Experiencing Communality in Collective Activity:

Four Ways to Generate Sameness in Differences

Introduction for ML SI entitled "Experiencing communality and togetherness at work:

Phenomenologies of a shared existence"

Ann L Cunliffe

(FGV-EAESP, Sao Paulo, Brazil)

ann.cunliffe@fgv.br

Ella Hafermalz

(Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

e.w.hafermalz@vu.nl

Aurélie Leclercq-Vandelannoitte (CNRS, LEM, IESEG School of Management, University of Lille, France)

a.leclercq@ieseg.fr

Lucas Introna

(Lancaster University, UK)

l.introna@lancaster.ac.uk

François-Xavier de Vaujany

(Université Paris Dauphine-PSL, DRM, France)

devaujany@dauphine.fr

Thijs Willems

(Singapore University of Technology and Design, Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, Singapore)

thijs_willems@sutd.edu.sg

Abstract

In this introductory article of the special issue "Experiencing communality and togetherness at work: Phenomenologies of a shared existence", we suggest exploring the issue of sameness and differences at stake in collective activity. In a post-pandemic world of work, characterized

by hyper-individualization and fragmentation, a weak sense of co-presence, liquidity, a widespread distrust of social institutions and geo-political tensions, communality is less than ever self-evident as a given. In this context, we ask the following question: How can we experience communality together in collective activity while acknowledging our often profound differences? This essay and Special Issue address this question by investigating how sameness can be experienced in and through difference. Specifically, we do so by focusing on commons and the process of communalization as it has been explored in Management and Organization Studies (MOS). We propose a typology in which we specify four perspectives shedding light on four experiences of communality in collective activity through and beyond differences. This typology offers a lens to present the articles selected for this special issue, as well as generating implications for research and education in MOS.

1. Introduction

Commons, communalization processes, and the constitution of meaningful collectives are topics that have been increasingly present in scholarly debates and in society at large (e.g., Bollier and Helfrich, 2012; Brandtner, et al., 2023). The notion of the commons is based on collective interest, cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual exchange (Springer, 2016), and while collective harmony is often assumed as given, it seems less self-evident in our practices: experience today is marked by conflict, difference, fake news, inequalities, and chaos, rather than any sense of togetherness. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our sense of togetherness, with enhanced tensions between individual and communal interests, and blurred boundaries between public and private spaces (Cunliffe, 2022).

In our post-pandemic world of work, as many knowledge workers are working remotely, often through digital means (Thompson, 2019; Vandaele and Piasna, 2023; Vine, 2023), the meaning of being together, communally, has changed along with the way we share, collaborate, discuss, interact, exchange and involve ourselves in organizations including our own (e.g., Aroles and Küpers, 2022; Gigauri, 2020). While employees are obviously more technologically connected (e.g., with cloud-based video conferencing service), only a few actually feel *truly* connected and tied to their work, their team, and their organization (Accenture, 2023). And this is all taking place in the context of the so-called 'great resignation,' where 40% of the global workforce is thinking about quitting their jobs (Sull et al., 2022).

Thus, in a post-pandemic world of work, characterized by hyper-individualization and fragmentation (Mancinelli, 2020), a weak sense of co-presence (Taskin, et al.,, 2023), liquidity (Clegg and Pinha e Cunha, 2019; Koksvik and Richards, 2021; Izak, et al., 2023), a widespread distrust of social institutions (Koksvik and Richards, 2021) and geo-political tensions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Bergström, 2022), communality is less than ever self-evident as a given. It no longer seems to be an obvious part of our social activity or institutions, at least to the degree it did in the past. The integrity of the self and the sense of a sustained and shared purpose have been corroded by the growing flexibilities, disruptions, and uncertainties of the modern world of work. Our sense of community and co-presence has been weakened as a result of increasingly mobile and flexible human relations (Taskin et al, 2023), that are henceforth marked by "*differences*", more than "*sameness*". Collective action is obviously, and more than ever, in crisis (Aroles, et al., 2020; Kornberger et al., 2020; Taskin et al, 2023).

In this context, has the organization as a *shared achievement of collective goals* reached an impasse? How can *we experience communality together in collective activity* while acknowledging our often profound differences? How do people with conflicting goals or beliefs exist alongside each other, develop a sense of co-presence, succeed in achieving common goals,

and create a sense of togetherness, without marginalizing and excluding others? This essay and Special Issue aims to address these questions by investigating how sameness can be experienced in and through difference. Specifically, we do so by focusing on commons and the process of communalization as it has been explored in Management and Organization Studies (MOS).

