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Identities in Translation: Management Concepts as Means and Outcomes of Identity Work

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Abstract

This article seeks to develop our understanding of how management concepts are translated by examining the role of identity work in this process. Rather than a sole focus on changes in a management concept, we examine tensions and congruences between agents' orientations towards that concept and how they see the broader organizational engagement with it. Through an examination of qualitative data from a study of those specifically tasked with the implementation of Lean in hospital contexts, we identify their narratives of self in relation to the concept. We show how, through four different types of *translation-as-identity-work* – externalizing, professionalizing, rationalizing and proselytizing – both the concept and the agent are constructed simultaneously. In recognizing interconnectedness, diversity and dynamism in these actors' involvement, we seek to integrate, contextualize and broaden existing perspectives on agency in translation research.

Keywords

agency, identity work, Lean, management concepts, translation

Introduction

Organizations have invested significant amounts of resources in the implementation of new management concepts (Radaelli & Sitton-Kent, 2016). In the last two decades, the processes through

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which these concepts are adopted and adapted have received increasing attention (e.g. Abrahamson & Piazza, 2019). For example, the adoption and adaptation of Total Quality Management, Lean Management and Business Process Re-engineering have all been studied from a number of theoretical perspectives (Sturdy, 2004). One important approach that emerged is that of 'translation' which is concerned with the modification and variation of ideas as they travel the 'distance' between source and new 'recipient' settings (Morris & Lancaster, 2006). This represented an important advance in understanding the flow and impact of management concepts (see reviews in Spyridonidis, Currie, Heusinkveld, Strauss, & Sturdy, 2016). In addition, studies have also shed light on the strategies and framing activities of diverse agents in the modification of management concepts, particularly in relation to their institutionalization (e.g. proselytizing as 'spreading the message' in Reay et al., 2013, p. 978). However, we still know remarkably little about the 'role of agency in translation' (Zilber, 2006, p. 300), especially that of those specifically tasked with implementation (Cassell & Lee, 2016; Huising, 2016). Indeed, extant research offers little detail about how translating agents construct themselves in relation to a concept, beyond the assumption that agents may identify and dis-identify with a concept (e.g. Huising, 2016; Mueller & Whittle, 2011). In other words, a better understanding of agents in their role as translators may shed more light on the subjective processes of translation and how these may ultimately shape the agents themselves. Or, as Huising noted:

> The primary focus of the adaptation and translation literatures is the changing nature of the practices as they move across time and space. . .. The people involved in changing the practices–their experiences, interpretations, and decisions–are not at the center of the literature. (Huising, 2016, p. 388)

Such a focus is important for two main reasons. First, prior studies have emphasized the 'virtually unlimited and unpredictable directions and outcomes of the interpretations that local actors make when responding to circulating ideas' (Røvik, 2016, p. 4). However, critical to understanding this potential heterogeneity of translation processes (e.g. see Cassell & Lee, 2016) is a consideration of those who perform such work in context. In particular, and as noted by Mueller and Whittle (2011), there is a need for more micro-level research to better understand how and why key agents make ideas 'come to life'. Second, and relatedly, developing a conceptualization of the agents in translation is important because their identity is central to how ideas travel. This is evident from long-standing debates outside of translation research on why and how popular management concepts are produced and disseminated (e.g. Huczynski, 2006). For example, the extent to which ideas 'constitute the identity of the modern senior manager as an heroic, transformative leader' is often held to explain *why* some ideas gain more popularity than others (Clark & Salaman, 1998, p. 137). Likewise, managers' identities themselves can be the target of those who seek to instil ideas such as TQM into organizations (e.g. Kelemen, 2000). In other words, there can be a strong existential resonance between ideas and agents (Knights & Morgan, 1991). Similarly, research has shown both how self-identity and the meaning attached to an idea may significantly influence *how* it is supported and institutionalized (David & Strang, 2006; Özen & Berkman, 2007). In short, agents' identities have long been considered central to understanding the popularity and adoption of management concepts (e.g. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Wilhelm & Bort, 2013) and yet have not featured significantly in accounts of how they are *translated*. Thus, it is difficult to conceive how we can come to a closer understanding of the diverse patterns of translation if we do not have an adequate conceptualization of the variety of ways in which agents engage with ideas in different organizational contexts and construct themselves while doing so.

In seeking to address these areas of relative neglect, we draw on research on identity work (Brown, 2017), which has the potential to help understand some of the resources through which

individuals shape (and are shaped by) the translation process (e.g. Cassell & Lee, 2016). We shall explore this empirically by investigating those formally tasked with the implementation and translation of the concept of *Lean* in the context of a network of hospitals. We identify different types of translation-as-identity-work in relation to *Lean* and show how these are systematically associated with the relationship between individuals' orientations towards the concept and their perceptions of the wider organizational engagement with it. In doing so, we show how both the concept and agents are simultaneously co-constructed in these types of identity work. Thus, we seek to contribute to translation research in management, in three main ways.

First, our findings provide a way of integrating two relatively distinct and poorly connected approaches to agency in existing translation research – as organizationally *embedded* or individually *strategic*. Second and relatedly, we develop a conceptualization of translation work that incorporates detail, context and coherence in explaining how agents' identification with a concept may vary. Third, in advancing our understanding of how these processes shape agents, we build a conceptual model that views translation as a *dual* mechanism, in which agents narratively construct both the concept *and* themselves in relation to their organization.

The article is structured as follows. We first review the literature on the translation of management concepts to reveal the potential to develop its conception of agency and the lack of attention to the relationship through which management concepts and agents shape each other. Here, we also introduce identity work as an appropriate lens to explore these shortcomings. This is followed by a discussion of our research methods and empirical context. The subsequent sections present the research findings, revealing different types of *translation-as-identity-work* and common attributes of them. Finally, we discuss the implications of our analysis and provide some directions for further research.

Agency in Translation

A growing body of research on the flow and impact of management concepts draws on translation theory. Despite different interpretations of what translation entails (Spyridonidis et al., 2016), theorists have shared a concern with the local (re)construction of ideas and concepts as they travel across and within organizations (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Often building on Latour (1986) and typically adopting a (social) constructivist ontology, these scholars took issue with the apparent stability and standardization implicit in some traditional studies of innovation diffusion. Instead, they viewed ideas as being socially produced as they are reconstituted in new locations (Røvik, 2016). Studies in this tradition have emphasized how ideas and their perceived attributes have no existence in and of themselves, but are rather 'created, negotiated or imposed during the collective translation process' (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 25). Sahlin and Wedlin (2008), for example, highlighted the symbolic nature of this process, arguing that 'what is being transferred from one setting to another is not an idea or a practice as such, but rather accounts and materializations of a certain idea or practice' (p. 225).

While acknowledging that translation 'is in the hands of people' (Latour, 1986, p. 267) and that ideas are translated by social agents rather than simply imposed on organizations and their staff, this line of research has often – and paradoxically – neglected questions of (individual) agency in context (Zilber, 2006). Rather, it has typically maintained a focus on documenting the modification of concepts, with explanations outlining the differences between the 'original' idea and its translated form as if this was distinct from their ongoing construction (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013; Wæraas & Sataøen, 2014).

In response, some recent work building on this tradition has started to 'redirect [our] attention to the importance of change participants' active engagement in the implementation process' (Gondo

& Amis, 2013, p. 242), especially in creating variation in organizational practices. Such studies emphasize how diverse agents, especially those in managerial and professional roles, use different rhetorical vehicles such as discursive practices and persuasive narratives to construct ideas in the process of translation (Cassell & Lee, 2016; Mueller & Whittle, 2011; Radaelli & Sitton-Kent, 2016; Reay et al., 2013).

