

OMTF 2024

Organizations, Management and Theories of the Firm

1. General Information

Host:	University of Bern, Team Prof. Claus D. Jacobs
Date:	September 26 (Thu), 8:40h – September 27 (Fri), 14:00h
Location:	University of Bern, UniS, Schanzeneckstrasse 1, 3012 Bern, Switzerland Room B-102
Contact:	Magdalena Waeber: magdalena.waeber@unibe.ch ; +41 31 684 55 25
Fee:	Participation fee covers the meals (coffee breaks, lunches, and dinner) 1. Full rate for both dates participation: 240 CHF 2. Participation on Thursday September 26 th , 2024: 200 CHF 3. Participation on Friday September 27 th , 2024: 40 CHF
Get Together:	September 25 (Wed), 19:00h , at Restaurant (Domino , Schwanengasse 3, 3011 Bern). Optional dinner for early arrivals (at participants' own expense)

2. Presentation Details

Long slot:	45 min. (15 min. presentation, 5 min. comment, 25 min. discussion)
Short slot:	30 min. (10 min. presentation, 20 min. discussion)

1 long slot and 1 short slot are dedicated to each research group, doctoral students were favored over post-doctoral researchers. Time will be monitored strictly, and exceedances will not be tolerated for the benefit of all concerned!

3. Participating Chairs

Nikolaus Beck	Università della Svizzera Italiana
Bruno S. Frey	CREMA
Patrick Haack	University of Lausanne
Claus D. Jacobs	University of Bern
Margit Osterloh	CREMA
Sebastian Raisch	University of Geneva
Katja Rost	University of Zurich
Andreas Scherer	University of Zurich
David Seidl	University of Zurich
Antoinette Weibel	University of St. Gallen

4. Participants

Participant	Chair	University
Benedetta Abagnale	Nikolaus Beck	Università della Svizzera Italiana
Merve Gül Barut	Nikolaus Beck	Università della Svizzera Italiana
Yuliya Navrotska	Nikolaus Beck	Università della Svizzera Italiana
Lionel Saul	Patrick Haack	University of Lausanne
Ekaterina Stepaniak	Patrick Haack	University of Lausanne
Emamdeen Fohim	Claus D. Jacobs	University of Bern
Maria Riniker	Claus D. Jacobs	University of Bern
Charlotte Traeger	Claus D. Jacobs	University of Bern
Magdalena Waeber	Claus D. Jacobs	University of Bern
Raphaëlle Delmotte	Sebastian Raisch	University of Geneva
Luis Hillebrand	Sebastian Raisch	University of Geneva
Niccolò Armandola	Katja Rost	University of Zurich
Jan Danko	Katja Rost	University of Zurich
Simon Egli	Katja Rost	University of Zurich
Jonas Geweke	Katja Rost	University of Zurich
Dana Entenza	Andreas Scherer	University of Zurich
Roman Gibel	Andreas Scherer	University of Zurich
David Sieber	Andreas Scherer	University of Zurich
Dorothee Winkler	Andreas Scherer	University of Zurich
Benjamin Grossmann-Hensel	David Seidl	University of Zurich
Jing You	David Seidl	University of Zurich
Sara Fontanet	Antoinette Weibel	University of St. Gallen
Pascal Nonnen	Antoinette Weibel	University of St. Gallen
Rebecca Tillery	Antoinette Weibel	University of St. Gallen

5. Program

Wednesday, September 25th

19.00	Optional Dinner	Restaurant Domino Schwanengasse 3, 3011 Bern For early arrivals and at participants' own expense.
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Thursday, September 26th

