme, “Das Ding,” in *Asthetik: Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*, ed. Gernot Böhme (München: Fink,

- 2001), 159–172, and Jens Soentgen, *Das Unscheinbare: Phänomenologische Beschreibungen von Stoffen, Dingen und fraktalen Gebilden* (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), 45–47.
- 22 Ted Toadvine, “Singing the World in a New Key: Merleau-Ponty and the Ontology of Sense,” in *Janus Head* 7.2 (2004), 273–283.
- 23 John Blacking, “Towards an Anthropology of the Body,” in *The Anthropology of the Body*, ed. John Blacking (London: Academic Press, 1977), 1–28, here: 9.
- 24 Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London/Newbury Park/New Delhi: Sage, 2012), 242.
- 25 Küpers, “Embodied Inter-Practices of Leadership” (cf. note 1).
- 26 Coole and Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms” (cf. note 4), 6.
- 27 Coole and Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms” (cf. note 4), 27.
- 28 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 237.
- 29 David I. Perrett et al., “Effects of Sexual Dimorphism on Facial Attractiveness,” in *Nature* 394 (1998), 884–887.
- 30 Karin Knorr-Cetina, “Objective Practice,” in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, eds. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001), 175–188.
- 31 Wendelin M. Küpers, “Phenomenology of Embodied Senses & ‘Sense-Making’ and the Making of Sense in Organizational Culture,” special issue on ‘Sensually Exploring Culture and Affect at Work,’ in *International Journal of Work, Organization and Emotion* 5.4 (2013), 325–341.
- 32 Carol Wolkowitz, *Bodies at Work* (London: Sage, 2006).
- 33 John Hockey and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson, “The sensorium at work: The sensory phenomenology of the working body,” in *The Sociological Review* 57.2 (2009), 217–239.
- 34 Phillip Vannini, Dennis Waskul and Simon Gottschalk, *The Senses in Self, Society, and Culture: A Sociology of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
- 35 Dennis Waskul and Phillip Vannini, “The Performative Body: Symbolic Interactionism, Dramaturgy, Affect, and the Sociology of the Body,” in *Handbook of Dramaturgy*, ed. Charles Edgley (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 201–212.
- 36 William S. Hamrick and Jan Van der Veken, *Nature and Logos: A Whiteheadian Key to Merleau-Ponty’s Fundamental Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011), 79–84.
- 37 For describing “the inherence of the self in the world and of the world in the self, of the self in the other and the other in the self” (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 306), it can be interpreted as a kind of ‘inter-involvement’ or “*Ineinander*” (ibid.).
- 38 Bryan Bannon, “Flesh and Nature: Understanding Merleau-Ponty’s Relational Ontology,” in *Research in Phenomenology* 41.3 (2012), 327–357.
- 39 Merleau-Ponty, *Nature* (cf. note 37), 208.
- 40 Greg Johnson, “Merleau-Pontian Phenomenology as Non-Conventionally Utopian,” in *Human Studies* 26 (2003), 383–400.
- 41 Seamus Carey, “Cultivating Ethos Through the Body,” in *Human Studies* 23 (2000), 23–42, here: 32.
- 42 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (cf. note 18), 117.

- 43 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (cf. note 28), 57.
- 44 Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity" (cf. note 6), 801–831.
- 45 Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity" (cf. note 6), 818.
- 46 Donna Ladkin, *Rethinking Leadership: A New Look at Old Leadership Questions* (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2010), 71–73, 182–183.
- 47 Olen Gunnlaugson and William Walker, "Deep Presencing, Leadership Coaching: Building Capacity for Sensing, Enacting and Embodying Emerging Selves and Futures in the Face of Organizational Crisis," in *Perspectives on Theory U: Insights from the Field*, eds. Olen Gunnlaugson, Charles Baron, and Mario Cayer (Hershey, PA: IGI Global Press, 2013), 128–137, Peter Senge et al., *Presence: An Exploration of Profound Change in People, Organizations, and Society* (New York: NY Sol Press, 2004), and Claus Otto Sharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009).
- 48 Affective atmospheres are the very forms in which things and environments present themselves and are spatially surrounding. Cf. Ben Anderson, "Affective atmospheres," in *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2009), 77–81. According to Böhme, whose theory is based on ecological embodiment and on a phenomenological, material-based aesthetic theory of nature and atmospheres, there exist spheres of a specific presence of things. Cf. Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics," in *Thesis Eleven* 36 (1993), 113–126 (hereafter abbreviated as 'Böhme 1993'). These are particular modes in which objects are present, which he calls "ecstasy of the object." Not only their colors, smells or sounds can be interpreted as ecstasies, but also primary qualities like extension and form. As vibrant matter depends on the medium through which it is perceived, a thing's eidos unfolds into the medium of its presence, "the ways in which it goes forth from itself" (Böhme 1993: 121) and thereby affects this medium. Thus an atmosphere belongs neither to the sphere of the object nor in that of the subject. Rather, it is a co-presence that exists within the terms of the subject/object division through its very situatedness. Applied to the organization context, the ecstasy of things and the atmosphere or atmospheric phenomena are something members have an immediate relationship and experience of as seemingly 'quasi-objectively exterior' to them. Exerted power or appearing elegance, emanating or expressed in material things are among social characteristics, while warmth or coldness are among synaesthetic features of also organizational atmospheres. Examples for communicative atmospheric qualities are for instance tensions or tranquility as they appear in organizations. Employees can feel themselves caught up in a tense atmosphere, like that of bullying, or enveloped by a friendly atmosphere of collegiality. Atmospheres can also be circumvented and circulate or sealed off through protective measures, such as certain types of building-design or artefacts in organizations. By creating and arranging things, light, sounds, symbols, etc. in organizational life-worlds, atmospheres are 'enhanced,' 'transformed,' 'intensified,' 'shaped,' and otherwise intervened on. Cf. Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Subject Matter of Architecture," in *Herzog & Meuron Natural History*, ed. Philip Ursprung (London: Lars Müller Publishers, 2006), 398–407. Thus, atmospheric impressions as they are mediated by material and socio-cultural things and relational practicing, like equipment, business-suits or offices and movements and significance in relation to them, can have ambivalent qualities and effects. They can be oppressive, agitating or expressive and uplifting as well as effectuate differentiations, restrictions or defenses or resistance. Using or perceiving these material and socio-cultural phenomena and practices by leaders, followers, customers or stakeholders, mediates a dynamic process that produces specific situated and embodied atmospheres.