In this emerging line of research, two relatively distinct perspectives on human agency within translation are evident. In some studies, individuals are portrayed as largely representative of, or wholly *embedded* in, 'organization[s] as an agentic actor[s] in the translation process' (Heinze, Soderstrom, & Heinze, 2016, p. 1143). They are seen to engage in 'an implicit search for pragmatic solutions' to fit *organizational* needs (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009, p. 191). This *embeddedness* approach tends to focus on the local organizational context for explaining the specific reception of ideas. Thus, translation outcomes are seen not as arbitrary modifications, but as governed by the way 'different contexts provide different editing rules' (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008, p. 226). More specifically, through rules related to 'context', 'logic' and 'formulation', ideas are seen to evolve differently in different settings. Kirkpatrick, Bullinger, Lega and Dent (2013), for example, show how the rules of four different healthcare organizational contexts are linked to particular translations of a form of hospital management (see also Helin & Sandström, 2010). In this embeddedness approach, we often find organizations and individuals to be conflated or, at least, not distinguished. In practice, such an approach stresses 'the role of actors as local interpreters and translators who are themselves embedded in both organizational and professional contexts' (Pallas, Fredriksson, & Wedlin, 2016, p. 1663).

Other studies, by contrast, follow what may be labelled a *strategizing* approach to translation. Here, agency is conceptualized as resulting from individuals' more personal redefinitions of the meaning of a concept. Or as Kirkpatrick et al. (2013, p. 49) note: 'a "strategizing" approach places most emphasis on the strategic intentions of actors in the translation (process) to promote their own interests'. Even though these intentions do not need to be in opposition to wider organizational considerations, the point here is that there are more bases on which an agent might interpret an idea than those provided by embeddedness in a specific *organizational* context. The opportunities of different interpretations allow key actors to shape ideas strategically in line with their individual preferences (Boxenbaum & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2009). Such a portrayal of agency in translation foregrounds 'the self-determinacy of managerial consumers [and] shows how they strategically use management ideas and adapt or "translate" them for their own ends' (Groß, Heusinkveld, & Clark, 2015, p. 276). For example, Boxenbaum and Battilana (2005) show how the concept of diversity management was translated to a Danish context on the basis of the individual preferences of a number of key actors (see also Morris & Lancaster, 2006; Nicolai & Dautwiz, 2010; Özen & Berkman, 2007).

Both embedded and strategic conceptualizations of agency have provided important insights into the outcomes of translation in terms of how *concepts* are constructed in context. However, there is significant scope for development. First, and in keeping with longstanding debates around agency in social theory, the emphasis towards either determinism or voluntarism is highly problematic (Heinze et al., 2016). Agents do not simply behave in accordance with some unitary notion of an organization, or even occupational role, nor solely in pursuit of their own separate interests, as each dynamic can inform the other. In other words, the connection between the different approaches to agency in translation research remains underdeveloped.

Second, each approach is quite narrow and static in the sense that they imply rather instrumental or purposive agents. There is little acknowledgement of their potentially contradictory, multifarious and emergent orientations (Brown, 2017). This neglect is surprising, since we know from numerous established studies within management that individuals' diverse values, feelings and

goals can be central to their engagement with both organizations and managerial concepts (e.g. Etzioni, 1961; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). This agency can be linked to the diverse social systems associated with management and organizations (e.g. Whittington, 1992). For example, research on *champions of change* and middle managers has examined role conflict and complexity associated with inconsistent expectations surrounding identity formation and the ontological (in)security involved (e.g. Currie & Procter, 2005; Mantere, 2008). Similarly, in studying the flow and impact of management concepts on employees, other research, beyond translation, points to the diversity of agents and responses to new concepts (Edwards, Collinson, & Rees, 1998). Even within management ranks, these responses can range from being critical, compliant or cooperative to being committed and championing new concepts, and may also include more ambivalent or unstable positions (e.g. Groß et al., 2015). However, the role of such a variety of possible orientations in the translation of concepts is largely absent in translation research. Furthermore, while there has been some attention to those acting in hybrid middle management and professional roles in the translation process (Reay et al., 2013; Spyridonidis & Currie, 2016; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013), few have focused on those who perform translation as part of their core responsibility (Radaelli & Sitton-Kent, 2016). Additionally, these agents tend to be defined largely in terms of their formal, structurally intermediate positions, rather than as individual actors with potentially diverse, complex and changing orientations towards translating a particular concept in context.

A third and final concern with existing conceptualizations of agency in research on the translation of management concepts is that they do not recognize how agents themselves may be simultaneously translated. This is something that is well established in studies of the use of goods and services for example, where consumers are also changed (e.g. Heusinkveld, Sturdy, & Werr, 2011). The oversight is especially surprising since the translation of actors is an explicit element in actor-network theory and the sociology of translation (Callon, 1984; Latour, 1986), from where translation studies in management have often drawn their inspiration. For example, Latour noted how translation denotes the 'creat[ion] of a new link that modifies . . . those who translated and that which is translated' (Latour, 1993, p. 6). Or as Frenkel (2005, p. 279) states: 'Both the idea and those who adopt it change during the process of translation.'

In summary then, studies of translation in management have recognized human agency, but conceptualizations are relatively poorly connected, narrow and static in their view of orientations and neglect the way in which agents are also produced through the use of ideas. There is, then, a need to recognize greater interdependence of orientations and diversity and dynamism in the agency of translation and to attend to how agents themselves are translated in this process. In recognition of this challenge, we outline below how drawing on a perspective of identity work and identification is a potentially fruitful way of developing this aspect of translation further.

Identity Work and Identification

The growing recognition that 'we cannot understand processes of organizing unless we understand identity' (Phillips & Hardy 2002, p. 52) has fuelled different theoretical perspectives on identity, especially in terms of how stable, sovereign or decentred identity is (Brown, 2014). Our intermediate position follows that of Giddens (1991) and others whereby identity is seen as a continually and reflexively constructed narrative, produced largely through discursive acts in the ongoing interaction of structure and agency. A key development in this tradition has been the concept of 'identity work' (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006), to help explain the agentic activity through which individuals seek to construct and negotiate 'a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity' (Watson, 2008, p. 129). Research in this area often emphasizes diverse and sometimes conflicting identities, certainly beyond those associated with formally rational or simple

responses to organizational demands. Following long sociological (interactionist) traditions, it shows how identity is accomplished or pursued through a dialectic between 'external' social identities and 'internal' notions of personal self-identity (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Thus, a number of studies identify some of the narrative strategies and tactics individuals engage in to construct a coherent understanding of the self when there are tensions between the two spaces (e.g. Pratt, Schultz, Ashforth, & Ravasi, 2016). Watson (2003), for example, shows how strategic managers draw on discursive resources to revise and reconstruct identities and establish a distance between self and other (see also Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; McInnes & Corlett, 2012).