08.40	Meeting time	UniS, Room B-102
8.45	Welcome	Claus D. Jacobs
9.10	Short Slot	Rebecca Tillery «The quest for the best(paid)? Introducing a Calvinist-based Model of CEO Pay»
09.40	Short Slot	Jonas Geweke «How Persistent Was Housing Wealth in Preindustrial Cities? 300 Years of Homeownership Mobility in the City-State of Basel, 1500-1800»
10.10	Short Slot	Simon Egli «The Political Economy of Cantonal Banks: How Politicians Deal with Higher Revenues from Public Assets»
10.40	Coffee Break	
11.00	Short Slot	Maria Riniker «From Idea to Impact: How Can Crowdfunding Shape the Organizational Structures of Social Enterprises?»
11.30	Short Slot	Benedetta Abagnale «Crafting a Market: The Emergence of The Micro-Brewing Industry in Ticino, Switzerland»
12.00	Short Slot	Lionel Saul «How to best configure future-making practices to foster long-term thinking?»
12.30	Lunch	UniS Bistro Schanzeneckstrasse 1, 3001 Bern
14.00	Keynote & Discussion	Prof. Dr. Andreas Scherer «Challenges for Academic Freedom in Times of Conflict and Polarization» Moderation: Emamdeen Fohim
15.00	Coffee Break	
15.15	Short Slot	Charlotte Traeger «Media Framing of Refugees in Switzerland: Taking a Microhistory Approach»
15.45	Short Slot	David Sieber «Companies as political actors in violent conflicts: How and why MNEs react to a war»
16.15	Short Slot	Benjamin Grossmann-Hensel «Opening ethnography? Reflections on the ideals of the field»
16.45	Break	
18.15	Social activity	Meet at the Bundesplatz Bern
20.00	Dinner	Restaurant Rosengarten Alter Aargauerstalden 31b, 3006 Bern

Friday, September 27th

8.45	Long Slot	Sara Fontanet «Aristotelian Rhetoric as a Driver of Moral Organizational Change: How Logos, Pathos, and Ethos can Initiate, Scale Up, and Sustain Moral Change in Organizations» Discussant: Roman Gibel
09.30	Long Slot	Merve Gül Barut «Valorizing Traditionalist Products through Singularization» Discussant: Jan Danko
10.15	Coffee Break	
10.30	Short Slot	Raphaelle Delmotte «From Uniformity to Uniqueness: Exploring the Dichotomous Effects of AI in Management»
11.00	Short Slot	Ekaterina Stepaniak «Unintended Consequences of Menstrual Leave»
11.30	Short Slot	Jing You «Strategic Categorization: How Different Strategy Actors Shape the Formation of a Society-level Category»
12.00	Conclusion	Claus D. Jacobs
12.30	Lunch	Restaurant National Hirschengraben 24, 3011 Bern
14.00	End	

6. Abstracts

Rebecca Tillery:

The quest for the best(paid)? Introducing a Calvinist-based Model of CEO Pay

In recent years, public outrage has intensified over the appropriateness of CEO compensation. Despite growing concerns regarding fairness, business leaders feel compelled to raise CEO salaries to remain globally competitive. The German Society for the Protection of Securities Holders most recently acknowledged this tension between public moral institutions and business needs in their press release accompanying their 2023 annual executive remuneration study.

The existing literature attempts to reconcile these conflicting perspectives through normative theories of distributive justice. Most prominently, defenders of exorbitant CEO salaries deploy Just Desert Theory (Mankiw, 2010) to suggest that current salaries reflect the value business leaders contribute to society. While Just Desert theory provides clear guidelines for determining the value of rewards to ensure they are just, often using a utilitarian analysis of equilibrium price, there has been little exploration into whether these guidelines indeed contributed to the rise in CEO salaries over the past few decades.

This paper explores the mechanisms that drive CEO compensation. We deploy a historical analysis informed by critical realism to shed light on how CEO pay is determined. The findings indicate that value circles, rather than market forces, are the primary drivers when determining CEO pay. They further indicate that these circles' moral intuition concerning CEO pay are not rooted in principles of Just Desert but in Calvinist ideas.

This paper contributes to the literature on distributive justice by highlighting an alternative mechanism of CEO pay value determination, extending our knowledge beyond the assumptions of Just Desert Theory. We provide a normative framework reconciling the tension between public demands for fairness and the perceived business necessity of high CEO compensation.

Jonas Geweke:

How Persistent Was Housing Wealth in Preindustrial Cities?

