

Becoming upbeat: Learning the affecto-rhythmic order of organizational practices

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Abstract

How is it that some organizational practices flow like clockwork and may even energize us but others seem to be stuck in the mud and diminish our capacity to act? In order to understand this, we develop a concept of *affecto-rhythmic order* that captures how rhythms and affects interrelate in the flow of organizational practices. Adopting a sociomaterial practice perspective, our ethnographic study of a Nordic startup accelerator demonstrates how participants learn and embody a contextual affecto-rhythmic *upbeat* order and how this enhances their individual and collective capacity to engage with the fast-paced development of business ideas and sales pitching skills relevant in the accelerator setting. As a contribution, the study theorizes and empirically illustrates the entangled nature of rhythms and affects in organizational practices, provides novel insights into inter-corporeal learning and the regulative nature of practices, and shows how affective ethnography can help scholars examine affect and write about it in organizational research.

Keywords

affect, affective ethnography, embodied knowing, practice-based learning, rhythm, rhythmanalysis

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Introduction

Growth is reflected in everything. One has to be more efficient. One has to think faster. Leisure is for things that develop you and take you forward. You only do useful things. Time is best spent with ambitious and determined people. If you don't keep up, you can always opt out. You feel empathy especially for those in the same situation. Anything good or bad can happen anytime. Your emotions go from one extreme to another.

This quote is from a documentary film on a successful start-up entrepreneur and a frequent keynote speaker in events organized at a local startup accelerator in Helsinki, Finland. It highlights the fast rhythms and changing affective intensities characteristic of accelerator practices, and draws our attention to how rhythms and affects are related in organizations and organizing. Extant practice-theoretical research suggests that organizational practices are rhythmic (e.g. Best and Hindmarsh, 2019; Nicolini, 2007, 2011; Vesala and Tuomivaara, 2018) and affective (e.g. Ashcraft, 2017;¹ Gherardi, 2017b; Kuhn et al., 2017; Reckwitz, 2017) by nature. By theorizing rhythm as temporal pattern and order (Gherardi and Strati, 1988; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Strati 2007), scholars have shown that organizational practices consist of multiple rhythms that enable collective coordination and synchronization of bodies and materialities (Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Nicolini, 2007; Strati, 2007, 2012; Valtonen et al., 2017). Other scholars have focused on affects as intensity and 'attunement' of organizational practices (Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Gherardi, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Reckwitz, 2017), which occur in bodily sensations and in variations in a state of action-readiness such as excitement (Katila et al., 2019; Keevers and Sykes, 2016) or attachment (Hoedemaekers, 2018) before they are translated into perceivable action. The theoretical premises of these studies suggest that rhythms are more than repetitive actions and affects are something other than subjective feelings; rhythms and affects are in fact forces that regulate accomplishment of organizational practices.

Despite these important developments, however, there is inadequate theoretical and empirical understanding of how rhythms and affects relate in the flow of organizational practices and of the consequences thereof, especially in terms of collective and synchronized action in organizations. Treating rhythms and affects separately easily neglects their reciprocal and relational aspects, and disregards the ways in which shifts in organizational rhythms may evoke shifts in affective intensities and the capacity of organizational members to act, and vice versa. Recently, several scholars have argued that a focus on rhythms/affects may open up new perspectives on organizational practices and the ways in which possible courses of action are shaped in organizations (e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Fotaki et al., 2017; Gherardi, 2017a; 2017b). Hence, our first research question is the following: *How are rhythms and affects connected in organizational practice?*

Building on a sociomaterial, practice-theoretical perspective (e.g. Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Gherardi, 2017a; Orlikowski, 2007) on learning and knowing in organizations (e.g. Gherardi, 2001; Gorli et al., 2015; Nicolini, 2011), we theorize that the relationship between practice-specific rhythms and affects is entangled and suggests an integrative concept of *affecto-rhythmic order*. This concept highlights the norms and an aesthetic criterion that defines the rhythms and associated affective attunement, that is, a shared affective state that can be enacted in specific practices. From this perspective, becoming a competent organizational member requires learning and knowing a situated

affecto-rhythmic order and embodying it in an organizational practice, mastering the rhythms of that practice and being affected by it, and affecting others involved in the practice in an appropriate manner. Hence, our second research question is the following: *How do organizational members learn and embody the rhythms and affective attunement of organizational practice?*

We base this article on an ethnographic study of 4UNI, a startup accelerator located in Helsinki, Finland. The stated goal of this organization is to speed up business development processes and venture creation. Our study indicates that the key practices of the accelerator (re)produce a situated affecto-rhythmic order that is best described as *upbeat*. This order highlights the entanglement of certain fast-paced rhythms of working and certain positive, perky ways of being and doing. We show how the accelerator participants learn and embody this order in repetitive participation in the accelerator practices, and illustrate how this enhances their capacity to engage with the fast-paced development of business ideas and sales pitching skills relevant in the accelerator context. The analysis further demonstrates how the upbeat order regulates the bodily doings and sayings of the accelerator participants.

Our study contributes to the literature on sociomaterial practices in organizations in four ways: (i) by theorizing and empirically illustrating that the relationship between rhythms and affects in practices is entangled, and emphasizing their interdependent and reciprocal nature; (ii) by highlighting the affective nature of inter-corporeal learning in organizational practices that occurs through collective affective attunement; (iii) by extending the view of the regulative power of practices to include an affective dimension functioning through compelling 'mood' or 'groove'; and (iv) by showing how a methodology inspired by affective ethnography and rhythmanalysis can help scholars examine affect and write about it in organizational research.

Practice-theoretical perspective on learning, rhythms, and affect

In developing our theoretical perspective, we build from sociomaterial practice theory and literature on practice-based learning. In the following, we open up the key elements of our theoretical perspective: practice-based learning, rhythms, the body, and affect. We then move on to articulate the idea of affecto-rhythmic order in more detail.

Practice-based learning

We start from the practice-theoretical premise that learning and knowing occur while organizational members participate in various practices that consist of a complex web of relationships between bodily and mental activities and the environment (Gherardi, 2001, 2010; Nicolini, 2011; Orlikowski, 2007). Through repetitive participation, learning and knowing are ingrained in the bodies of novice organizational members and displayed in the skillful accomplishment of practice (Edenius and Yakhlef, 2007; Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Yakhlef, 2010). Accordingly, learning and knowing are seen as situated, non-dualistic, and non-individual processes that cannot be separated from doing. We

particularly draw upon practice theories that highlight the sociomateriality (Orlikowski, 2007) of practice, and see practice as a recurrent pattern of socially sustained activities where both human bodies, objects, and entities such as artefacts and discourses are equally relevant elements of practice and entangled with one another (Gherardi, 2017a; Orlikowski, 2007). According to Barad (2003), these entanglements are heterogeneous, dynamic and co-constitutive by nature; they are not mere collections, but neither are they fixed or determined.