A key part of the process of identity work is therefore, *identification* – viewing and incorporating the essence of an identity target as self-defining (Brown, 2017; see also Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Employees for example may have different individual-level targets of identification such as an organization, occupation, team, or hierarchical role, but also particular ideas (Snow & Anderson, 1987). Here, by differentiating the boundaries and/or attributes of identity targets, individuals discursively accomplish identities, often seeking a sense of self-respect and dignity. This may then also allow them to maintain various types of protective distance (or *dis*-identification) from any imposed professional or managerial identities deemed as conflicting (Atewologun, Kutzer, Doldor, Anderson, & Sealy, 2017). By contrast, self-identity may be reinforced when there is a congruence (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) or an ambivalent or neutral position can be taken (Brown, 2017). Thus, identification comprises 'identity talk' through which individuals can bring different attributes of targets into their own identities (Ashforth, Harrison, &d Corley, 2008). This is a dynamic process such that individuals can shift identifications, through what Ellis and Ybema (2010) term 'discursive positioning' and thereby continually construct inclusive and exclusive 'selves' vis-a-vis significant others.

As identification is commonly used to denote both a state of being *and* a process of becoming (e.g. Atewologun et al., 2017), it can be regarded as both an *outcome and means* of identity work (also Pratt et al., 2016). Here, again, individuals pursue an understanding of the self in a dialectic between 'external' social identities and 'internal' notions of personal self-identity (see Figure 1). This view is especially relevant to our specific concerns with how, and why, management concepts are translated. Hence, a focus on identification would allow developing a more integrative conceptualization of agency in translation by studying discursive positioning around tensions or congruences between actors' own orientations towards a concept and wider organizational expectations around it. The latter for example would be reflected in actors' perceptions of organizational elite orientations such as those of senior management and professionals. At the same time, an identification lens can clarify how translation is partly linked to the pursuit of identities and can therefore help us understand how the shaping of management concepts might simultaneously construct the agents involved. Figure 1 captures how the logic of identification in identity work may reveal the translation of management concepts as a dual process. Accordingly, we seek to answer the question: *How do those tasked with implementing a new management concept engage in identity work to manage the tensions or congruences between their own orientations and what they perceive as the organization's engagement with the concept?*

Method

Research setting

For the purpose of this paper, we focused on the management concept of 'Lean' in the context of Dutch healthcare. Lean can be traced back to scientific management traditions and the Toyota production system. Despite different interpretations and labels (e.g. *six sigma*), the main claim of Lean

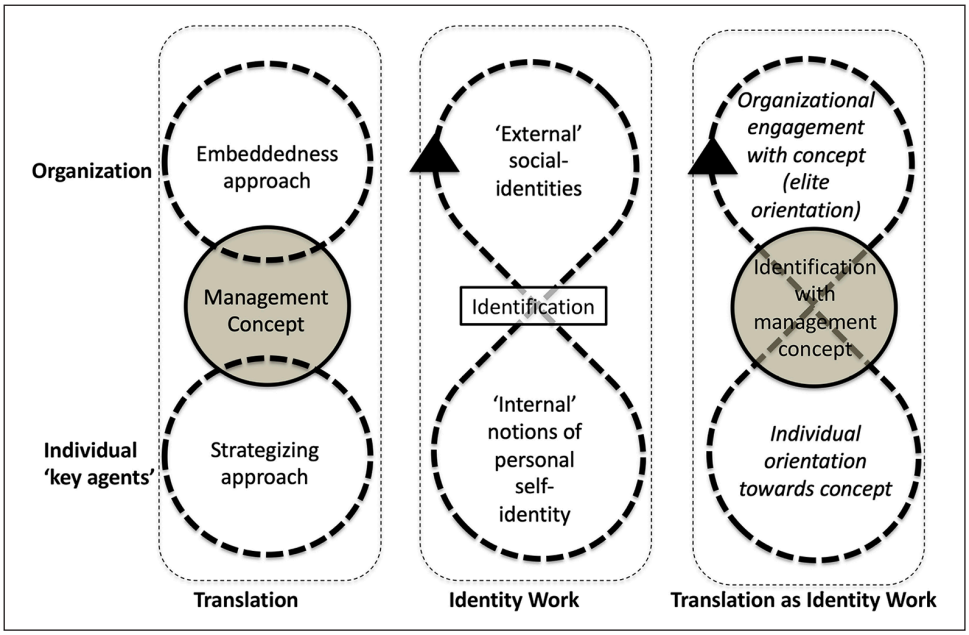

Figure 1. The logic of translation as identity work.

is to bring 'value to the customer' through continuous quality improvement and waste reduction (Womack & Jones, 2003). Lean qualifies as a 'prescriptive notion[s] on how to manage or organize, (that is) meant for consumption by managers, and known by a particular label' (Benders & Verlaar, 2003, p. 758) and continues to be extensively promoted in managerial discourse. It is often associated with significant organizational change, emotional commitment and/or behavioural engagement (Huczynski, 2006). Therefore, given that identity work is more likely to be visible when individuals adjust to new or extensive organizational roles and orientations, the concept potentially suits our research purposes well. This is especially the case when applied in healthcare, where we may expect to see significant agentic efforts to translate the concept because of the distance from the context of its 'origination' in manufacturing, and where identity tensions among (medical) professionals are often associated with the introduction of new forms of management (e.g. Currie, Finn, & Martin, 2010; McGivern, Currie, Ferlie, Fitzgerald, & Waring, 2015; Waring & Currie, 2009). In particular, the application of *Lean* in Dutch healthcare started soon after its introduction in the UK and USA around the turn of the century (Burgess & Radnor, 2013). The first explicit implementation in the Netherlands led to the formation of a national network of healthcare institutions in 2011, LIDZ ('Lean in de zorg'; Lean in healthcare) (Benders, Van Grinsven, & Heusinkveld, 2014), which is the specific setting for our study. LIDZ initiated a variety of activities to promote the core principles of *Lean* and its growing number of members, both individual and organizational, suggests the continuing appeal of the idea. At the time of study (2014–16), 57 healthcare organizations had joined the network, including 37 hospitals.

Data collection

As noted earlier, a diverse range of actors have been studied in the translation literature, especially those who are generally referred to as managers or employees, but also people belonging to

particular (medical) professions or management occupations (e.g. Kirkpatrick et al., 2013; O'Mahoney, Heusinkveld, & Wright, 2013). In this study, we focused on 'implementation managers', as an 'extreme case' of agents who have a formal responsibility for promoting and adapting a management concept and who may also often strongly (dis)identify with it. We assumed this role to be of particular theoretical relevance in exploring how processes of identity construction relate to the translation of management concepts. In a similar way, theorists of organizational change have studied those in roles labelled as 'change agents', 'champions of change' or even 'souls of fire' (e.g. Balogun, Gleadle, Hailey, & Willmott, 2005; Mantere, 2005; Rouleau, 2005).

In particular, we identified the 39 implementation managers in the 37 hospitals in the LIDZ network. Despite differences in formal job titles (i.e. quality manager, policy officer and innovation manager), they shared similar tasks and responsibilities. To capture individual interpretations, narratives and experiences around Lean, our primary source of data was interviews (see Appendix), supplemented with some documentary sources. The use of interviews is quite common in translation research and is well suited to our focus on orientations, even if it largely precludes access to translation in real time (e.g. O'Mahoney et al., 2013). In the field of identity research too, interview-based studies are found to lend themselves well to surface the self-narrational or discursive process through which agents build identities (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008).

Contact information provided by the LIDZ network was used to send relevant informants an invitation to be interviewed. In total, 45 interviews were conducted following the same semi-structured outline – including the 39 implementation managers in the 37 LIDZ hospitals, and 6 others in non-implementation roles in the network (e.g. network officials and external Lean consultants). During the interviews, informants were first asked about their personal background and experiences with Lean, then to provide a chronological account of its evolution within their organization. Finally, they were asked to describe the way in which they personally related to the concept and how they perceived the wider organizational engagement with it, particularly that of senior management and other influential actors (such as senior medical professionals). Most interviews were held at the informants' offices and lasted 75 minutes on average. All interviews were recorded with approval of the interviewees, transcribed verbatim and sent back to the informants for comments. Informants and their organizations were assured confidentiality, and quotes that compromised anonymity were altered or omitted.