Commons relates to "goods, spaces, or entities that are *shared* and governed by *a community* rather than any one individual or organization" (Brandtner, et al., 2023, p. 1), while communalization is the process or way in which something becomes owned or shared by a community. As such, these notions have been studied in a wide range of contexts and from various standpoints including politics, land use, technology, knowledge production, and organizations. Research has also gained traction in MOS (e.g., Benkler, 2017; Cnossen et al., 2020; De Angelis, 2017; Endrissat & Islam, 2022; Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020; Resch et al., 2021; Waters-Lynch and Duff, 2021). As we stated in our Call for Papers[i], communalization and community as shared lived experience may take many forms and be imagined in many ways. This raises questions around how community may be perceived, experienced, and enacted in work, research, and learning.

Underpinning studies of communality and communalization in MOS research are two central notions – *sameness* and *difference,* which may co-exist in a dialectical way. A great deal of MOS literature implicitly considers *sameness* as an essential ingredient of communalization processes and the constitution of meaningful collectives. Organizations and organizing processes presuppose an idea of communality and social cohesion, achieved through some sort of *sameness*. For instance, organizational culture is defined as the *shared values, norms and practices* of a group of people; organizational change and reorganization are known to require a *shared mindset, cognitive schemes, agenda, goal*; likewise, coordination in organizations relies on a *shared focus or task*. In fact, the term organization[ii] itself assumes a sort of pre-

existing and obvious collective action, action that is illustrated by having a group of different people create a *common ground* from which organization or organizing can happen.

Existing literature has thus privileged sameness – in the context of communality and communalization – over difference. Likewise, philosophies, in particular political philosophies and phenomenologies, have long explored different forms and experiences of communality - in particular through the notion of sameness. Yet, as Ricoeur (1990) observed, we are both the same (as part of humanity as a whole) and different (unique beings with our own history and intentions). Therefore, while a degree of sameness is needed to achieve communality, togetherness, solidarity and collective harmony, there will always be differences. Extending existing work in MOS, our goal in the introduction of this special issue is to offer an alternative view, echoing the evolutions of our societies, of our digital age and of the world of work, by grasping communality through the dialectic or process of sameness/difference. In order to tackle abovementioned changes of communality*,* we aim to provide in this introductory article a way to conceptually and empirically frame the idea of *experiencing and achieving communality through differences.*

Our premise, therefore, is that it is impossible to imagine and generate communality without acknowledging and even celebrating difference. Indeed, philosophers and organizational scholars have recognised for long that entwined in building a collective lies a sense of alterity (Habermas, 1979), of recognizing productive differences (Cunliffe and Locke, 2020; de Vaujany and Heimstädt, 2022), and building on generative conflicts (Follett, 1924[iii]). Exploring sameness, difference and multiplicity is therefore critical to communalization in work and in learning. This issue has been addressed in various ways within *Management Learning*. Beech, et al., (2021) argue that learning occurs in micro-communities as one encounters difference and collaborates with people who have similar experiences. And given the journal's roots, Perriton and Reynolds (2018) reflect on how the philosophy of exploring difference that is

embedded in Critical Management Education has been eroded by 'structural realities in UK education' (p.532).

We argue here that communality requires such a difference and multiplicity, which, in itself, requires fragile attentional focuses. Thus, communalization processes and the constitution of meaningful collectives today require "*generating sameness through differences*". Basically, what generates the growth of togetherness (the commons itself) is differential. For example, our exchange of emails, the meetings we did to work on this article, their frequency, distances, and the variety of ideas contributed to produce both the paper, the peculiarities inside of it as well as some sense of what it should and should not be about. As illustrated more generally by our special issue, these differences can be between rhythms, practices, narrative events and key moments at stake in the life of organizing (e.g., meetings, projects, recruitments…).