Approaching organizational practices from this perspective entails treating them not only as empirical phenomena (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011), but as the ongoing (re) production of social order, that is, ‘what socially sustains “a way of doing things together”’ (Gherardi, 2009b: 546). Hence it invites us to critically consider the ways in which practice assumes normative, context-specific, and ‘proper’ conduct that regulates the doings and sayings of practitioners (Geiger, 2009; Gherardi, 2009a; Meriläinen et al., 2015) and emerges from history, past practices, particular fields of interests, or politico-economic settings (Contu and Willmott, 2003; Gherardi et al., 2013; Nicolini, 2011). In this article, we are particularly interested in the ways in which organizational members learn and know the ‘proper’ rhythms and affective attunement in the flow of organizational practices in the context of an accelerator organization.

Rhythms

An essential part of learning and knowing in practice involves rhythms, in other words repetitive temporal patterns that define the order and tempo of practice (e.g. Nicolini, 2007, 2011; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Schatzki, 2010). Individual practice has multiple rather than single rhythms that require practitioners to navigate through alternatives for action in different situations (Valtonen et al., 2017). For example, teaching practice is ordered by the rhythmic sequencing of semesters, periods, lecture days, lecture hours, and the different ways in which a lecture hour can be rhythmically divided. Teaching practice further overlaps with the rhythms of other practices in administration and research. When practitioners identify the rhythms in practice, they have cause to form expectations about upcoming events and make decisions regarding when to do or not do something or the tempo with which it is to be done (Gherardi and Strati, 1988; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002), enabling collective coordination and synchronization of bodies and materialities (Hindmarsh and Pilnick 2007; Nicolini, 2011; Strati, 2007, 2012).

Lefebvre (2004) makes a distinction between *cyclical rhythms* like days and nights or monthly cycles that belong to the cosmic sphere and *linear rhythms* like clock time that belong to the sphere of social practices. He further suggests that learning and knowing certain rhythms entails consideration of the following: *repetition* of gestures, movements, actions, and situations; *interference* in linear rhythms and cyclical rhythms (e.g. night shifts and circadian sleep rhythms); and *cycles* of birth, growth, peak, decline, and end (Lefebvre, 2004: 15). In organizational settings, rhythms are linear by nature and driven by rationality, by quantifiable time, and not least by controlled clock time (Cunha, 2008; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). In addition to working hours and repetitive work routines, organizational rhythms are influenced by an array of things such as financial reporting, annual plans, and project deadlines that shape the flow of

organizational practices (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). Rather than being virtual representations, these rhythms are shaped by the embodied practices of organizational members and also shape these practices.

The body

Practice-based studies indicate that the body plays a fundamental role in learning and knowing the rhythms of practices in organizations. In particular, these studies suggest that learning and knowing are not purely cognitive processes, but also involve embodied knowing and learning in various forms—aesthetic, tacit, pre-reflexive, and pre-discursive—which take place beyond intention or consciousness (Gärtner, 2013; Hindmarsh and Pilnick 2007; Meriläinen et al., 2015; Strati, 2007, 2012; Valtonen et al., 2017; Yakhlef, 2010; Yakhlef and Essen, 2013). The body is prepared to gain sensible knowledge that is ‘perceived through the senses and judged, produced and reproduced through them’ (Strati, 2007: 62), as studies show. For example, scholars have found that professionals like architects, perfumers, or headhunters learn to execute ‘professional vision,’ that is, a form of sensing things in a particular way that is acknowledged among other professionals (e.g. Gherardi, 2009b; Meriläinen et al., 2015; Styhre, 2013).

Extant studies indicate that the rhythms of organizational practices are made available to organizational members through sensorial cues (e.g. Strati, 2007; Valtonen et al., 2017) and that organizational members may learn to reflectively make aesthetic judgments regarding the more-or-less ‘proper’ enactment of these rhythms (Gherardi, 2009b; Strati, 2012). To exemplify, in nature it may be the beat of the rain that helps generate the slow rhythm associated with wilderness tourism (Rantala and Valtonen, 2014). Another source of sensorial cues comes from other bodies and materialities; bodies often coordinate their doings with other bodies (Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Nicolini, 2011; Strati, 2007, 2012). Lefebvre (2004) further reminds us that learning and knowing rhythms entail repetitive bodily training that he calls *dressage*. In dressage, practitioners are bent and bend themselves into the ‘proper’ rhythms of practices by repeating certain activities (Lefebvre, 2004), for example sales pitching or making surgical stitches, until they become embodied and appear natural. Hence, the literature indicates that learning and knowing the rhythms of organizational practices involves preparing the body to gain sensible knowledge about the rhythms as well as repetitive training in which the body is disciplined to the rhythms.

Affect

Even though the sociomaterial, practice-based literature on learning and knowing demonstrates that rhythms of organizational practices are sensed and enacted through the bodies of organizational members, the relationship between rhythms and affects has not been theorized in the extant literature. In this article, we join the emerging practice-theoretical literature on affect (e.g. Aschraft, 2017; Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Gherardi, 2017a, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Reckwitz, 2017). We define affect according to the Deleuzian tradition as changes in bodily capacity (i.e. increases or decreases) that emerge through encounters with other bodies that can be both human and nonhuman (Deleuze

and Guattari, 1987; Massumi, 2002). In this view, affect is sensation, intensity, or energy that is dischargeable, for example, through human bodies, objects, technologies, material artifacts, and places (Manning, 2013; Massumi, 2002; Stewart, 2007). Though affect may occur through encounters with written texts and verbal presentations, it does not follow the form of codified language but works in rhythms and resonances that can set things in motion in the body and across bodies (Blackman and Venn, 2010; Massumi, 2002). Affect, then, is a social rather than a subjective phenomenon; it operates in and through relations between bodies by first occurring in bodily sensation and variation in a state of action-readiness before translation into perceivable action or an individuated emotion (Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2008). Affect is activity rather than a stable condition as it moves and circulates among and between human and nonhuman bodies (Stewart, 2007) by inducing bodily arousal and (dis)pleasure directed at a specific person, object, or idea (Ashcraft, 2017; Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Gherardi, 2017b; Reckwitz, 2012, 2017). These effects become visible, for instance, in changing facial expressions, tone of voice, pace of breathing, sounds, and other sensorial means (Blackman and Venn, 2010; Massumi, 2002). Thus, affect could be described as a moving sensory force, a materially felt social relation (Kuhn et al., 2017).