Data analysis

Our analysis started with the following broad question: How and why do implementation managers orientate themselves towards the concept of Lean? It then progressed in three overlapping stages with a focus on *orientation, identity work and attributes*. First, after an initial review of the data, we open coded both for the demands and opportunities the implementation managers experienced from their organizational context, and for their own individual orientations towards the concept of Lean. These orientations were mapped abductively, going back and forth between relevant literature and empirical data (Van Maanen, Sørensen, & Mitchell, 2007). The result was that we began to identify variations in *organizational* context in terms of its *perceived engagement* with the concept along the lines of the simple 'high/low' measure of organizational 'internalization' used in Kostova and Roth (2002). In particular, we looked specifically at interviewees' perceptions of the stated and lived orientations of two groups of dominant stakeholders or organizational elites. We classified this as 'high' when both the CEO/senior management and a significant number of relevant and influential medical professionals were seen to regard the concept as valuable and actively promoted and supported it in the organization. For example, one of our informants indicated how all newly hired 'theme principals' (medical directors supervising a specific pathology)

openly supported Lean while those who did not had left the organization. In contrast, when such stakeholders were perceived as being reticent or negative about the value of Lean – reflected in explicit criticisms or what appeared to be merely ceremonial internalization or compliance – we classified perceived organizational engagement as 'low'. For example, another one of our informants indicated how she found her board of directors engaged with Lean in a superficial fashion in order to comply with the healthcare insurer who embraced the concept's potential:

> The board of directors said they wanted to invest in it [Lean]. The question was what their intrinsic motivation was to do so. It seemed, and I have no doubts about this, that it was just done to keep up appearances. There was no belief in the methods and results, but it was done symbolically, so as to get in favour with [Healthcare insurers], to be able to say: 'we are a healthcare organization that provides efficient care'.' (informant 36)

When the orientations among organizational elites were perceived as neutral or ambivalent, this was classified as a *mixed* level of organizational engagement. In each case, what is important for our purposes is how it was *perceived* by implementation managers.

Alongside perceptions of *organizational engagement*, we sought to identify and classify the individual implementation managers' own *orientations* towards Lean. Here, we could be more specific about positions than we could with their view of combined elite orientations, although there are obvious parallels. In particular, we could be more precise about what lies behind a particular orientation (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). This nuance is evident in classic studies of employee orientations or responses to both management controls and concepts such as Etzioni's (1961) framing of organizational involvement as moral, calculative and alienative. Similar classifications are deployed widely as *commitment, cooperation and compliance*, in studies of orientations to both organizations and management concepts such as customer service and TQM, although precise usage of these terms varies (e.g. Groß et al., 2015). In general, discourses of *commitment* relate to orientations in which characteristics of the concept are seen as congruent with one's (desired or adopted) identity and its associated values (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). For example, the same informant elaborated how her own orientation towards Lean reflected a deep desire to engage with the concept, to the extent that she believed in the concept before really knowing what its application would entail:

> I was actually infected with the virus. I had faith. But I did not know how to do it yet. But I just *had* [original emphasis] to find out how, and I wanted to know more about it. (informant 36)

By contrast, *compliance* relates to relatively negative or critical orientations in which the concept is engaged with through a sense of obligation or a fear over the consequences of not doing so. Finally, *cooperation* relates to more active or contingent orientations in which an individual accepts the concept for instrumental reasons, but without a strong sense of personal commitment.

Our measures of *organizational engagement* (high, mixed and low) and *individual orientation* (commitment, cooperation and compliance) with Lean, while firmly grounded in relevant studies, may seem relatively crude. In particular, for individual orientations, the notion of ambivalence is only evident implicitly as cooperation and other positions such as indifference or neutrality are absent. Certainly therefore, following Etzioni (1961), these positions should be seen as ideal types.

In our second stage of coding we sought to explore and specify patterns in the ways in which implementation managers described their efforts to address any tensions and congruence between the two dimensions. Gradually, codes were grouped (Miles & Huberman, 1994) around four broad sets of narrative which we labelled as types of identity work—*externalizing, rationalizing,*

Table 1. Representation of types of identity work.

	Individual orientation: Compliant (1)	Individual orientation: Cooperative (2)	Individual orientation: Committed (3)
Low (perceived) organizational engagement (1)	Informant 4: externalizing, informant 18: externalizing	Informant 2: externalizing, informant 29: externalizing, informant 32: externalizing, informant 33: externalizing, informant 40: externalizing	Informant 16: professionalizing, informant 20: professionalizing, informant 22: professionalizing, informant 36: professionalizing, informant 41: professionalizing
Mixed (perceived) organizational engagement (2)	Informant 14: rationalizing, informant 21: rationalizing, informant 38: externalizing	Informant 11: inconclusive, informant 39: inconclusive	Informant 12: professionalizing, informant 15: professionalizing, informant 23: professionalizing, informant 25: professionalizing, informant 26: professionalizing, informant 34: proselytizing, informant 35: proselytizing
High (perceived) organizational engagement (3)	Informant 37: rationalizing	Informant 1: professionalizing, informant 9: rationalizing	Informant 3: proselytizing, informant 5: proselytizing, informant 6: proselytizing, informant 7: proselytizing, informant 8: proselytizing, informant 10: professionalizing, informant 13 proselytizing, informant 17: proselytizing, informant 19: proselytizing, informant 24: proselytizing, informant 27: proselytizing, informant 28: proselytizing, informant 30: proselytizing, informant 31: proselytizing

professionalizing and proselytizing (see discussion below). Table 1 specifies how these types of identity work are represented in the data in relation to organizational engagement and individual orientation.

In a third stage of selective coding, we looked further into the construction of the implementation managers' narratives, and identified three 'elements' shared across the four types of identity work, which we started to recognize as '*attributes of identification*' (Ashforth et al., 2008). The first attribute was organizational *salience*, which refers to the ways in which agents enhance or diminish the importance of the concept in relation to the strategic goals of the organization, for example by narrowing or broadening its scope. The second – *transience* – brings a temporal quality to the concept in terms of how it is constructed as short-lived/replaceable or persistent. Third, *valence* refers to how the agents discursively infuse the concept with an intensity of meaning or emotion. Overall, while our initial focus was on how Lean was narratively constructed (i.e. translated) through these three attributes of identification, we began to see how Lean and its implementers were simultaneously constructed as tool/consultant, method/expert, project/project manager and imperative/servant. Our final types are presented in Figure 2 and are further outlined and developed in the following sections.