- 49 For concrete examples and practices applied to organizational life-worlds see Wendelin M. Küppers, “Klug Nichts tun: Die Kunst engagierter Gelassenheit in der Organisations- und Führungspraxis,” in *Zeitschrift für OrganisationsEntwicklung* 2 (2013), 4–17.
- 50 Hugo J. E. M. Alberts and Ute R. Hülshager, “Applying Mindfulness in the Context of Work: Mindfulness-Based Interventions,” in *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications*, eds. Jochen Reb and Paul W. B. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 100–132.
- 51 Lucas D. Introna, “Ethics and the speaking of things,” in *Theory, Culture and Society* 26.4 (2009), 398–419, and Lucas D. Introna, “Otherness and the Letting-Be of Becoming: Or, Ethics Beyond Bifurcation,” in *How Matter Matters*, eds. Paul R. Carlile et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 260–287.
- 52 Barbara Kellerman, *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters* (Boston: Harvard Business Publishing, 2004).
- 53 Russ Vince and Abdelmagid Mazen, “Violent Innocence: A Contradiction at the Heart of Leadership,” in *Organization Studies* 35 (2014), 189–207.
- 54 Timothy Morton, “The Mesh,” in *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry, and Ken Hiltner (New York: Routledge, 2011), 19–30, here: 28. Joanna Latimer and Mara Miele, “Naturecultures?. Science, Affect and the Non-human,” in *Theory, Culture & Society* 30.7-8 (2013), 5–31.
- 55 One interesting question concerns what visible and invisible work do non-human and human, thus ‘non-+human’ manifestation perform, intermediate and contribute to giving sense(s) to the interwoven practices mentioned. Especially, revealing could be to explore what connection structures, technologies and artefacts and embodiments of organizations do establish or process (not) with other non-human realities and other practices. For this, it might be relevant to localize the responsive capacity for action or non-action as this where and how embodied intra- and inter-actions in relational organizational practices can (not) be brought about. In terms of pragmatics, it becomes important to find out how to judge selective exclusions or strategic priorities for political embodied interventions. One creative avenue can be seen in knowing more about how material storytelling and the material of stories in organizations are co- and reconfigured through the entangled state of agencies of bodies, artefacts and spaces as part of learning as an intra-active becoming.
- 56 Concretely asked: what kinds of embodied artefacts are used to function how in various embodied organizational practices? In particular: what roles do ‘boundary objects’ play and how do the combined effects of communications, emotions and materialities in relation to them contract meaning? Likewise, we need to better understand how to prevent ‘artifact errors’ or the ‘artifact myopia’ that is failing to recognize the full complexity of organizational artifacts as well as differences in its perception or alternative influences, both of which can easily compromise artifact decisions and performances. Cf. Iris Vilnai-Yavetz and Anat Rafaeli, “Managing Organizational Artifacts to Avoid Artifact Myopia,” in *Artifacts and Organizations: Beyond Mere Symbolism*, eds. Anat Rafaeli and Michael G. Pratt (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006), 9–21.
- 57 Karen Barad, “Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism Without Contradiction,” in *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*, eds. Lynn Hankinson and Jack Nelson (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer, 1996), 161–194, here: 164.
- 58 Manuel DeLanda, *A new Philosophy of Society* (London: Continuum, 2006).
- 59 According to Teilhard de Chardin, the physical Earth in its evolutionary unfolding is growing a new organ of consciousness he called the ‘noosphere.’ Cf. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine*

*Milieu* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) (hereafter abbreviated as ‘Teilhard de Chardin 1960’), and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). For him, this is a planetary thinking-network that is an interlinked system of consciousness and information, functioning as a global nexus of self-awareness, instantaneous feedback, and planetary communication. For bringing alive this visionary perspective that sees matter and spirit as dimensions of an embracing cosmic ‘stuff-process,’ he calls for us to “throw ourselves into the things of the earth” (Teilhard de Chardin 1960: 34) in order to move towards the object of our work “as though towards and opening on the supreme fulfilment of our beings” (ibid.: 27). He envisioned things as intermediaries to be made creative use of, as they serve as nourishment to be taken, and elements to be associated with, as these mediating things are ‘borne’ along with us. Following this, the spiritual appreciation of matter as part of a noosphere can be re-interpreted today in ecological ways, thus ‘eco-noosphere.’