To that end, we propose a way of making sense of communality *through and beyond differences*, based on the premise of the commons as a relational space. We propose in particular a typology, in which we specify four perspectives shedding light on four experiences of communality in collective activity *through and beyond difference* (Section 2). This typology is embedded in alternative and critical conceptions of commons that describe commons as processual, social, and inherently relational (see Brandtner, et al., 2023). As such, it emphasizes a processual account of communality built through and with differences (rather than against them), and therefore *a fragile accomplishment always in the making*. This way of thinking offers a lens to present the articles selected for this special issue (Section 3) as well as generating implications for research and education in MOS. We suggest practical implications and an agenda, where "differences/differenciality" are the heart of a vision for future discussions about commons and communality. In particular, the four perspectives we specify necessarily have implications in the context of the Anthropocene and grand ecological challenges, as well as for the future world of work and the digital society we all contribute to

6

build, through our decisions, IT usages and behaviours, *through and beyond* our differences (Section 4).

2. Making sense of communality through and beyond "*differences*"

The view we offer of a processual account of communality, *always in the making, as a fragile accomplishment.* echoes more recent approaches of commons, that have gone beyond a property or resource-based view to better grasp their eminent *relational –* by nature *ongoing, evolutive and processual* - dimension (e.g., Brandtner, et al., 2023; Harvey, 2012; Williams, 2018). For instance, De Angelis (2017, p. 11) urges us to develop our understanding of the ongoing interactions in the communing process, while Gibson-Graham et al. (2016) have likewise called for an analysis of the commons through the "social process of communing". Harvey (2012, p. 73) similarly sees in commons "an unstable and malleable social relation." These accounts have put forward that "a theory of meaningful social interaction, not a theory of property or natural resources, needs to be at the foundation of understanding the commons" (Brandtner, et al., 2023, p. 5).

The typology we suggest aims to contribute to this line of reasoning by considering the notion of difference and differentiality in this ongoing relational process. We contend that this communing process builds on difference, more than mere sameness – and that difference is crucial in such a process. Thus, the alternative set of modalities proposed below resonates particularly well with process philosophy which, even though "everything always is in becoming", is primarily interested in how a sense of temporary stability is reached. Communality – as a fragile, ongoing accomplishment always in the making – relies on various types of activities, practices, flows, described in our typology, as suggested partly by the articles comprised in this special issue[iv].

In particular, we sketch four perspectives for the study of communality in organizations and organizing. These perspectives are drawn from our understanding of phenomenology and, more specifically, from the very philosophical move of phenomenologies to post-phenomenologies (de Vaujany, et al., 2023)[v]. (Post)phenomenology addresses the need for a contextual and relational understanding of communality, specifically by giving attention to both the subjective *and* the intersubjective experience of (organizational) life. As such, it provides a particularly useful lens to look at sameness, difference, and more importantly, how sameness and difference are intertwined in the process of communalization. Some of these (post)phenomenologies are explored in the MOS literature. All of them go beyond an intuitive, usual approach of treating commons as resources, properties or things immediately shared, like common values, gestures, places, or spaces. Instead, these four perspectives highlight multiple temporalities and differences that are all constitutive of some sort of *differentiality.* By differentiality, we mean the gaps, in-betweenness of events happening in the world, a contrast at stake in all experience of the world (see Julien, 2012).

Perspective/type 1 [Narrative] – The first perspective is the **hermeneutic process of individuation within a community,** which is about becoming oneself within a community. That is, the very process of people making sense of the world and elaborating a common language and narrative about it is at the heart of understanding ourselves as unique (individuation) and part of a community. Here, the 'I', 'We' and 'They' are all instantiated and individuated in the open, shared hermeneutic experience of the world as given, immediate (see e.g., Ricoeur, 1985 and his conclusion about our present in crisis, or Cunliffe, 2022). This perspective is extremely important for a world of management where one is expected to conform to roles, evaluated against performance criteria, or engage in emotional labour – where achieving or enacting one's own sense of identity, of being oneself and addressing differences within a commons, can be challenging (Cunliffe and Locke, 2020). It is also at the heart of learning processes,

which are both enabled and constrained by identity practices and experiences of sameness and difference (Beech et al., 2021).