In presenting our analysis in the following sections, we sought an approach that would be suitable to demonstrate some of the contextual richness of our data such as illustrative stories or

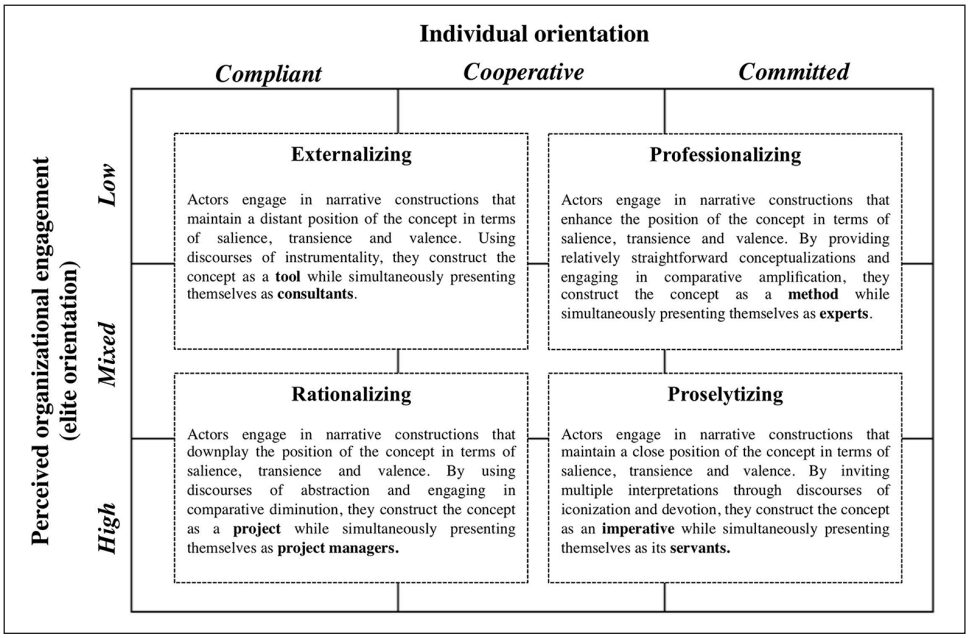

Figure 2. Four types of translation-as-identity-work.

biographies. But in a research context where the sample comprises an entire and named community and participants know each other, this approach risks compromising the individual and organizational anonymity upon which research access was agreed (Sergi & Hallin, 2011). Therefore, in elaborating the four dominant types of identity work, we use selected quotes from the interviews to illustrate their specific attributes. More detailed data is set out in additional tables which are available on request from the first author.

Findings – Identities in Translation

As noted above, we developed an abductive framing of how identity work as translation occurs. This was grounded in the view that embedded and strategic conceptions of agents in extant translation research should not be regarded as unconnected. On the contrary, we expect organizational engagement and individual orientations to be linked – more or less congruent or in tension – and hence focus on their interaction. For example, one of our informants reflected on the tension between identifying strongly with Lean herself, but finding only limited, 'ceremonial' organizational engagement. As we shall see, whether in cases of congruence or of tension, both agent and concept are partially constructed through the identity work involved. We discuss below the four types of translation-as-identity-work we identified (externalizing, professionalizing, rationalizing and proselytizing). For each of these, we outline three attributes of identification – *salience, transience and valence* – through which agents narratively construct both the concept *and* themselves in relation to their organization.

Externalizing

One of the narrative constructions that reflects identity work in the translation of Lean may be described as *externalizing*. We found this most prominent in situations where individuals show a

more negative orientation towards the concept (compliance) and where organizational engagement also is seen as low, accepting the concept solely for reasons of appearance or legitimacy, for example. As we set out below, we found a tendency on the part of the implementation managers to position Lean in a way that maintains a significant distance from both themselves as agents and from the organization. Here, individuals stressed how they sought to play down the overarching productive value of Lean for their organization primarily by constructing it in terms of being 'merely' a *tool*. At the same time, they used self-narratives that understated or distanced their (ascribed) role as implementation managers, positioning themselves instead as 'outsiders' or *consultants*.

Most of the interviewees who articulated this type of identity work emphasized narratives that constructed the concept as 'something' to be picked up and put down depending on whether it is deemed to be useful to the situation at hand. Lean is then, framed as relatively subordinate to strategic priorities of the organization. For example, one of our informants talks about the concept and about herself in a connected way, which reflects how her experience with Lean resembles the wearing of a pair of glasses.

> And surely *I can take off these glasses*. And I think that goes for everyone [in the department] who is critical (of Lean). They will consider *taking off their glasses and look at things in a different way*. We don't have people here that would be able to do only Lean, and I like that. We have a background that allows us to look at things from different perspectives. . . . I see *Lean as an opportunity to give my people the tools to have more fun in their work*. (informant 2, emphasis added)

In providing descriptions of the activities they carried out as implementation managers, these interviewees tended to provide rather fixed or static conceptualizations of Lean. One informant aimed to show colleagues in the organization what beneficial effects Lean can have, but without them 'really' having to engage with the concept, thereby seeking to limit the concept's significance:

> When we are asked to do something, we have a slightly different approach. Focusing more on the result, we will first identify the problem and *which tool would fit it best*. The rest we just leave out. *It is not the idea or aim that people will really learn how to work with the methodology*, but that we learn how to attain results with the help of it. That is an entirely different approach. (informant 4, emphasis added)

The above quotes about Lean also show that these implementation managers tend to present themselves as somewhat distanced (external) from Lean and/or the organization, similar to the position of external consultants. They see their own efforts in translation as being able to assess the concept's efficiency in relation to alternative approaches and observed problems, while having limited responsibility for implementing the concept. This was also reflected in a temporal orientation that can best be described as finite. Here, the interviewees didn't construct the concept of Lean as especially novel, but as 'old wine in new bottles' and as something that would disappear or be replaced by other similar ideas, thereby narratively contributing to the instability of the concept:

> Yes, years ago we had the (XYZ)-model, so I think it is reasonable to expect (change). . . And Lean is not something new. (Rather) a number of elements were taken from other models and put under that label to give them a new lease of life. The way it is being applied in healthcare right now; I don't rule out the possibility that something else will come our way. (informant 38, emphasis added)

Similarly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, we found that this type of identity work displayed limited positive emotional involvement on the part of the implementation managers. Indeed, some of our participants related how their sense of distance from the concept was quite prevalent in their own self-presentation:

> For me it means that *I work more as a consultant* and have less involvement in Lean activities. . . . That is not a problem . . . *I approach it (Lean) very critically* myself and *I have always found it quite hard to translate Lean* from a manufacturing context to a hospital context. . . . But I have to say, I think I am one of (only) a few, because I see this as a real obstacle and that is not the case with everybody. (informant 4, emphasis added)

Professionalizing

Another strong and pervasive narrative construction that reflected identity work in the translation of Lean was what we term 'professionalizing'. We found this type of identity work most evident in situations where individuals showed a strong positive orientation towards the concept (commitment), but where the extent of organizational engagement was seen, once again, to be quite limited (low). In 'professionalizing', we found a tendency on the part of the implementation managers to promote the organizational value of the concept, while simultaneously playing down their otherwise clearly evident positive personal and emotional orientation. As we shall see, they presented themselves as experts rather than advocates and tended to construct the concept as a *methodology*, providing a consistent answer to experienced problems through prescriptive steps and activities.