Scholars inspired by practice theory argue that practice has the potential to affect its participants (Ashcraft, 2017; Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Gherardi, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Reckwitz, 2017). Put differently, affect can be understood on the basis of what it 'does' in and through practice. For example, a study showed how the festival making, pitching and bonding practices in a major start-up conference created affective intensities that contributed to institutionalization of startup entrepreneurship (Katila et al., 2019). Specifically, it is suggested that affect operates through practice-specific attunement (Reckwitz, 2017), that is, matching rhythm, timing and feeling of what is taking place; it is about getting into a shared affective state with other participants (Stern, 1985) and of being sensitive to affective forces that require attunement (Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Stewart, 2007). Whereas Stern (1985) highlights attunement mainly as human accomplishment, Manning (2013) and Stewart (2007) argue that it is a co-constituted relational space of human and non-human bodies in which affect emerges and moves. In organizational contexts, participants are able and even expect(ed) to be attuned in specific ways. To illustrate, affective attunement carries tacit seeds of interpretation that provide organizational members with clues about when and how they should, for example, sense excitement (Katila et al., 2019; Keevers and Sykes, 2016) or attachment (Hoedemaekers, 2018) or act collectively to contribute to particular affective intensity (Henriques, 2010; Katila et al., 2019).²

Recognizing that learning and knowing in organizations are affective processes entails examining how affect shapes our bodies and 'primes us for action' (Thrift, 2008: 221). Scholars show how affect precedes reflective learning and knowing by forcing people to think or by directing our attention to particular things 'before thought kicks in' (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012: 52). In this view, learning should be seen as a process where the body learns to be affected, i.e. 'effectuated' by other human bodies, places, and objects. Hence, a competent practitioner is affectively attuned to practice, i.e. affected by it (Reckwitz, 2017) and able to contribute to the emergence and maintenance of practice-specific affective intensities. In turn, some scholars have examined

how the social and material surroundings of organizational members can be manipulated to mobilize affect and thus regulate the possible courses of action available in organizational settings (Michels and Steyaert, 2017).

Affecto-rhythmic order

The sociomaterial, practice-based literature recognizes the rhythmic nature of organizational practice; the rhythms of practice are sensed and enacted through the bodies of organizational members, and the 'proper' rhythms of practice (re)produce a specific order. The literature further shows that organizational practice affects its participants and (re)produces specific affective attunement. However, there is inadequate theoretical and empirical understanding of the relationship between rhythms and affects in the flow of organizational practices and of the consequences thereof. To address this question, we suggest a shift away from treating rhythms and affects separately towards the integrative concept of *affecto-rhythmic order*. This concept theorizes that practice-specific rhythms and affects are entangled in organizational practice, and highlights their reciprocal relationship through which changes in the rhythms are interconnected with changes in how the practice affects its participants, and vice versa. Grounded in the practice-based perspective, this concept further suggests that being a competent participant in organizational practice requires learning a contextual affecto-rhythmic order and embodying it in the practice. Furthermore, and as extant research hints, embodying an affecto-rhythmic order alters an actor's capacity to act. To study this empirically, we conducted an ethnographic study of a Nordic startup accelerator. We will discuss our study design in detail below.

Methodology

The empirical context of this study is the 4UNI accelerator, which is a startup accelerator targeted especially at higher education students, graduates, and researchers motivated to develop entrepreneurial skills and developing new ventures. It is organized by Helsinki Think Company (ThinkCo), a non-profit organization sponsored by the University of Helsinki and the City of Helsinki (Finland, Europe). The stated goal of the 4UNI accelerator is, as the name indicates, to speed up business development processes and venture creation.

The 4UNI accelerator is organized annually, welcoming about 50 participants per year. It takes place over a 2-month period and involves several facilitated workshops and training sessions with business professionals. Like many other similar accelerators (see Pauwels et al., 2016), it proceeds through three carefully facilitated phases. First, the participants accepted to the accelerator on the basis of their applications are divided into multidisciplinary teams. The team members meet each other at a two-day workshop where they specify a 'wicked problem' they want to solve and define a preliminary solution to this problem. In the second phase, the teams develop the preliminary solutions into for-profit business concepts in collaboration with business developers, legal advisors, and experienced entrepreneurs. Most of the teams establish their own firms and get their first customers in this phase. In the third phase, the business concepts are pitched to

judges including entrepreneurs and investors, colleagues, and the audience at large during a big final event. The winner is rewarded with money and other resources to develop their business concept further.

Affective ethnography, materials, and analysis

This study utilizes an ethnographic approach, focusing on the practices of the 4UNI accelerator. Ethnography is characterized by the researcher's deep engagement in the study setting and the use of diverse methods to explore contextual aspects and uncover day-to-day activities and understandings (Ybema et al., 2009). In particular, this study draws upon affective ethnography, a style of ethnographic research practice that recognizes the researcher's capacity to affect and be affected as central to the interpretation process (Gherardi, 2018; Stewart, 2007). In affective ethnography, the researcher's body is understood not only as a site of sensible-aesthetic knowing (Strati, 2007), but also as a resonant materiality able to affect and be affected in relations with other human and nonhuman bodies (Gherardi, 2018). According to this ethnographic style, researchers need to be affectively attuned during the fieldwork and open to affective contagion, where they themselves 'become-with-data' (Gherardi, 2018). Affective ethnography thus entails paying analytical attention to the entangled relations among heterogeneous bodies, discourses, and materialities (Gherardi, 2018), and to the shifting affective intensities emerging in and through these relations (see e.g. Katila et al., 2019).

The key premises of affective ethnography align with Lefebvre's (2004) suggestions for examining the rhythms of everyday practices. He argues that rhythms can be experienced only through bodies, and that examining rhythmicity entails bodily engagement and activation of multiple senses. For Lefebvre, 'rhythm analysts' need to 'let the rhythms grab them' and use their bodies as a kind of 'metronome' (Lefebvre, 2004: 19). Hence, rhythm analysts heed breathing, circulation of blood, beating of the heart, and delivery of speech as analytical 'landmarks' (Lefebvre, 2004: 21). In our case, this includes, for example, sensitizing to heartbeat acceleration, perspiration, pain, or exhaustion while in the field. In order to analyze rhythms, it is also 'necessary to get outside of them' and to observe them' (Lefebvre, 2004: 27). Hence, both immersion and observation are necessary for studying the affecto-rhythmic order of organizational practices.

The ethnographic data generated for this study consist of interview transcripts, documents, and recordings of participant observations. The first and second authors conducted 22 in-depth interviews with the 4UNI accelerator participants and organizers before, during, and after the accelerator program in 2015 and 2016. The typical duration of an interview ranged between 45 and 90 minutes, and the interviews were transcribed verbatim. During the 4UNI accelerator program in 2015 and 2016, the authors further collected various documents regarding the program and its activities. They included promotional materials, documents describing the accelerator content and schedule, workshop templates, and other documentary materials. In this article, we used the data generated through interviews and document collection to acquire contextual insights into the 4UNI accelerator organization and its stated goals, the accelerator's general organizing principles, and the temporal aspects of the accelerator activities, including the timing, duration, and tempo of the accelerator workshops.