300 Years of Homeownership Mobility in the City-State of Basel, 1500-1800

Research has shown a steady increase in wealth inequality in preindustrial Western Europe. However, much less is known about the development of wealth mobility, limiting researchers' understanding of how micro-level dynamics, such as inheritance practices and marital sorting, contributed to preindustrial wealth inequality. This paper addresses this gap by studying homeownership and housing wealth mobility in the city-state of Basel across three centuries (1500-1800). Although homeownership is just one dimension of wealth, it was historically the most significant component, fundamentally shaping families' income and investment opportunities. Using a unique genealogical database of over 300,000 individuals, we apply linear probability and rank-rank correlation analyses to find that grandfathers' and fathers' homeownership and housing wealth ranks significantly predict their descendants' outcomes. We explore three potential transmission mechanisms—inheritance, assortative mating, and political power—to explain the persistence of homeownership wealth across three generations. Our preliminary findings show that all three channels significantly influence homeownership and housing wealth outcomes, adding explanatory power beyond family, neighbourhood, and occupation fixed effects. Finally, we observe that mobility rates were higher in the sixteenth century but stabilized during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We argue that the Reformation initially increased mobility opportunities for a wider range of families before an emerging elite gradually restricted access to the housing market.

Simon Egli:

The Political Economy of Cantonal Banks: How Politicians Deal with Higher Revenues from Public Assets

Cantonal banks have become a boon (and in a few cases, money sinks) to their cantons thanks to their strong growth and increasing profit margins after the banking crisis in the 1990s. Within two decades, net flows from cantonal banks to cantons increased from 0.5% to 3% of total cantonal income. In addition, cantons have sold parts of their cantonal bank equity to realize a capital gains. What have cantons done with this sudden increase in funding? I assume that in the context of increasing tax competition between cantons, the money has been used to reduce tax burdens both on individuals and firms. Corresponding with standard assumption of public finance, I make further assumptions: First, right-center majorities in cantonal parliaments have favored lowering taxes over increasing expenditures and that left-center majorities have done the opposite. Second, right-center majorities prioritize lowering taxes on well-to-do individuals and the corporate income tax compared to left-center majorities which are more likely to favor reducing taxes on the average person. Using a dataset spanning the years 1960-2020 and 24 cantons, I find that (1) increases in bank dividends as well as capital sales are associated with subsequent reduction of personal income taxes, (2) that left-center majorities are more likely to decrease personal income taxes, both on average and high earners, than right-center majorities, and (3) that right-center majorities are more likely to reduce corporate income taxes. I discuss the findings in the context of the virtues and pitfalls of public ownership of capital assets.

Maria Riniker:

From Idea to Impact: How Can Crowdfunding Shape the Organizational Structures of Social Enterprises?

Since 2013, crowdfunding for sustainable and social enterprises has gained increasing scholarly interest (Hussain, Di Pietro, & Rosati, 2023; Lehner & Nicholls, 2014), and the potential of crowdfunding to finance social ventures is widely accepted in the literature (Calic & Mosakowski, 2016; Lehner & Nicholls, 2014). Previous studies have examined the information that social entrepreneurs share to persuade critical resource holders and have identified the key factors for achieving their funding goals. However, there is limited understanding of how crowdfunding impacts the development of a nascent social enterprise beyond resource mobilization. This study aims to answer this question to deepen our understanding of the long-term impact of crowdfunding on emerging social enterprises. Crowdfunding is a communicative process that demands entrepreneurs to be active on the crowdfunding platform, social media, and offline events to mobilize their network. We draw on the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) theory to grasp how this communicative process impacts the inner workings of a social enterprise and shapes its organizational structures. It is argued that crowdfunding can accelerate organizational communication and pressure nascent social enterprises to clarify their social mission, and speak in the name of their beneficiaries, values, and figures that have not yet been studied.

Following the Montreal School branch of CCO research, this study conducts a ventriloquial analysis (Cooren, Matte, Benoit-Barne, & Brummans, 2013; Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro, & Bodor, 2006) of communicative events in online communication and interviews. The study aims to contribute to the social entrepreneurship literature by shedding light on how nascent social enterprises act under the pressure of fast and frequent public communication and how their organizational structures emerge in this setting. It will also contribute to the theoretical and methodological discussion by introducing the Montreal School in Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) and ventriloquial analysis to social entrepreneurship research.

Benedetta Abagnale:
Crafting a Market: The Emergence of The Micro-Brewing Industry in Ticino, Switzerland

The phenomenon of the emergence of new organizational forms within a specific industry has long gained significant attention from both scholars and practitioners. This study delves into the factors driving the establishment of new specialist organizations (microbreweries) in the Swiss beer industry, with a particular focus on the canton of Ticino, which has traditionally been dominated by wine production and has no local beer culture.

Our study investigates the underlying mechanisms that have driven this phenomenon through semi-structured interviews with Ticino microbrewery owners, managers, and brewers, supplemented by online articles from Swiss newspapers and beer-related websites.