Here, narrative constructions reflected a tendency among managers to boost the position of the concept with respect to the organization's strategy, in part by providing relatively straightforward conceptualizations of Lean that enhanced its clarity and distinctiveness. One respondent remarked how he is an active and visible proponent of connecting the 'method of Lean' to reaching different organizational accreditation goals as it makes the concept more natural and convincing:

> When we do things, *we will do it with this method* (Lean) or it has to be recognizable as such or adapted to it. Then it's a natural thing. We should not be Lean accredited, but accredited [in accordance with general system of accreditation]. . . ... *we need to connect it to something*, we need to strive for *a link. I have given many presentations* with people asking why should we do this? (informant 23, emphasis added)

Such accounts also appeared to invite narrative construction of the self as *experts*, engaging with others in a 'teaching mode', almost as if the implementation managers were responsible for the learning process of staff whose task was, in fact, merely to assimilate the concept (see also Bruner, 1961):

> And I think it is funny, because people will come to me and ask: do I turn left or right here? And then *they would look at me as if I would know*. And I think, well *I really don't know, but I think they are more than happy if I decide for them*. So then I say: I would do the right turn. And then everybody goes right whereas I think: Left would also have been fine, but at least they are moving somewhere. (informant 22, emphasis added)

In contrast to what we found with externalizing, our informants remarked on the longevity of Lean, narratively contributing to its stability. They detailed how other ideas that share similar features may come to be explained under the same label. This enhances the perceived impact of the concept and the necessity for others to engage deeply with it. Simultaneously, it contributes to a positive image of themselves as active agents of change as opposed to being a project worker or consultant, whose efforts will not always see the light of day.

> *It is not a fad*, but you will see other variants to Lean. The other day I read something about an idea that I thought '*that really looks like Lean, it is just badged differently*', but I don't think it's a fad. We call it Lean,

> but also process improvement. It is something you can't do without anymore. (informant 20, emphasis added)

However, we also observed that, to prevent people resisting it on the basis of obsolescence, implementation managers were not always inclined to use the specific label 'Lean' when talking about its longevity. Nevertheless, they did tend to keep using the label for clarity and recognizability.

> *The word Lean may pass. But I think the label of continuous improvement will stay. I tend to not explain it as Lean anymore. . . . It fits me personally, to help people on an individual level and to get them so enthusiastic that they will convey it too. And* so I don't have to call it Lean all the time. Hmmm, but I do explain it, I will tell them it comes from Lean, and people know it too. *'That is from Lean' they will say when they see me.* (informant 16, emphasis added)

Informants also revealed how this type of identity work reflected a tension between their high levels of personal, emotional commitment and the necessity to present themselves more neutrally. By taking this position, they played down their positive subjective orientation, and instead sought to increase the legitimacy of the concept by providing clarity and consistency. For example, on many occasions, interviewees expressed the tension of championing something not embraced fully by the rest of the organization:

> That is what I mean by overstepping the mark. It will come, because you know, with me it runs deep. I believe in this [Lean] so enormously, that well, I think I am just one step ahead of everyone else here who says we don't need this. I think you just have to wait and see. I am sure that within a year everyone will say yes I do want this [Lean]. So what we do? We provide a training day with clear instruments and guidelines. (informant 22)

Rationalizing

In situations where implementation managers show limited commitment to the concept, but where the extent of organizational engagement is considered to be high, we find a different type of translation-as-identity-work, which we call 'rationalizing'. Here, individuals sought to diminish the organizational engagement by constructing the concept as a set of tasks with which to accomplish specific assignments within a limited period of time. Through presenting themselves as 'project (or programme) managers', they tended to distance themselves from having to support 'a deep implementation' of the concept. By using discourses of abstraction, they diluted the concept through other interpretations of Lean that were also more congruent with their personal views and aspirations.

Here, we found narrative constructions that reflected a tendency among implementation managers to frame Lean as subordinate to the strategic priorities of the organization, in part by providing narratives that constructed Lean as a '*project*' and themselves as *project managers* or leaders:

> You don't have to have expert knowledge on what Lean is, instead it is mostly about organizing and managing it. I didn't really miss having that knowledge. You learn quickly enough from other hospitals and that is what we did. . . . We didn't really know about the characteristics of Lean, *we just thought we were going to do a project with a beginning and an end. . . . A project comes in, and you need a project leader*, and they are (in) subjects that you are not [an expert in], so that is not so strange to me. (informant 21, emphasis added)

This diminution of the concept, as if it were easily replaced by new or comparable ideas (projects), had the potential to undermine both its impact in the organization and the perceived necessity to deeply engage with it. Thus, some of the interviewees' narratives reflected a temporal orientation that, again, was finite and which detracted from the overall stability of Lean.

> It is something that's *in fashion now*. However, I don't know if it will be [fashionable] *in ten years and if it will still be called that [Lean]*. This is because Planetree is a predecessor that is also a philosophy that has been a hot topic for a while, and *to some extent they are quite similar*. It comes from another source, but it is also about hospitality and the environment. *There are a couple of elements that are interchangeable*. (informant 37, emphasis added)

In turn, this also contributed to constructing themselves as temporary agents of change who continuously need to anticipate the end of the concept:

> My *programme* is finite per [date], so I'm thinking about my future, what to do about it, what will I do afterwards? I asked my manager 'where do you see me?' and he said '*you're really Lean'. But then at night, I wonder, should I really focus on Lean?* Will it still be a thing 10 years from now, or will we have something new? I am afraid that that will be the case. *Then it will be something else again. . . .. These are all waves*. I think that we will continue to improve. Digitization will help, *but I think Lean is a trend*. (informant 9, emphasis added)

Another of our informants, who had been working with Lean for years, noted that while the organizational engagement with Lean appeared to be strong, he had become less positive about it because it did not challenge him anymore. As in other cases, he coped with this tension by allowing for a relatively detached personal involvement from the main elements of the concept. Again, in doing so, he constructed the concept as slightly broader in scope to incorporate activities he felt more passionate about:

> Well . . . people would say 'I will send it [a document on the application of Lean in the hospital] to you' and I would reply 'don't bother, I will see it when we discuss it'. . . . Well, *the challenge is what do I learn and how do I develop* (personally). . . .. So you know, I address that now by *doing other things as well (apart from Lean)*. . . . You will encounter different things [such as new concepts] and you will see aspects of yourself [in them]. *And you will also then develop like that for your role here* (in implementing Lean). (informant 37, emphasis added)

Proselytizing

The fourth type of identity work in the translation of Lean was what we term 'proselytizing' (cf. Reay et al., 2013). This involves the actors positioning the concept in a way that maintains proximity both to themselves and their organizational context. We found it most common when individuals showed a positive personal commitment towards the concept and perceived the organizational engagement as being similarly high. Here, we shall see how interviewees sought to enhance the organizational standing of the concept as an *imperative*, while simultaneously presenting themselves as *servants*, fully committed both to the concept and the organization.

This type of positioning involved narrative efforts to construct the concept as relatively central to the organization's strategy. In doing so, the implementation managers were inclined to use a discourse of devotion and talk about Lean in a way that allowed for multiple and emergent interpretations and a broad following. This reflected an ambition to work towards a meaningful and

distinctive application of Lean where they invited others to cooperate in giving meaning to it. It also reflected modesty and sometimes even insecurity on their part with respect to how the concept was best implemented. Thus, as with professionalizing, participants appeared to construct a sense of themselves as teachers, but in this case, engaging in a 'hypothetical teaching' or non-didactic mode where the teacher and the learner are in a cooperative relationship going through various stages of discovery together (see Bruner, 1961):

> So how can we make these cornerstones [elements of Lean] point in the same direction so that everybody has a sense of *purpose* and will go that way and will see *Lean as one of the most important drivers* for developing leadership and managing departments and improving [processes]? I want to make that happen, introduce the whole organization to Lean and let them work according to *Lean principles*. The organization still has to realize that. It is going through *the same learning process as the one I am going through*. (informant 35, emphasis added)

Yet, and again, similar to professionalizing, we observed that implementation managers were not always inclined to use the Lean label, but in this case, it was to allow for a broad application of the concept rather than prevent resistance. Similarly, in proselytizing, some of our informants remarked on the novelty and expected durability of Lean, thereby narratively contributing to its relative stability as a concept and, at the same time, constructing an identity of themselves as servants of real change. For example, one of our informants commented on a combination of approach and timing that constructs Lean as being different from other concepts.