The main data source for this study was participant observation conducted by the second author. He engaged with the 4UNI accelerator in 2015 and 2016 and acted as a member of one of the participating teams developing their own business concept. Altogether, the fieldwork took four months. During the fieldwork, the participant author generated empirical materials that comprised field notes, photographs, and video clips of participant observations (including some 80 hours of observation in formal and informal events and meetings). Our analysis of affecto-rhythmic order in the context of the 4UNI accelerator and the ethnographic vignettes—shown in the next section—are based on the data generated through participant observations. Thus, the empirical analysis is based on the participant author's 'insider view.' We view his body as a site of sensible-aesthetic knowing and resonant materiality that is able to affect and be affected by multiple human and nonhuman bodies coming together in the accelerator practices.

The process of analyzing the empirical materials was iterative and abductive; it began during the ethnographic fieldwork. At this point, the participant author observed that the rhythms initiated as part of the 4UNI accelerator practices first felt difficult and even painful to follow. Subsequently, however, he observed that engaging with them started to feel 'natural'—and even energizing—over time and throughout the course of iterative business development and skills training sessions. Inspired by this observation, we carefully read through our field notes and analyzed the supplementary video and photograph data generated during the fieldwork. We coded the materials following the procedures of open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) in order to map the multiple events, encounters, and actors involved in the 4UNI accelerator and to identify the most critical or surprising moments where the rhythms of accelerator practices became visible. To illustrate, we paid attention to how the organizers scheduled the rhythms of working and resting during the accelerator program. As a result, we developed codes such as 'arrhythmia,' 'repetition,' 'synchronization,' and 'facilitation.'

We consequently recognized the need to complement the coding by considering the sensory cues through which the rhythms of the 4UNI accelerator emerged and became available for the participants. For example, we paid particular attention to hearable and visible cues of rhythms such as verbal guidelines and visible bodily movements, which we video-recorded during the accelerator program. We also recognized the need to pay more focused attention to the affects that seemed to be present in the data, although they seemed difficult to grasp.

Hence, we next revisited the empirical materials, organized them anew, and elaborated on the theoretical framework. At this point, the third author joined the team, and was able to provide a reading of the data as an outsider. We organized collaborative analytic gatherings during which we discussed emerging insights and made sense of the materials via development of an interpretative framework. We gradually ended up reading the incidents by employing a sociomaterial practice theoretical framework of learning and knowing and theories of affect. We identified relationships among human and nonhuman elements such as human bodies, documents, facilitated assignments, tables, and sound waves of music that encouraged or discouraged the accelerator participants in picking up certain accelerator rhythms, adjusting their bodily doings and sayings according to these rhythms, and reflecting on the appropriateness of the rhythms in the accelerator context. In this phase, Henriques' (2010) empirical analysis on affect and rhythms

in the context of Kingston's dancehall scene was particularly helpful to us as it directed our attention to rhythmic shifts and their affective outcomes. Specifically, we recognized and analyzed the potential of the rhythmic shifts in our case to transform the participant author's and his team's capacities to act, such as by energizing or discouraging—and thus affecting—them. This led us to develop the notion of affecto-rhythmic order. We identified two key practices of the 4UNI accelerator, *business idea development*, and *sales pitching*, that allow us to demonstrate how this order, which is best described as *upbeat*, functions.

As we aim to help the reader 'sense the upbeat feeling,' we offer detailed and lengthy vignettes that crystallize the rhythmic flow of practices and the emergence of affect in the continuously shifting sociomaterial constellation of bodies, discourses, and materialities (see also Ashcraft, 2017; Gherardi, 2018; Katila, 2019; Katila et al., 2019; Kuhn et al., 2017). These vignettes were chosen because they poignantly demonstrate the entanglement of rhythms and affects in practice as well as the process of learning and embodying the rhythms and affective attunement of practice. Next, we discuss our analytical insights in more detail.

Becoming upbeat: Learning the affecto-rhythmic order of accelerator practice

The 4UNI accelerator operates through an intensive two-month program that consists of fourteen workshops held every third or fifth day. Between the workshops, the participants have time for recovery and independent work in teams. This periodization makes for oscillation between high- and low-tempo work rhythms. In turn, each scripted workshop is divided into sequences of clocked and facilitated iterative business development assignments that draw from a 'lean startup method' emphasizing quick ideation, rapid experiments, brief sales pitches, feedback loops, and continuous progress. In the following, we will describe how learning the contextual affecto-rhythmic order takes place through participation in business idea development and sales-pitch practices. In our case, this order is best described as *upbeat*, with a fast pace and a positive, perky way of being and doing.

The practice of business idea development: Becoming upbeat in dressage

At the 4UNI accelerator, the practice of business idea development comprises a set of activities including business idea generation, business model planning, and strategy formation for entrepreneurial businesses. In the following, we seek to demonstrate how the accelerator participants can learn and embody a contextual affecto-rhythmic upbeat order through the repetitive training or *dressage* (Lefebvre, 2004) assumed by this practice. The vignette below shows how the affecto-rhythmic upbeat order emerges and becomes available to participants in business idea development practice:

On a Saturday morning around 9:00 am, I [the second author] am attending the first 4UNI accelerator workshop. 'WOW what a group! It's so awesome to finally meet you all! We have such an amazing group of people in this room,' says Jukka enthusiastically while standing with his arms wide open and smiling in front of us. Jukka, who is an entrepreneur and the facilitator

of the workshop, continues: 'Document everything you do here and write only one idea per post-it note. When you discuss your ideas, always use "yes, and" instead of "but" or "no." Give everyone a voice.' Jukka then gives an assignment to us: 'In teams, quickly ideate about what kind of wicked problems could be solved with your team's knowhow. You have only 15 minutes!' Jukka starts a big digital timer and turns up the volume of some fast-beat electronic music. It is still early in the morning and somehow the loud music doesn't feel right. A bit confused, glancing around, and not knowing what to do, I slowly turn my body towards my team mates. They seem to be equally confused like those in the other teams. The hesitant atmosphere in the room is almost tangible. After some time, we start to write individually, in silence, looking down, not at the others.