We discovered that microbreweries are primarily founded on entrepreneurial passion, rather than unsatisfied and unmet customer needs. This approach calls into question traditional economic theories about customer demands, as well as marketing theories about the establishment of new markets with completely new products. Furthermore, collaboration among Ticino's microbreweries emphasizes a community-centric approach, which questions many traditional economic models' competitive assumptions. Specifically, this raises questions about resource partitioning theory, which holds that new organizations emerge to fill specific market gaps left by generalist producers.

Ticino entrepreneurs are very passionate and committed to creating distinct craft brewing identities, educating customers, utilizing and integrating local resources and ingredients, and cultivating a supportive community. We thus identified several dimensions driving the emergence of microbreweries in Ticino. These findings suggest that the Swiss craft beer industry represents a more complex and intricate model of organizational emergence, influenced by cultural and community dynamics with entrepreneurial passion being the foundation upon which the other dimensions are built. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of cultural entrepreneurship and industry evolution, advocating for a more comprehensive theoretical framework that considers these multifaceted dynamics.

Lionel Saul:
How to best configure future-making practices to foster long-term thinking?

Organizations suffer from short-termism at various levels, which prevents them from addressing grand challenges (Gümüşay et al., 2022; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). Future-making practices, "the specific ways in which actors produce and enact the future" (Wenzel et al., 2020, p. 1443), have been recognized as being pivotal to helping organizations master long-term thinking (Fergnani, 2022a; Marinković et al., 2022; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015; Wenzel et al., 2020). The value of future-making practices, such as corporate foresight, lies in "achieving preparedness in navigating the future that will occur by having simulated futures that may have occurred" (Fergnani, 2022b, p. 852). However, we currently lack knowledge of how the different future-making practices of an organization interact and if they complete and support each other to enact the future (Wenzel, 2022, p. 849) and, consequently, how they can help organizations to foster long-term thinking to tackle grand challenges. Thus, this study will explore "How to best configure future-making practices to foster long-term thinking?" This paper will run a fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis based on the different future-making practices from the literature, such as the ones based on corporate foresight (Fergnani, 2022a), scenario planning (Healey & Hodgkinson, 2024) or utopias (Gümüşay & Reinecke, 2022). This study advocates that interactions between different future-making practices may be the key to fostering long-term thinking to tackle grand challenges (Wenzel, 2022; Wenzel et al., 2020). Qualitative comparative analysis employs the principles of set theory to examine the connections between causal attributes (different future-making practices) and outcomes (foster long-term thinking to tackle grand challenges) (Misangyi et al., 2017). A fuzzy set approach, which allows to assume of a spectrum of possible attributes' values (Fainshmidt et al., 2020), will be used to better capture fine-grained differences in degrees of membership implementation (low/medium/high) (Greckhamer et al., 2018).

Charlotte Traeger:

Media Framing of Refugees in Switzerland: Taking a Microhistory Approach

Framing, understood as the process and practice of meaning negotiation and construction, plays a crucial role in shaping the perception of social problems and their corresponding policy responses. To explore how the media frame the influx of refugees in Switzerland and the policy responses, we employ a micro-historical approach. We focus on two recent occasions of refugee influxes: the 2015/2016 Syrian refugee influx and the 2022/2023 Ukrainian refugee influx to Switzerland. Through an interpretative, comparative case study based on expert interviews, press articles, and press releases, we shed light on the processes and practices of media framing in Switzerland and their consequences for public policy.

By situating these cases within the broader history of refugee framing in Switzerland, we identify patterns between contemporary and past practices. Our analysis reveals an oscillation between framing refugees as an opportunity that enriches the country socially, economically, and culturally, and as a threat to national identity and societal stability. We observe a dichotomy in how refugees are portrayed: as personalized individuals from Europe or as a group from outside Europe, perceived as an overwhelming flow imposing a financial burden on the country.

We discuss the implications of such binary framing for policy responses and present our contributions to framing theory, research on social problems, and public policy.

David Sieber:

Companies as political actors in violent conflicts: How and why MNEs react to a war

Multinational enterprises (MNEs) are increasingly active in contexts characterised by violent conflict. These contexts not only entail financial and humanitarian risks but also public expectations to mitigate harm and even help resolve the conflict. In the case of the ongoing war in Ukraine, a public debate ensued about how foreign companies can legitimately do business in Russia, given its role as the invading aggressor. Many of the MNEs operating in Ukraine took on humanitarian and diplomatic responsibilities.