> I think that there has been a shift in health care, which has made it *more important to look at these things*. I do not know exactly what the trigger was because there were always topics like this [gives examples of concepts], but it never reached the shop floor. It all went high over [people's heads], I have always been in (all those) project groups because *I have always been searching* and then you realize, oh yeah that is already a year ago, two years ago. *But it is not just the timing*, it is also *part of the approach of Lean* to take it to the work floor. (informant 13, emphasis added)

This type of identity work displayed a high degree of mostly positive emotional involvement on the part of the implementation managers, with limited tension with organizational (e.g. senior management) expectations. Interviewees thus provided descriptions of how they would identify themselves as inextricably linked to the concept.

> The only reason we didn't get lost is that *we believed in it*. I believed in this [Lean] from the very start. I immediately thought: this is going to bring us what I always felt was needed, but for which *I had never found the job that preached it, or the place to practise it.* (informant 31, emphasis added)

They engaged in self-affirming identity work that both reflected their subjective involvement and also allowed them to express modesty and embrace their anxieties around the application of the concept. They also invited others to cooperate in giving meaning to Lean, again, opening it up for different constructions and forms:

> The idea of collectively steering towards a true north appealed to me enormously as a principle, not just as lived by the top of the organization, but also to connect with the shop floor. *But really understanding what Lean is, if I am very honest, then I still don't know*. I am making small steps in my thinking, and in doing it, which is even more important perhaps. *I have been talking passionately about Lean for 3-4 years. . . . My idea is that we also do this very much together*, me in my layman's role, well not quite layman, but *I remain very modest about that*. (informant 8, emphasis added)

Discussion

Our study sought to provide insight into how key actors engage in identity work in the translation of management concepts so as to better understand agency in this field of research. More specifically, by focusing on those tasked with the implementation of a management concept, we developed a conceptual model of translation-as-identity-work that identifies different types of identity work through which both the concept and agent are co-constructed. This also shows how these types are systematically associated with the relationship between individuals' own orientation towards the concept and their perceptions of the wider organizational engagement with it (see Figure 2). Based on this model, we sought to address three principal areas of theoretical development.

First, prior research on agency in translation has provided little detail on how organizationally *embedded* or individually *strategic* perspectives are connected. In seeking to better understand this, our study revealed how the interaction between implementation managers' orientations towards the concept and their perceptions of the organization's engagement with it, is a mechanism for identity work and translation. Thus, from our data, we developed a conceptual model of translation-as-identity-work comprising four types of identity work linked to particular organizational-individual combinations (see Figure 2). Here, *externalizing* and *proselytizing* were associated with situations of relative congruence between how the individual and the organization engaged with the concept. *Rationalizing* and *professionalizing* were associated with situations in which individuals negotiated their narrative as way of coping with experienced tensions. In this way, our research combines and extends the two dominant, but poorly connected, approaches to agency in translation research, and allows us to better understand diverse identifications and dynamics that guide individuals in processes of translation. In short, it is not simply the organizational context or individual interests that shape translation, but their interaction and combined effects.

Second, prior studies have outlined a wide variety of discursive practices and persuasive narratives through which concepts are transformed (e.g. Mueller & Whittle, 2011; Reay et al., 2013), but little research has been done to *specify* how such 'translation work' (Cassell & Lee, 2016) or 'micro-level practices' (Radaelli & Sitton-Kent, 2016) can be linked to a variety of possible orientations to concepts among key actors who actually perform this work. By showing how individuals' identification with a concept and their inclination to maintain a coherent self-narrative play a defining role in the translation of management concepts, our findings challenge the existing, relatively narrow and static conceptualizations of agency within translation that imply rather instrumental or purposive agents. Our model thus complements prior work by explaining how individuals' (subjective) values and goals can be central to their engagement in translation work. Here, we revealed how our types of translation-as-identity-work each comprised three *attributes of identification* through which agents narratively constructed the concept in relation to themselves and to their organization: *salience, transience* and *valence*. By means of these attributes, agents were able to alter the strategic importance of the concept, bring a temporal quality to it and infuse it with an intensity of meaning or emotion. The significance of this lies not just in a further recognition of the diverse ways agents understand themselves and identify with a concept in its translation, but also in the specification of common properties within such diversity; properties concerning the directions and outcomes of translation in relation to the broad conditions under which they occur.

Third, while research has shown in detail the outcomes of translation in terms of how *concepts* are constructed, it has paid scant attention to how the *actors* involved may be simultaneously constructed. We noted that this neglect was surprising given the centrality of actors among early translation theorists such as Latour (1986) or research on the adoption of management practices (e.g. Huczynski, 2006). In broadening our empirical understanding of the micro-level practices and

agents of translation then, our model reveals translation to be a *dual* mechanism in which agents narratively construct both themselves *and* the concept in relation to their organization. Thus, we saw how Lean and its implementers were simultaneously constructed as tool/consultant, method/expert, project/project manager and imperative/servant. Overall, then, by considering translation as a means and outcome of identity work, this study stresses the significance of agents as critical in understanding the processes and impact of management concept implementation.

Conclusion

We hope to have shown how the 'distance' between source and recipient contexts in the translation of management concepts is a fundamentally *subjective process* and centrally concerned with identity work. More specifically, in showing how implementation managers engage in identity work, our study has sought to better integrate, contextualize and broaden the conceptualization of human agency in translation research. Our model connects embedded and strategic agency approaches to translation; provides more detail, context and coherence in explaining how agents' identification with a concept may vary; and more explicitly theorizes the transformation of agents in processes of translation.

More broadly, our work also begins to develop a closer understanding of some possible *regularities* or patterns of translation. As already noted, research has identified different types of work involved in translation (e.g. Cassell & Lee, 2016), yet has left us with limited insights into any recurring dimensions or broad conditions through which translation is achieved. By examining the role of identity work, we were able to specify four types of translation-as-identity-work in relation to particular broad conditions. Moreover, our attributes of identification (*salience, transience* and *valence*) were found to be common across these four types, even if they took different forms in different organizational-individual combinations. There is therefore potential to explore these attributes in other translation contexts for other types of translation work. Indeed, our findings have potentially wider implications for related research and practice. For example, the types of translation-as-identity-work we identified are clearly relevant to studies of change management implementation, in place of more static orientations such as commitment or resistance. Proselytizing, for instance, resonates with 'issue selling' and could be linked to the effectiveness (or otherwise) of change strategies in contrasting contexts of senior management engagement.

Our study naturally has some limitations, which give rise to other areas of potential research. A first consideration is our reliance on one-off, retrospective interviews with key individuals. Even though the orientations, perceptions and identity work of these actors were our focus, we know that these transform over time through a complex array of different actants (Røvik, 2016). The relationships between individuals within these networks, their biographies and non-human actants deserve greater attention in future research. The same holds for our categorization of translation-as-identity-work into dominant and relatively fixed types. Our data allowed us to illustrate different positions adopted in relation to this categorization, but it also sometimes suggested possible shifts among individuals. A closer study of these transitions through longitudinal research and real-time data collection would allow for developing a better understanding of how identities, ideas and the way they influence each other may change over time throughout one or different implementation projects. For example, different types of translation-as-identity-work might be revealed by exploring how implementation managers perceive the level of engagement of *other* significant actors within and beyond the organization, such as professional peers or other organizations. Another fruitful area for further research relates to the specificity of the empirical context of Lean and Dutch healthcare we studied. Even though we expect our findings to hold analytical relevance for understanding the translation of concepts and actors in other settings, research might usefully

examine and compare identity work as translation for concepts that may be seen as placing less emphasis on the active involvement of staff, symbolically or technically. Also, further insight into the nature and degree of identity work as translation may be generated by studying translation in different institutional settings where the role of professions is more or less salient, and in sectors (such as manufacturing) that may experience a different distance from a concept's context of origination.