Perspective/type 2 [Sensorial] - The second perspective is that of ***inter-corporeality within communalization*** (see Beyes et al, 2022; Dale and Latham, 2015; Küpers, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1964; Willems, 2018). It means that communalization happens from our embodied relationship with the world, which is always both singular and collective, and always before and beyond language. For Merleau-Ponty, we understand ourselves through the actions, feelings, and experiences of others: inter-corporeally through our bodies. We are immersed in a common sensory order, a sensory imperative (Juhlin and Holt, 2022). To act, we need to feel and to be felt by a common body. This world is much more pre-reflexive than the former one (hermeneutic process of individuation). This common body is not thought and hardly thinkable. 'I' just feel that this other person can do that, feel more or less that, etc. This inter-corporeality is more or less specific and always multiple. The more I act with the same people and things, in the same environment, the more local inter-corporeity arise. Yet, this is as marked by difference as much as sameness. It is always from *my* body that I perceive and sense the world so that communality is an approximation, a fragile accomplishment, more than a given. And the diversity of environments itself feeds various common bodies my selves are part of and likely to act with. Of course, this sensorium is more or less erased by new tools, firstly the cybernetical semiosis Merleau-Ponty saw as looming ahead in the 50s and 60s, and now a more general digital semiosis (de Vaujany and Mitev, 2017). Either altering, extending, dissimulating, or simply interweaving further subjectivation, this lens has been the topic of many phenomenological and post-phenomenological contributions.

Perspective/type 3 [Pragmatic] - The third perspective is the one we call ***inquiry-based communality***. Here communalization means identifying shared concerns and co-problematizing through experimentation, which feeds a community of inquiry. Individuals and

instruments are wrapped into a movement of inquiry, from problematization to solutions, from indetermination to determination (Dewey, 1918, 1922, 1938; 1998; Lorino, 2018; Zask, 2015). Here, differences and even conflicts are highly generative for the communalization process, which is driven by problems and concerns. There are no pre-defined differences (e.g., essential individual differences). The very movement of inquiry, the becoming of activities, the concerns at stake in the world, drive the process. The satisfaction of the pragmatic exploration itself leads to shared roles and inclusion. Conflicts, multiple points of views, tense activities, divergent interests, feed the inquiry. Divergences are energy for the process. Conflicts are life, something which is shared with the other three perspectives (but here with a more pragmatic and experimental focus). The common builds (when necessary) the provisional harmony of all the people and things individuated in the flow. Maintaining openness to new ideas, people, places, things likely to be wrapped into the process of "communing", a process that is central for the continuity and effectiveness of inquiry (de Vaujany and Heimstäedt, 2022). *"Commoning" involves opening and re-opening continuously the time-space of collective activity.* Of course, numerous phenomenologies and most of all, post- or anti-phenomenologies, are close to this notion, e.g., that of the late Merleau-Ponty (Revel, 2015; de Vaujany, 2002), but also those of Ingold (Mousavi, et al., 2021) or Foucault (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2023).

Perspective/type 4 [Cosmological] - The fourth and last perspective we would like to introduce here is that of the ***vital process of communality*** built namely from the biological and vitalist philosophy of Nietzsche (Stiegler, 2021). Here, communalization is much more in an abandon in the movement of life itself, something happening cosmologically beyond and before any selves, any so-called humanity and subjectivity, any attempt at controlling or even experimenting in or with the world. Nietzsche was deeply influenced by the biological knowledge and biological philosophies of his time. His thought (and this is a common point

with pragmatism and process philosophy) was strongly influenced by debates about evolutionism and ecological process. For him, *living beings were both assimilative (incorporating flows in many ways) and resistant (building pockets, lücke, bubbles) to cultivate their specificities.* As such, he theorises both the collectivities selecting and the individuals resisting. Commons could be seen as the in-betweenness of this process, the relationality at stake in it. At the end, life as an open, total process of becoming, is what prevails over any local entities and subjectivations. To survive, any system needs to cultivate a diversity far beyond what is needed. It has to host a diversity as close as possible to the diversity of the world. It has to be the world, to ingest as much as possible the world. There is and there needs to be a subtle continuity between organisms and their environment. Differences as unresolved and not necessarily harmonious presences are thus key. But keeping too much would also kill any living organism. The genealogical perspective of Nietzsche is thus much more ecological, symbiotic and systemic than the previous lenses we have outlined. It articulates the processuality of the commons with its necessary systemicity (Valentinov, 2022), the flow and the relations. It stresses multiplicity before and beyond subjectivity (reminiscent here in many ways of Bergson or Deleuze, also vitalist philosophies).

These four phenomenological or post-phenomenological perspectives emphasize important tensions, in particular the issue of subjectivation at stake in communalization (Read, 2011; Singh, 2017), summarized in Table 1 (below). Of course, they overlap in many aspects, in particular their processual, non-essentialist view of commons.

Table 1: Four different experiences of communality in collective activity.