Despite the significance of these developments, the Business and Peace literature fails to satisfactorily account for these behaviours. The reasons are that the empirical literature (1) has not sufficiently covered interstate wars and (2) largely ignores the deliberative processes in which MNEs engage to discuss and legitimise their actions.

I contribute to closing this research gap by conducting a qualitative analysis of media reports about Swiss MNEs operating in Russia and Ukraine before and during the war. A considerable part of the public debate about the presence and responsibilities of MNEs in the current conflict took place in the traditional media, with Swiss MNEs actively engaging to legitimise their actions. To capture this phenomenon, I gather articles published in three leading Swiss German newspapers, spanning the period from just before the Euromaidan (November 2013) to July 2024. I select a sub-sample for in-depth line-by-line coding according to their length as well as their reach based on social media reactions. I contribute to the literature by showing how media-based public discourse constructs special responsibilities for MNEs in interstate conflicts.

This project is a pre-study to test this methodological approach for a larger project and is currently a work in progress. Preliminary findings from a test sample will be presented at the OMTF.

**Benjamin Grossmann-Hensel:
Opening ethnography? Reflections on the ideals of the field**

Recent calls and pressures from research councils and professional societies advocate for an extended use of qualitative data. Addressing such calls and pressures has methodological implications that may shift the ideals guiding qualitative analysis in management and organization studies. We examine these implications for ethnographic data, where such extensions are typically considered problematic because of the assumptions about its epistemological basis. Our paper identifies and juxtaposes these assumptions with recent examples of published ethnographic studies. Despite the ideals of immersive research guiding organizational ethnography that present challenges to its more extended use, we note that these ideals vary in practice along two dimensions: distance from the original data collection and distance from the original research questions. We discuss the epistemological and ethical grounds against extending the uses of ethnographic datasets and specify conditions in which these challenges can be surmounted. We generate three trajectories for expanding the use of ethnographic data which we label reanalysis studies, revisitation studies, and studies using qualitative data repositories. More extensive uses of qualitative data offer exciting promises for the ethnographic method, for research participants, and for the scope of research on management and organizations. However, the potential of such innovation hinges on a holistic reflection on the evolving ideals of the field.

**Sara Fontanet:
Aristotelian Rhetoric as a Driver of Moral Organizational Change: How Logos, Pathos, and Ethos can Initiate, Scale Up, and Sustain Moral Change in Organizations**

Driven by the ambition to transform their organization as a force for social good, a rising number of employees have started grassroots movements to drive positive change from within their workplace (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; Scully & Segal, 2002; One Young World, 2022). Surprisingly, research examining how this rising phenomenon contributes to shaping organizational moral boundaries is still relatively scarce. In this paper, we build on the theoretical framework of organizational moral change by Solinger et al. (2020) and expand it by bringing in Aristotelian deliberative rhetoric. Specifically, we explain how logos, pathos, and ethos appeals enable each phase of a moral change process: 1) *initiating*, 2) *scaling up*, and 3) *securing* moral change (cf. Solinger et al., 2020, p.510). We argue that it is by opening up, widening, and integrating the moral space that rhetoric contributes to bringing about a moral change. Theoretically, anchoring our perspective in Aristotle's moral philosophy, we demonstrate the importance of moral character in moving an organization and its members closer to the morally good life (Aristotle, 2004). Practically, our model offers a set of rhetorical tools that could be used to reduce moral muteness and establish durable patterns of morality in companies.

Merve Gül Barut:
Valorizing Traditionalist Products through Singularization

Traditionalist products, which are deeply rooted in established traditional production practices, frequently face challenges when modernist alternatives are introduced into the same market. Although research has indicated enduring demand for traditionalist products, how they uphold their market value in response to modernist challenges is not well understood.

To address this gap, we studied the market for Turkish cymbals in the 1980s, a remarkable case of resistance to modernization—where machine-made methods sought to replace handmade—by the valorization of traditionalist products as singularities. Our qualitative data analysis reveals a process model involving multiple actors and stages. The producer singularized the products by bringing incalculable features to the fore, intermediaries desingularized them to prepare their transition to the users, and the users resingularized the products, harnessing them for creative self-expression. Given the products' movement from one actor to another and the reiteration of this process over time, their meaning was reconstructed and shared around their singularity as a basis for valuation. Our findings shed light on the dynamics of co-constructing product singularity as a means of valorizing old traditions, thus enabling the resilience of traditionalism against modernism in markets.