In sum, we have sought to show how the translation of management concepts is intimately linked with identity work, which appears in different, but regular types and which can be understood through a more interconnected, diverse and dynamic concept of agency whereby both actor and concept are simultaneously constructed.

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Appendix. Overview of interview data.

	Job title (translated)	Gender	Age	Educational Background	Hospital	Type of hospital[b]	#Beds[a]	#Employees[a]	'Lean phase'[c]	Lean 'approach'[b]
I	Senior consultant Lean	f	35–40	Industrial engineering	1	General hospital (TCC)	942	6147	3	Lean
II	Consultant process improvement & innovation	m	55–60	Health sciences, change management	2	UMC	953	8607	2	Lean
III	Manager Lean	m	25–30	Business economics	3	Specialist hospital	—	265	3	Lean
IV	Consultant, Lean coach	f	45–50	Nursing, business economics	4	UMC	733	6554	2	Lean
V	Manager Lean & care logistics, Chairman LIDZ	m	35–40	Business administration	5	General hospital (TCC)	848	4533	2	Lean
VI	Manager innovation	m	60–65	Healthcare	6	Specialist hospital	—	293	1	Lean
VII	Consultant & program manager OE	f	45–50	Educational sciences & technology	7	UMC	695	4960	4	OE/LeanSS
VIII	Manager care, program manager care innovation	m	55–60	Business administration	8	UMC		6628	1	Lean
IX	Program manager streamlined working	f	35–40	Civil engineering	9	General hospital (TCC)	667	3547	3	Lean
X	Lean coach	m	40–45	Healthcare, business administration	3	Specialist hospital	—	265	3	Lean
XI	Lean coach program healthcare innovation	m	45–50	Nursing, business administration	8	UMC	N/A	6628	1	Lean
XII	Program leader Lean quality & process innovation	f	30–35	Public governance	10	UMC	1002	6234	2	Lean/LeanSS
XIII	↑ Project manager Lean/Trainer Lean six sigma	m	30–35	Nursing, healthcare management	11	General hospital (TCC)	455	2615	3	LeanSS
XIII(2)	Project manager Lean SS, Lean coach & trainer	f	40–45	Nursing	11	General hospital (TCC)	455	2615	3	LeanSS
XIV	Manager ward, TOC consultant	f	40–45	Management	12	General hospital	255	788	2	TOC
XV	Innovation coach, care group management	m	40–45	Logistics management	13	General hospital (TCC)	824	4218	3	PW
XVI	Head healthcare logistics	f	40–45	Industrial engineering	14	Specialist hospital	251	1594	1	Care logistics/ Lean
XVII	Program leader Lean	f	40–45	Speech & language therapy, MBA	15	General hospital	294	1870	1	Lean/LeanSS
XVIII	Manager innovation & quality, program manager	f	40–45	Health sciences	16	General hospital	293	1266	1	Lean
XIX	Consultant care innovation	f	45–50	Nursing, management	17	General hospital	646	3152	2	PW
XX	Process coordinator, Lean manager	f	45–50	Management assistant, project management	2	UMC	953	8607	2	Lean
XXI	Senior consultant	f	35–40	Business engineering	18	General hospital (TCC)	627	3467	3	Lean
XXII	Senior policy officer	f	30–35	Medical informatics, healthcare management	19	UMC	1042	10366	2	OE/LeanSS
XXIII	Consultant consultancy & policy	f	55–60	Nursing, management courses	20	General hospital	808	3793	1	Lean

(Continued)

Appendix 1. (Continued)

	Job title (translated)	Gender	Age	Educational Background	Hospital	Type of hospital[b]	#Beds[a]	#Employees[a]	'Lean phase'[c]	Lean 'approach'[b]
XXIV	Program manager Lean	f	50–55	Occupational therapy, healthcare management	21	General hospital (TCC)	955	5229	1	Lean
XXV	Consultant staff department quality & safety	f	40–45	Health sciences	22	General hospital (TCC)	683	3649	2	Lean
XXVI	Lean consultant, head of unit	f	45–50	Health sciences	23	UMC	1320	10510	2	Lean
XXVII	Quality manager	f	40–45	Food technology, consumer studies	24	General hospital	499	2782	2	Lean
XXVIII	Staff member quality & safety – LeanSS	m	45–50	Physiotherapy	25	General hospital	500	2353	1	PW/LeanSS
XXIX	Program manager	f	25–30	Health sciences	26	General hospital	341	2158	1	PW/Lean
XXIX(2)	Policy officer, official secretary	f	50–55	Nursing, management courses	26	General hospital	341	2158	1	PW/Lean
XXX	Team leader, project manager Lean	f	30–35	Nursing	27	General hospital	N/A	5646	N/A	Lean
XXXI	Program manager, coach, trainer	m	50–55	Business administration	28	General hospital (TCC)	739	2889	2	LeanSS
XXXII	Program manager care logistics	f	40–45	Industrial engineering	29	General hospital	310	1662	1	Lean
XXXIII	Senior consultant, Lean coach	f	50–55	HTS, business engineering	30	General hospital (TCC)	493	2818	2	Lean/LeanSS
XXXIV	Head quality & safety	m	50–55	Psychology	31	General hospital	265	1315	1	Lean
XXXV	Coordinator quality assurance	m	40–45	Total quality Management	32	General hospital (TCC)	1063	5953	2	Lean/LeanSS
XXXVI	Program manager Lean six sigma	f	40–45	Medicine & life sciences, sociology	33	General hospital (TCC)	578	2949	3	LeanSS
XXXVII	Management consultant	m	30–35	Health sciences	34	UMC	986	10389	2	LeanSS
XXXVIII	Head policy & organization – Lean coach	f	45–50	Nursing	35	General hospital	399	2278	3	Lean
XXXIX	Member board of directors	f	50–55	Economics	36	General hospital (TCC)	808	3793	1	Lean
XXXX	Strategic consultant Lean & capacity management	m	30–35	Business economics	37	General hospital	942	6147	1	Lean
XXXXI	Coordinator LIDZ network, Lean coach	f	35–40	Nutrition & dietetics	—				—	
XXXXII	Consultant Lean (external)	m	—	—	—				—	
XXXXIII	Consultant Lean (external)	m	—	—	—				—	
XXXXIV	Representative health insurance company	m	—	—	—				—	
XXXXV	Website manager LIDZ network	m	—	—	—				—	

[a]Data on size hospitals (beds and employees) retrieved from Jaarverslagen Zorg 2015 (DIGIMV) (Annual reports Healthcare).
[b]TCC (= top clinical center), UMC (= university medical center), LeanSS (= Lean six sigma), OE (= operational excellence), PW (= productive ward), N/A (= not available).
[c]Self-assigned indications of the development of Lean in the hospitals, provided through the LIDZ network.
Please note that, to preserve anonymity, the order of the interviewees in this table does not correspond to the in-text interviewee numbers.