Experience of Communality	Type 1: Narrative *Hermeneutic process of individuation within a community*	Type 2: Sensorial *Inter-corporeality within communalization*	Type 3: Pragmatic *Inquiry-based communality*	Type 4: Cosmological *The multiplicity of living experience*
Core dimension of communality	Linguistic and narrative differenciality. Becoming a unique individual within a narrative commons.	Our individual and joint embodied experiences within the world.	A community of inquiry through co-problematization and openness.	Vital. Life process. Feeling the totality of life inside and outside
Harmony as…	Maintaining our sense of self within an understanding of the whole.	Fragility, always provisional, embodied and affective	Emergent, always provisional and unexpected	Illusory
Conception of subjectivation	Making self in relation with others	Making meaning through our embodied experiences with others.	Making collective insights through synthesizing with others	Making life as ongoing liveliness
Key principles	Individuation. Speech Immediacy, reduction and hermeneutics on the way	Paying attention to ours/others gestures, emotions. Common body (intercorporeality) Touch and being touched/affected	Differences and conflicts can be generative within communalization	Life, flow, assimilation incorporation, system
Community of learners as…	Common narrative. Pedagogy and learning as assembling 'I's and 'We's	Common embodied experience or being-with	Players, collective inquirers.	Unlearning habits of control.
Key inspiring philosophers	Husserl, Ricoeur, Arendt	Merleau-Ponty, Agamben, Butler, Lingis, Nancy	Dewey, James, Mead	Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault, Braidotti

These four perspectives (or types) have different ontological preferences: hermeneutic (and linguistic/narrative) for the first one, corporeal and embodied for the second, pragmatic and material for the third, deeply vital and life-oriented for the fourth. Maybe they are all compatible directions for community management – and may even exist in some form in all communalization processes. It is however our contention that one of these types tends to be dominant in different communalization practices. Again, we do not see any hierarchy in the four perspectives, we rather see in them different dimensions at stake in communalization processes that future research could explore further.

3. Implications for research and education in MOS: "Differences/Differenciality" as a vision for future discussions about commons

In this introductory article, we build on the idea of "differences/differenciality" as a crucial orientation to develop further discussions about commons and communalization. Basically, our approach highlights that commons are not already there in the world, expecting their unveiling and revealing by a rational manager. Commons are constructions, processes happening in the very interstices, liminalities, tensions, and gaps of organizational life, far from the commonly assumed vision of a rational center able to identify for us a common good.

Framing commons and communalization in this manner is not only a theoretical exercise but also, we believe, a potentially inspiring, practical, and meaningful way to develop implications for education, research, and practice in our contemporary societies. We thus wish now to address the following question: *how can we understand, research, and theorize the ways in which, despite conflict and difference, communality can be achieved in 21st century management learning, organizations, and societies?* We revisit this question through our typology by setting up a useful agenda for future research in management education, learning

and teaching practices and processes. We would argue that the four perspectives that we have outlined might indeed have important implications for the study and experimentation of managerial education, learning and teaching and how this interrelates with new ways of organizing and working – especially in the context of the grand challenges facing us, such as climate change in the Anthropocene; increasing wealth disparities; decline in democratic institutions, etc. The suggestions that we make here is supposed to be indicative rather than exhaustive. We hope that they would suggest and stimulate further thinking, experimentation and elaboration.

Before we proceed, we want to note that management, management education, and management learning is always and already *a collective process*. Indeed, even individual learning only makes sense with reference to the collective, differentially. As such, this typology of four perspectives has significant implications. The *first narrative perspective*, relying on a hermeneutic process of individuation, for example implies the development of a common narrative in education, through pedagogy and learning approaches aiming as assembling 'I's and 'We's. Learning means combining both individual expressions with collective expressions, as well as navigating the potential struggles or gaps between the two. Situated games, artistic mediations, collective writing about a managerial situation, can, for example, contribute to such a process. The *second sensorial perspective*, relying on inter-corporeality within communalization, implies constituting a common embodied experience. What matters is a common embodied relationship with the world: feeling that we all have the same kind of body, likely to suffer the same way. Paying attention to each other, cultivating empathy and care, through embodied con*tact* (Introna, 2021), are key here. Affective conversational exercises, that expose vulnerabilities, between learners can be helpful. As well as exchanging roles and situations as embodied and lived experiences. And, regarding increasingly digital workplaces, we need to extend notions of embodiment to other, non-human bodies too (Introna, 2021). For

instance, how do we, in our work or learning processes, come embodied in an inter-corporeal sense with phenomena such as robots (Sergeeva et al., 2020) or algorithms (Willems & Hafermalz, 2021)?