In this first vignette, the affecto-rhythmic upbeat order emerges and becomes available to the participants through sensorial cues (Strati, 2007, 2012) that can be heard, seen, and felt. Firstly, it emerges and becomes available in verbal instructions when the participants are asked to work *quickly*, within a short timeframe of 15 minutes, while simultaneously using positive words like *yes*, *and* instead of *but* and *no*. Although these verbal instructions alone are not enough to convey the order, they are relationally connected to less explicit, hearable, and visible instructions and nonhuman bodies capable of producing affects that together convey the 'correct' affecto-rhythmic upbeat order. For instance, the facilitator's energetic bodily performance and his positive and perky comments like *WOW what a group* materialize the appropriate order of the business idea development practice. In addition, the digital timer set in front of the participants materializes the upbeat order by emphasizing both the limitedness of time and the running time in seconds. These multiple hearable and visible aspects of the upbeat order are further linked with the high volume and fast beat of the electronic music, which can be heard and felt through the body. When the volume is turned up just before the business idea development assignment, the music forcefully informs the participants about the 'proper' affecto-rhythmic order of the business idea development practice, which highlights a fast pace and a positive, perky way of being and doing.

The vignette indicates that the emerging affecto-rhythmic order places specific demands on the bodies of practice participants, that is, it is affective (Stewart, 2007). These demands invite and push the participants to adjust their bodily doings and sayings to the upbeat order of practice—to work quickly, energetically, and positively. Hence, the order demands affective attunement (Manning, 2013; Stewart, 2007). The vignette further shows the difficulty of avoiding or escaping these bodily demands. For example, taking distance from the fast-beat, high-volume music played as part of the business idea development practice would entail leaving the accelerator space. This highlights the imposed—rather than negotiated—nature of the upbeat order. Adjusting one's bodily doings and sayings to the upbeat order does not, however, take place without difficulty or effort. As novices in the practice, the participants lack embodied knowing, a prerequisite for competent participation in practice (Gherardi, 2001; Yakhlef, 2010). Thus, the bodily demands posed by the order affected the participants in ways that diminished their capacity to act. In the vignette, this is depicted by slow bodily motions, passive body postures, and silence; the participants did not know how to act individually or collectively. However, through repetitive dressage, they began to learn and embody the upbeat order, as the following vignette shows:

My [the second author] team is working intensively on our business idea at the business idea development workshop. ‘Three minutes left,’ Jukka [the facilitator] shouts suddenly. ‘Oh gosh, we need to speed up,’ says Anne [a participant] and sounds worried. We lean towards Anne and listen to her attentively. Anne accelerates her speech, raises her voice, and looks directly at us as she intensely explains her ideas on the potential solutions to the wicked problem we chose to solve during the workshop. I raise my head to check the digital timer. ‘Just twenty seconds left,’ I notice. My heartbeat quickens and I feel hot, sweaty, pained, and desperate. I quickly shout out: ‘We must get these ideas sorted, we need to be faster!’ The atmosphere intensifies, then Jukka shouts: ‘Time’s up!’ and continues with a big smile on his face: ‘Fantastic job everyone! WOW!’ We, like those in other teams, slap enthusiastic high fives, laugh, sit down, and lean backwards. I feel relieved. We made it!

This second vignette shows how the participants in the business idea development practice engage with dressage, continuous bodily training, through which the practice and its affecto-rhythmic upbeat order are slowly ingrained in their bodies. In the vignette, such dressage unfolds through intensive working cycles that consist of 15-minute business development assignments. These working cycles follow a particular rhythmic pattern of birth (assigning the task), growth (performing the task), peak (accelerating task performance to the fastest speed possible), and end (concluding the performance) that is connected with a similar pattern of affective intensities of birth, growth, peak, and release. This connection between the rhythmic pattern and the pattern of affective intensities is reciprocal. For example, each time a working cycle ends, it is connected to an intense affective release, which can be heard in yells, seen in smiling faces, and felt in hugs and high fives circulating among the participants. By repeating these intensive working cycles and respective rhythmic and affective patterns, the participants’ bodies are shaped in relation to the emerging affecto-rhythmic upbeat order.

In the beginning of the vignette, the participants are still trying to cope with the practice of business idea development and its affecto-rhythmic upbeat order. They need instructions on the ‘proper’ working rhythms, and the attempts to accomplish a given business development assignment in a given timeframe evokes affects that the participant author experiences as pain and stress. As the participants attempt to cope with the rhythms, they gradually show learning of the upbeat order; they start to make reflective observations about the remaining time from their surroundings (e.g. the digital timer) and assess whether they are keeping up with the ‘proper’ rhythms. Furthermore, the participants are not only learning to adapt to the instructions given by the accelerator facilitators, but are also learning to affect each other and be affected by each other. For instance, the participants start to coordinate their doings and sayings collectively and to tacitly ‘synchronize’ their bodily movements, which is typical of knowledgeable doers (Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Nicolini, 2011); they lean towards each other simultaneously, maintaining eye contact with each other, listening attentively, and encouraging their colleagues to work faster. Being affected by the surrounding materialities and the bodies of other participants can be felt in the body, in the quickening heartbeats, sweat, and pain before release:

[At the business idea development workshop that the second author attended] The relief from the intensity of the previous task is short-lived. There are only a few seconds before the next

15-minute acceleration. 'Ok, let's move on, people!' Jukka [the facilitator] shouts, gives us the next task, and sets the timer. As in the previous tasks, we lean towards each other, but this time we start writing our ideas on the post-it notes immediately. The fast-beat background music is turned up and the bass waves resonate with our bodies. It feels stunning; my heartbeat quickens, I speed up my writing, and everyone else seems to be speeding up too. The handwriting becomes messy; my hand hurts but I keep on writing without thinking. Like the other teams, we keep on negotiating, writing, and slapping the post-it notes onto the table as quickly as we can before time is up. The room becomes filled with the uproar of fast-beat music, the noise of people talking, and the sound as the post-it notes are placed on the tables. The atmosphere is electric. When the time is up, the room explodes with excitement that can be sensed in the body in the clapping, hugs, yells, whistling, and laughter.

This third vignette illustrates the embodied character of dressage, a state where one does not have to think about the 'proper' conduct, and the body is fluently attuned to the affecto-rhythmic order of practice. In other words, one can feel 'stunned' by the practice, as described in the vignette. While feeling stunned is an individual bodily sensation, it is also a social accomplishment—an outcome of being 'affectively attuned' to practice—(Reckwitz, 2017: 119), including its rhythms, heterogeneous relations between bodies, expressions like 'let's move on, people,' the sense of acceleration, and multiple materialities such as the tremor of the bass waves in the body, the digital timer signaling the flow of time, and the slapping of post-it notes onto the table. This successful, social enactment of the affecto-rhythmic order is 'contagious' (e.g. Gherardi, 2018), shifting from body to body and creating an electric atmosphere manifested in the uproar of enthusiastic sounds of work and in perky, positive gestures like high fives and hugs. In particular, it has the potential to alter individual and collective capacities to act—that is, to energize collective doing and enable the participants to speed up as well as to continue working long hours. The effects of affecto-rhythmic practices are not, however, equal:

I [the second author] feel exhausted after nine and a half hours of intense effort at the business idea development workshop, too many cups of coffee, and too little food and rest. But I am not complaining, and no one else seems to complain either. The next morning people look tired but happy when they try to wake up with coffee. 'A terrible hangover without a sip of alcohol,' Peter [a participant] says and smiles happily. Soon, after a 'warm-up session,' the positive energy is back in the room. But not everybody is happy after the first day; some participants felt they couldn't keep up with the rhythm and constantly lagged behind their peers. They didn't show up on the second day of the workshop because they'd found the rhythm of the event too stressful.