Raphaëlle Delmotte:
From Uniformity to Uniqueness: Exploring the Dichotomous Effects of AI in Management

As the use of artificial intelligence spreads through organizations and society, two seemingly contradictory tendencies are observed: some authors claim that AI tends to standardize outputs, preferences, processes, and behaviors, while others argue that AI has the potential to increase idiosyncratic outputs, democratize creativity, and promote the expression of plural voices. Existing literature on AI in management has documented AI's role in enhancing efficiency and consistency in organizational processes, contributing to the standardization narrative. Simultaneously, research also highlights AI's capacity to augment human creativity and innovation. Motivated by the need to reconcile these contrasting perspectives, our paper aims to build a theoretical framework to categorize both dynamics and shed light on their boundaries and interactions. This framework will contribute to the existing AI in management literature by providing a nuanced understanding of AI's complex outcomes, offering insights into the effects of AI on standardization and plurality, creativity and innovation. The contribution of our paper will be twofold: for the AI in management literature, our paper will offer a comprehensive framework for studying AI's complex outcomes. For practitioners, our insights will help to guide the strategic implementation of AI.

**Ekaterina Stepaniak:
Unintended Consequences of Menstrual Leave**

Menstruation concerns many people of working age and significantly impacts their lives, yet it remains a taboo topic in the workplace. However, recently practitioners and researchers showed growing interest in the menstrual leave policy, which allows menstruating individuals to take days off work in case of debilitating symptoms. Although it has been adopted in several companies around the world, scientific literature on this topic is very scarce. To better understand the possible consequences of this policy adoption, our research explores Swiss employers' attitudes towards menstrual leave, its potential to cause discrimination against women, and a way to prevent it. Specifically, we investigate whether educating HR professionals about menstrual-related symptoms (MRS) can prevent discrimination and if the perceived unfairness of the policy explains the relationship between menstrual leave and discrimination.

We are conducting a survey experiment with HR professionals from Swiss French companies. Participants imagine working in a company that recently adopted either a sick leave (control condition) or a menstrual leave (experimental condition) policy. In a third (informed) condition, participants receive additional information about MRS, including prevalence, severity, and links to chronic illness. They then evaluate an imaginary female employee based on her age, position, tenure, objectives achieved, days off taken, and manager feedback. Participants assess her commitment to work, competence, morality, agency, and promotion probability, and indicate their perception of the leave's fairness. Additionally, they are asked if they and their supervisors would support the leave policy. We hypothesize that evaluations and perceived unfairness will be lower in the experimental condition compared to the control and informed conditions. This study aims to inform organizations about the potential risks of implementing a menstrual leave policy and ways to mitigate these risks.

**Jing You:
Strategic Categorization: How Different Strategy Actors Shape the Formation of A
Society-level Category**

Extant research in category dynamics has focused on the producers within the category who strategically engage in category construction but less considered the actors outside the focal category through a lens of the whole category system. In this paper, we examine different market category actors' strategic efforts to navigate the ambiguous and contested meanings of a nascent goal-derived category. Through a longitudinal qualitative study of the recent development of the "New Chinese Domestic Products" category (Xin guohuo), we find that the category ideals changed over time and evolved into a stable ideals structure. Moreover, we find that category members as insiders and their oppositional incumbents as outsiders collaborated to construct that ideals structure which affects boundary expansion and contraction and eventually leads to categorical deepening. Based on these findings, we generate a process model that depicts the dynamics of category actors' collective efforts to promote ideals elaboration and develop a meaning structure for the nascent goal-derived category. Unpacking the strategic actions of new category members and incumbents reveals how ongoing interactions among these actors elaborate the category ideals structure to navigate ambiguous meanings. Our research also unveils the dark side of inter-category collaborative dynamics, characterized by covert activities under the bridging label, which undermine categorical goals. This study contributes to the literature on category dynamics by providing insights into inter-category dynamics and the evolving mechanisms of meaning structures. In addition, this study extends knowledge of different actors' roles and their interplay in strategic categorization.