The *third pragmatic perspective*, relying on an inquiry-based communality, emphasizes the role of participants as collective inquirers. It implies very pragmatic ways of teaching, involving students collectively in a problem, starting with a concern and treating it collectively. We can imagine here more nomadic, open, and long-duration orientations of learning, collectively. Students (and a larger set of people and objects) can become part of a community of inquiry. These practices of collective enquiry might of course be more demanding, but also perhaps more rewarding in enacting commons. The *fourth cosmological perspective*, relying on the multiplicity of living experiences, implies unlearning habits of control. It is thus very paradoxical, as it is focused on an unexpected process of "unlearning": unlearning to control, cultivating more symbiotic relationships with the world, as it happens or unfolds. This can be also grounded in atypical outdoor walks (in nature) and unlearning experiments with students that challenge not only ideologies, assumptions, traditions, etc., but also taken for granted ontologies. Looking back at our reflections and suggestions, it is obvious to us that business schools and management departments rarely teach and learn communality.

More specifically, when considered in the context of the grand challenges we face, our typology has significant implications in terms of appropriate management and managerial approaches. Let us consider, for example, our enormous ecological grand challenge – that is, our "communion" with nature, one might say. Let us start with our third *pragmatic* perspective. From this perspective, dealing with climate change involves a playful, open experimentation grounded in local ecological concerns. People need to co-problematize climate change, how they live it in the present, how they might live it in the future. This process co-constitutes the community of inquiry. Business schools could educate in these terms. States and cities could

also orient themselves towards this, beyond the step of sensibilization (e.g., with "fresques du climat"[vi]). In contrast, the fourth *cosmological* perspective involves something that looks at the opposite of the third one (but at the end, which is for sure compatible): a collective humility and a sense of abandon in nature and the flow of life. According to this perspective, we need to unlearn our very managerial obsession for control. We need to be more in the immediate experience of life. Communalization happens in this flow, where we could all find the liveliness of life. Here, there is not really a community of humans, but more a community of life. In this vein, the first and second perspectives could appear as first steps towards the third and fourth perspectives and their contributions [vii] to an alternative management of climate change. Speech, common narratives, sense of embodiment, are necessary individual and collective subjectivation on the way to ecological commons.

Our typology also has implications for research about *new ways of working* – for example, the tension they highlight between individual remote workers, and the necessary co-presence and communities at stake in work. Our four perspectives suggest various communality initiatives in remote work. For instance, according to the first *narrative* perspective, employees could cultivate Enterprise Social Media profiles, sharing updates and personal information that relates to organisational self-branding and newsletters about who "We" are; through these specific communication and social identification processes, remote workers would reinforce their feeling of perceived proximity (Wilson et al., 2008) and sense of belonging to a same community. According to the second *sensorial* perspective, focusing on inter-corporeality, annual 'retreats' could be held for all workers to come together and experience eating and drinking together – the experiences could be referred to throughout the year as a basis for ongoing communality, while site visits and office days would be standardised. According to the third *pragmatic* perspective, relying on an inquiry-based form of communality, on-site and remote employees could gather in project teams, and join daily hybrid 'stand up' meetings to

make sense of the core problem and understand how to resolve it; online tools could be used for collective idea generation, problem solving, and planning. Lastly, according to the fourth *cosmological* perspective, based on their multiplicity of living experiences, employees could work fully hybrid with no standards as to when and how work will be done. A multiplicity of platforms and tools would be enrolled in the provisional establishment of messy and lively communities, with little oversight or coordination – vitality is what attracts and engender ongoing participation (open source communities might be an example here).

In the end, our typology offers various communalization initiatives aiming at building the future of our universities, the future of our relation to nature, and the future of work. As suggested by our reflection on this new vision and of its implications, future research is necessary to further contrast and compare the tensions, dialectics and paradoxes at stake in these four ways towards communality. We also encourage further research to explore the possibility of a meta-theory dealing with the conceptual integration of these four perspectives (see Valentinov, 2022). In this vein, it is tempting to see perspectives 1 and 2 as possibly happening from within and against the becoming stressed by perspectives 3 and 4. It is also tempting to see the managerial instruments and mediations stressed by perspective 3 as possible levers and tools for the process of commons (see Munro, 2022).