This last vignette shows how participating in the business idea development practice and its affecto-rhythmic upbeat order impact the accelerator participants in ways that go beyond the moments in which those affects emerged. Even though affective sensations are short-lived, the memory of joyful or distressing sensations can both 'attach' and 'detach' participants to practice (Gherardi, 2017b: 216). The vast majority of the accelerator participants became attached to the practice of business idea development through the kinds of persuasive affective sensations experienced in this practice. Other participants, however, felt that the imposed affecto-rhythmic upbeat order was 'too much,' and thus left the 4UNI accelerator. This highlights the non-negotiable nature of the affecto-rhythmic order in our case; either you learn it or you opt out.

Furthermore, this last vignette illustrates how linear and cyclical time (Lefebvre, 2004) are intimately connected in the enactment of the business idea development practice and its affecto-rhythmic upbeat order. Even though the practice highlights linear time, the cyclical time and cyclical needs of the body such as hunger and rest inevitably shape and are shaped by it. In particular, the vignette indicates that in learning and embodying the practice of business idea development and the upbeat order, the accelerator participants learn implicitly to disregard the cyclical needs of the body and to partly control them, signaling the priority of overlapping rhythms in contemporary society where linear time dominates. This is evident in the doings and sayings of the accelerator participants; although participation required working long hours without rest and nutrition, nobody complained publicly. Rather, the participants expressed a state of being 'happy and tired' and a willingness to work even harder.

The practice of sales pitching: Developing a professional vision and taste for the upbeat

In the previous section, we sought to illustrate how the business idea development practice at the 4UNI accelerator assumes a contextual affecto-rhythmic upbeat order and how the accelerator participants learn and embody this order over time through repetitive participation in practice. In this section, we shift our analytical attention to another key practice of the 4UNI accelerator, the practice of sales pitching, and seek to demonstrate how it assumes a similar upbeat order, and, in particular, how the participants in this practice develop 'a professional vision' and 'taste' (Gherardi, 2009b) for that order. Whereas professional vision refers to the capacity to identify and discuss the affecto-rhythmic order as a particular feature of practice, taste refers to the capacity to make aesthetic judgments regarding its more-or-less appropriate enactment. The following vignette focuses on how the upbeat order is translated into an object of knowledge that can be identified, discussed, and aesthetically evaluated as part of the sales-pitch practice:

In a sales-pitch training workshop our [including the second author] task is to develop a three-minute sales pitch based on our business idea. The workshop facilitator shows us a PowerPoint slide that illustrates the key phases of a professional pitch (Hi!; Problem; Solution; Value; Ask; Thank you!), and explains: 'The pitch format is like the etiquette for the *Linnanjuhlat* [the formal ceremonies on the Finnish independence day at the presidential palace]. It helps you make good choices. You can jump off the format, but then you really need to know what you're doing. When you hop on stage, pause for a second. Say "hi" and let the audience know that it's now your turn. And when you're finishing, pause for a second, and say "thank you." The judges want *tight* stuff. There's no time for being *loose* [emphasis in speech]. You need to buy your listeners' time with the beginning of your pitch. An average researcher speaks 2.5 to 3 minutes about the problem and then quickly runs through the solution. You definitely have to explain the problem, but really, really briefly [use a hand gesture to demonstrate how brief]. Then, you have to move on to the solution. And this first part [of the pitch] can take max, max, max 15 to 20 seconds,' the facilitator tells us.

By educating the accelerator participants in the sales-pitch format, the facilitator in this vignette provides a template that allows them to develop a professional vision and

taste consisting of aesthetic knowledge, professional vocabulary, and materiality (Gherardi, 2009b) relevant for the affecto-rhythmic order of the sales pitch. In particular, the template renders the specific rhythms and the appropriate or desired affective aspects of sales pitching visible and negotiable—a linear structure with a clear beginning and end, a fast pace, six identifiable phases, timing in seconds, pauses before and after the pitch. The affective attunement is one of energetic *tightness*. By highlighting specific elements of the sales pitch with bodily gestures and verbal expressions, the facilitator further accentuates their importance; you should heed them and enact them with care. Hence, the template provides participants with a ‘way of seeing’ sales pitches in general and their affecto-rhythmic order in particular.

As a part of this template, participants are provided with a vocabulary for evaluating and making aesthetic judgments about the more-or-less appropriate enactment of the affecto-rhythmic order of the sales pitch. In the vignette, this vocabulary includes several metaphoric expressions. Firstly, the sales-pitch format is compared to the etiquette of the Finnish Independence Day celebrations at the presidential palace. This metaphor emphasizes the regulative nature of the affecto-rhythmic order; it is good and proper—the standard. This metaphor further implies that enacting the correct pitching format, like the etiquette, allows you to make the ‘right’ impression, for instance to persuade the audience to obtain funding for a venture. In particular, it is suggested that by learning the sales-pitch format and sticking to it you can produce the desired affective impact, whereas departure from the format results in failure; ‘researchers’ who talk too long about the problem rather than moving on in good time to the solution are an example. It is further explicitly stated that only experts can play with the sales-pitch format and that novice participants should not even try. This emphasizes the normative character of the affecto-rhythmic order.

Secondly, the desirable, affecto-rhythmically appropriate sales-pitch performance is described as *tight* and the undesirable version as *loose*. These metaphorical criteria have a strong affective component; our ability to distinguish tight performances from loose ones rests on our capacity to be affected in a particular way and our ability to identify both rhythms and affective intensities in practice. Furthermore, the metaphors of ‘no time for being loose’ and ‘you need to buy your listeners’ time’ accentuate the specific affecto-rhythmic upbeat order in our example. Taken together, the factual and metaphorical expressions depicting appropriate and inappropriate enactment of the affecto-rhythmic order provide participants with a template for recognizing and aesthetically evaluating specific sales-pitch performances and transform what they see in those performances into communicable knowledge credible at the 4UNI accelerator and in the startup community at large. The following vignette shows how the accelerator participants are trained to use this template in action:

With the facilitator’s instructions in mind, each team pitches their business idea to the other participants and the facilitator. While we [including the second author] applaud and whistle, Perttu [a participant] walks in front of the space, turns his body towards us, and smiles. There is good energy and excitement in the room; people are smiling and sitting towards Perttu in small groups. Perttu starts: ‘Hi! I assume we’ve all been young at some point’ [smiles]. People laugh, which creates a relaxed atmosphere. Despite an energetic start, Perttu seems nervous and

uncertain. He keeps glancing at his written notes, walks around restlessly, struggles with words and uses several fillers like ‘you know’ and ‘um’ while falling out of the rhythm. The audience faces him and sits quietly; some are nodding their heads while following the performance carefully. When Perttu finishes, we give him a long round of encouraging applause and start commenting on the pitch with the facilitators’ instructions in mind: ‘Please, don’t kill the positive energy. When you give feedback, always remember to replace “no” and “but” with “yes, and.”’ Mikko [a facilitator] is the first to comment: ‘Umm . . . [he tries to find the words] as a speaker you are great . . . good presence and great use of voice. The introduction was too long . . . it needs to be shortened.’ Julia [a participant] continues: ‘I also think the intro was too long . . . you need to get to the solution earlier . . . strong ending anyhow [smiles]’. There are some more comments, some of which Mikko asks the participants to reformulate because the forbidden words ‘no’ and ‘but’ were used.

This vignette shows how a professional vision and taste for the affecto-rhythmic order are developed and legitimized through repetitive bodily training or dressage (Gherardi, 2009b). At the 4UNI accelerator, this bodily training comprises taking different roles in repetitive pitching exercises: by pitching in front of other participants, by observing and sensing the sales pitches of other participants, by evaluating their sales pitches, and by following how experienced participants such as the facilitators comment on the sales pitches and evaluate them. Through repetition, the participants can develop the sensual, bodily capacity to identify and assess the more-or-less ‘proper’ enactment of the affecto-rhythmic order of sales pitching. This entails learning to use your body in particular ways—to focus your bodily senses, to be open to affective contagion, and to control your interpretations in accordance with the particular affecto-rhythmic order, which defines the contextual criteria for a ‘good’ sales pitch. Hence, professional vision and taste can be seen as relational bodily capacities that are continuously developed and refined in multiple relations between human and nonhuman bodies.

Interestingly, this vignette further illustrates how the accelerator participants act upon knowledge obtained through emerging professional vision and taste. In particular, although Perttu has difficulties in delivering his sales pitch, the participants in the audience assume collective responsibility for maintaining and sustaining the affecto-rhythmic upbeat order throughout their performances. As participants in the same situated practice, they back up the contextually appropriate upbeat order. Rather than forcefully criticizing Perttu’s performance, the participants enact the positive and perky order by whistling, clapping their hands enthusiastically, smiling and nodding, and communicating their feedback and evaluations in a positive and encouraging manner. This indicates that when participating in sales-pitch practice the accelerator participants not only develop a professional vision and taste for a specific affecto-rhythmic order but also (re) produce it collectively and assume responsibility for its maintenance, that is, they are attuned to it. This is also apparent in the following vignette:

Throughout the accelerator program the expert evaluations of the sales pitches guide our [including the second author] learning process. According to the expert evaluations, the ‘correct’ rhythm is intense, fast-paced, energetic and coupled with a confident, positive, and entertaining bodily performance. Pitches that meet these criteria are judged ‘tight’ or ‘professional,’ while uncertain or slow-paced performances are judged ‘loose’ or ‘too broad.’

Before the accelerator's semifinal event, we make the last adjustments to our sales pitch and analyze a video recording of our training pitch. Anne [a pitching team member] comments on her bodily performance: 'Damn it, I forgot my hands again [points at a laptop screen with her hand]. The intensity is totally missing if I just stand like that. I need to remember my hands . . . to be more active with them.'

This last vignette illustrates how the capacity to identify and make aesthetic judgments (Gherardi, 2009b) about such affecto-rhythmically 'appropriate' sales pitches become embodied. In particular, the taste criteria become understandable and identifiable in fine detail through repetitive expert appraisal of the pitching performances. This enables the participants to connect specific rhythms, bodily performances, and affective sensations with the aesthetic classificatory criteria of tight and/or loose. Hence, embodying a professional vision and taste for the affecto-rhythmic order entails the ability to affect and be affected by the nuances of the pitching performances. Such practical knowledge rests on the body's sensory capacities (Gherardi, 2009b; Strati, 2007, 2012). Gaining these bodily capacities moves the trainees from semi-reflective appraisal to the reflective appraisal of the affecto-rhythmic order, as shown by the video assessment of one's own pitch. The sensory capacities developed according to the aesthetic codes of the practice are extended to self-monitoring and self-development. Learning such capacities entails active participation in practice and is accomplished in relationships among multiple agents such as peers and experts.

Discussion and conclusions

In this article, we have argued that the connection between rhythms and affects has been overlooked in the extant organizational literature, and we have developed an integrative concept of affecto-rhythmic order to illuminate this connection. We define affecto-rhythmic order as the constitutive entanglement of social rhythms and affective attunement in everyday situated practices. This concept directs attention to the norms, aesthetic criterion, and bodily sensations that specify the 'appropriate' rhythms and the more-or-less shared affective states enacted in practice. This suggests that these two aspects of practice are mutually forming each other. Becoming a competent organizational member, then, requires learning and knowing situated affecto-rhythmic order and embodying it in practice. This is a process that is sensed in the body when engaging in practice. Our ethnographic investigation demonstrates how learning and embodying of an affecto-rhythmic 'upbeat' order in accelerator practices entails sensory openness to order and submission to ongoing bodily dressage. This further entails being assessed and assessing others as well as learning how to affect/be affected by others in keeping with the order.

Through our study, we contribute to the literature on sociomaterial practices in organizations. First, while prior studies have examined the rhythms of practice as if they were subjectively experienced, produced in practice, and constitutive of it (Nicolini, 2007; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Schatzki, 2010), little attention has been paid to the affective quality of rhythms. By recognizing that the relationship between practice-specific rhythms and affects is entangled, we were able to elucidate how the rhythmic assembling of organizational practice affects (i.e. increases or diminishes) the capacity of those participating

in the practice to act on an individual and/or collective level. Thus, the significance of the concept of affecto-rhythmic order is that it articulates the coupling of rhythms and affects and their simultaneous consequences for the accomplishment of organizational practice.