4. Introduction of the articles comprised in this Special Issue

We wish to present the articles we selected for this special issue through the prism of this typology. This special issue comprises five contributions, all of which resonate with our proposed perspectives. All emphasize the relationship between sameness and differences in specific manners.

- The first article by Hanna Vesala, *'Rhythmic appropriation of hybrid workspace as a condition for reflective togetherness',* lies in-between our second and third perspectives. The author emphasizes the importance of embodied rhythms, their process and differences in the elaboration of commons by means of a re-exploration of Merleau-Ponty's view of inter-corporeity;

- The second article by Simone Faulkner, Mihajla Gavin, Najmeh Hassanli, Anja Hergesell, Pavlina Jasovska, Ece Kaya, Alice Klettner, Jennie Small, Christopher Walker, and Ruth Weatherall, '"*Maybe one way forward": Forging collective collegiality in the neoliberal academy'*, is more inscribed into the first perspective both in sentiment and method. It is about the 'we' of academic collegiality, and its tensions with the extreme focus on individualities in the context of the neo-liberal academy;

- The third article by Lisa Callagher, Stefan Korber, Paul Hibbert, Frank Siedlok, and Ziad El Sahn, '*We-experiences and the maintenance of workplace friendships: Being workplace friends together',* may be situated within the narrative, sensorial and pragmatic perspectives. Through individual reflexive autoethnographies and collective reflection (type 1 narrative), the authors explore how feelings of togetherness (type 2 sensorial) emerged and continued across geographical distance and during the physical isolation of COVID (type 3 pragmatic). In line with the dialectic of sameness and difference, they identify how we-sustaining practices are enacted, while facing potential fractures. In doing so, they offer four forms of togetherness.

- The fourth article, by Suzette Dyer, Peggy Edges, Shankar Sankaran, Tony Wall, Amy Kenworthy and David Jones, *'A Collaborative Autoethnographic Journey of Collective Storying: Transitioning Between the "I," the "We," and the "They"'*, can be embedded in the first perspective; the authors develop in this article lessons learned during a three-year, collaborative autoethnographic journey which started in January 2020. Their story

is one of conducting a meaningful inquiry into our shared lived experience amidst the changes brought about by COVID-19 lockdowns. The authors analyze how they collaboratively reflected and researched across institutions, countries, disciplines, and career stages. Drawing on an Arendtian lens, they present a cyclical and developmental frame within which to process collaborative storying, and collaborative academic work.

- The fifth article, by Leo Bancou, '*Towards a 'vulnerable co-presence' for hybrid ways of working: Recasting the nexus of co-presence and vulnerability with Merleau-Ponty and Butler'*, inscribed in the second perspective, explores the interplay of copresence and vulnerability in the context of hybrid working, by drawing on the ontological arguments of Merleau-Ponty and Butler. It develops the notion of 'vulnerable co-presence' and lays the groundwork for re-politicizing the hybrid workforce.

Each article offers different ways of re-imagining how we may enact collective togetherness in different societal and cultural contexts when working, learning and researching, communally.

5. Conclusion

In a society and world of work marked by increasing tensions between individuals and communal interests, the necessity to rethink our ways of working, learning and teaching, and researching together has become increasingly important. Through this Special Issue, we hope to offer different ways of understanding communality and togetherness, as well as learning about how we may create feelings of togetherness and of collaboration, while maintaining a mutual respect of differences. We hope the ideas offered will lead to future discussions of communality within the *Management Learning* community.

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[i] Call for Papers. https://journals.sagepub.com/pbassets/cmscontent/MLQ/Cfp%20SI%20Experiencing%20Commons%20final%20version.pdf

[ii] Organization: "a group of people who work together in an organized way for a shared purpose" (Cambridge dictionary - https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/organization)

[iii] See also Metcalf and Urwick (1949).

[iv] The papers we received illustrate and embody part of our four modalities. Our typology offers a way to further explore experiences of communality.

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[v] Our idea is not to elaborate a hierarchy between the four processes. The order of description is based on the post-phenomenological movement of our description. We believe that these four perspectives all have their own merits, are all politically interesting, and are extremely relevant to deal with the issue of communalization at stake in organizing.

[vi] https://climatefresk.org/