Increasing scholarly attention is being paid to sociomaterial practices and affects (Ashcraft, 2017; Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Gherardi, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Katila et al., 2019; Kuhn et al., 2017). We enrich this discussion and respond to the recent calls to examine the role of affects in organizations and organizing (e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2012; Fotaki et al., 2017) by theorizing and empirically illustrating the entanglement of the relationship between practice-specific rhythms and affects and forming a situated affecto-rhythmic order. This suggests that each organizational practice has a situated and 'appropriate' affecto-rhythmic order providing norms and an aesthetic criterion defining the rhythms and affective attunement that can be enacted in specific practices. In so doing, the affecto-rhythmic order contributes to the collective coordination and synchronization of bodies and materialities in practice, creating an identifiable affective feel around the practice. Our study further suggests that rhythmic and affective changes in organizational practice are interdependent; while the rhythms of 'well-functioning' or 'fluent' practice may increase practitioners' capacity to act, drastic and sudden changes in rhythms can diminish this capacity and thus fundamentally erode the practice. To elaborate how the concept of affecto-rhythmic order allows us to analyze and better understand the reciprocal relationship between (changing) rhythms and (changing) affects and the effects thereof on organizational practice, we use an example from the context of Finnish elderly care.

In winter 2019, Finnish media reported several cases of malpractice in publicly funded care for the elderly (Yle, 2019). In many institutions, care practices had traditionally produced not only the requisite technical services but also a palpable sense among patients, their relatives, and the workers themselves that care and security were being provided. The report, however, showed that a sharp acceleration in care work rhythms due to implementation of 'more-with-less' policies was assaulting this tradition, especially in private elderly care homes. Specifically, this rhythmic increase in pace meant that care workers in many institutions felt that they no longer had time to maintain this standard; a palpable sense of neglect and insecurity was the result. Consequently, when considered through the concept of affecto-rhythmic order, this example can be understood as an illustrative case of how changes in the rhythms of organizational practice may conflict with the 'appropriate' affecto-rhythmic order connected to the practice, thus diminishing the capacity of practitioners to act and diluting the practice in question.

Second, we have highlighted that competent participation in organizational practice entails learning a contextual affecto-rhythmic order and embodying it in the practice. Specifically, we have shown how inter-corporeal learning of this order underpins the abilities of competent accelerator participants to coordinate their activities smoothly in entrepreneurial teams. Earlier literature has conceptualized practice-based, inter-corporeal learning in terms of 'coordination' or 'synchronization' between bodies (e.g. Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Strati, 2007); we add to these studies by showing how such learning works via 'affective attunement.' This enables us to emphasize and better understand how inter-corporeal learning functions affectively in and through achieving a connection with other actors and participating in a shared affective space. Furthermore,

while earlier research has demonstrated how practitioners develop sensorial skills enabling them to anticipate subtle shifts in the embodied conduct of others, and to respond and adjust to ‘varying circumstances’ (e.g. Hindmarsh and Pilnick, 2007; Yakhlef and Essen, 2013), our analysis, in line with Strati (2007), draws attention to how bodies are expected to be constantly aware of delicate changes in the affectual intensities of other bodies, both human and non-human, adjust to them, and also be responsible for maintaining practice-specific affective intensities. Hence, our study grasps and conceptualizes the dynamic and delicate ways in which an assemblage of human and non-human bodies—and not only individual artefacts such as the surgeon’s scalpel (Strati, 2012)—shapes inter-corporeal learning and knowing through their affectual presence.

Third, we contribute to discussion on the regulative power of sociomaterial practices (e.g. Geiger, 2009; Gherardi, 2009a, 2009b; Meriläinen et al., 2015). We have highlighted how accelerator participants in our case (are pushed to) develop and adopt certain ‘upbeat’ appearances, behaviors, and sensual capacities that manifest the regulative effects of participation in organizational practices. Earlier research has acknowledged that norms inscribed in practices regulate the body by guiding its proper conduct (e.g. Gherardi, 2009b). We extend this research by illustrating how this regulation works at the level of affects. Specifically, we show how affects function through organizational practices to energize and attach competent participants to a practice in which they (willingly) submit themselves to intensive and rather coercive dressage in keeping with a contextual affecto-rhythmic order. Although the participants in our case worked long days in rhythmically and affectively intensive circumstances, they still claimed that they were ‘happy and tired.’ This is an apt example of how competent participants are ‘carried away’ by the practice (Reckwitz, 2017), even though it may disrupt the body’s biological rhythms (Valtonen et al., 2017). We thereby suggest that the concept of affecto-rhythmic order enables us to better capture the potential of sociomaterial practices to regulate bodies by compelling them via a hooking ‘mood’ or ‘groove’—a phenomenon strikingly present in the practices we analyzed, but also identifiable in other types of organizational practices that involve passionate attachment (see Gherardi, 2009b).

Fourth, we make a methodological contribution to organizational studies on affect. Scholars in this area have argued that empirical study of affect involves challenges (Fotaki et al., 2017) and that methodological developments are needed to integrate affect into organizational analysis (e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). Building on a Deleuzian view of affect, we add to this research by showing how a combination of affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2018; Stewart, 2007) and rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2004) can serve as a fruitful methodological approach for examining affect and writing about it in organizational research. Affective ethnography and rhythmanalysis share an analytical emphasis on the body and bodily responses. When brought together, these approaches enable simultaneous analysis of affects and rhythms, offer vocabulary for a sociomaterial analysis acknowledging, for example, both social and biological rhythms and their affective nature, and suggest a writing method which aims at simultaneously ‘communicating’ rhythms and their affective consequences in a manner that allows the reader to sense them. While lengthy reflection on the efficacy of this methodological combination is beyond the discussion here, suffice it to say that we find that grasping and theorizing the relations between affects and rhythms in the 4UNI accelerator practices would have been

impossible without the embodied, affective participation of the second author in the practices. While video recordings and other documents allow analysis of repetitive actions, body movement, and visible reactions of the people studied, the sensory experiences of the participant researcher play a key role in identifying, reflecting, and communicating the entanglement of rhythms and affects in the (accelerator) practices.

To conclude, our study has sociopolitical implications. In particular, we suggest that as different kinds of entrepreneurship programs and spaces—including accelerators, incubators, and boot camps—are becoming increasingly common in educational, corporate, and government settings, and are actively celebrated in the media and on social media, critical attention should be paid to the (affecto-rhythmic) practices of these programs and spaces. In particular, our study proposes that these programs and spaces may function as important sites, or even ‘factories,’ for affective intensities that work to attach ‘competent’ entrepreneurial participants to precarious work conditions, leaving little opportunity for skepticism or critical resistance.

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Notes

- 1 Ashcraft (2017), Ashcraft and Kuhn (2018), and Kuhn et al. (2017), which are cited later in this study, consider organizations to be communicatively constituted. Because the onto-epistemological starting points they follow are very similar to sociomaterial practice theories, we group them together for the purposes of this study.
- 2 Though our focus is on practice-specific affective attunement, we acknowledge that the affective intensity typical of a practice is fragile and can be disrupted in multiple ways (e.g. Ashcraft and Kuhn, 2018; Gherardi, 2017b; Keevers and Sykes, 2016; Kuhn et al., 2017; Valtonen et al., 2017).

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