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Organizational Necrosis Autopsy: How Extremist Openness Can Threaten Open Organizing

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Abstract

Existing research highlights the imperative nature of addressing inherent tensions when implementing organizational openness, necessitating actors to navigate explicit or implicit emergent closure mechanisms. However, certain literature warns against the absolute conception of openness prevalent in academic and practical spheres. This article thus explores what occurs in organizations that eschew closure mechanisms in favor of openness. I draw on the ethnographic inquiry of Managers du 21e siècle, a non-profit organization championing openness as a pivotal organization tenet, whose existence has come under threat amidst escalating crises. The metaphor of organizational necrosis serves to highlight that an extremist pursuit of open principles can hamper action by fostering depersonification, to align with extremist open values, and triggering disempowerment, through strategies that deflect conflicts of value. My first contribution emphasizes the detri-mental repercussions of an extremist openness paradigm on organization sustainability. The second explores how medical metaphors can assist in grasping organizational decline.

Keywords: *Open organizing*; *Closure*; *Critical management studies*; *Metaphor*; *Extremism*

Organizational openness emerged from the free libre and open-source software movements as an alternative and emancipating form of organizing (Parker et al., 2007; Pearce, 2013), later giving rise to a growing body of initiatives labeled 'open', such as open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), open government (Janssen et al., 2012), or open strategizing (Whittington et al., 2011). Openness relies on a shared ideal-type within the organization, granting both internal and external individuals the rights and necessary resources (i.e., technological tools, strategic information, source code, etc.) to contribute to the open project however they deem necessary (Schlagwein et al., 2017). This article figures in the emergent field of open organizing, which suggests bridging the gap between the various open scholarships together (Splitter et al., 2023).

This literature especially aims to stress that enacting openness is no easy endeavor. To sustain the inclusive, transparent, and autonomous qualities required for an alternative and more democratic form of organizing (Armbrüster & Diether, 2002; Dobusch et al., 2019; Parker et al., 2007), the actors engaged in the opening of their organization must address certain inherent tensions (Dobusch & Kapeller, 2018; Hautz et al., 2017; Heracleous et al., 2017; Kornberger et al., 2017). Some dilemmas are rooted in goal prioritization (e.g., Smith et al., 2018; Turco, 2016), while others face the (appropriate) organizing processes to apply (Heracleous et al., 2017; Husted & Plesner, 2017; Raviola, 2017; Smith et al., 2018) or even the management of actors' expectations (Hautz et al., 2017).

Closure, defined as the implementation of exclusionary criteria or processes, appears as a prerequisite in managing the inherent liabilities of openness and ensuring the latter's long-term preservation (Dobusch & Dobusch, 2019). On one hand, the literature has demonstrated explicit means of closing, such as formalized procedures (Dobusch et al., 2019; Husted & Plesner, 2017; O'Mahony & Ferraro, 2007) or a culture based on self-censorship (Luedicke et al., 2017; Turco, 2016), which members may perceive as legitimate. On the other, critical studies have showcased implicit applications of closure that run parallel to open ideals (Heimstädt, 2017; Ringel, 2019), while other authors prefer to emphasize the emergence of

authoritarian norms of closure hidden within the promotion of open principles (Clegg, 1994; Puranam et al., 2014).

Beyond the domination techniques they reveal, these examples highlight the absolute and unlimited view of openness that pervades both the literature (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987; Gibbs et al., 2013; Schlagwein et al., 2017; Tkacz, 2012) and open initiatives (Hautz et al., 2017). More specifically, I suggest that actors of open organizations are liable to personally fuel a totalitarian approach to openness, as they often have the power to accept or reject contributions and memberships (Dahlander & O'Mahony, 2011; Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015). In spite of identifying this potential deviation into extremism, we still know little about what occurs when actors refuse to set any form of closure in the name of openness, a research question this article seeks to address. As totalitarianism seems incompatible with the idea of emancipation (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Armbrüster & Diether, 2002), this study examines the sustainable character of open organizing, a topic of great importance in the critical performativity debate, which focuses on the implementation of alternative practices (King & Learmonth, 2015; Learmonth et al., 2016; Spicer et al., 2009).

To do so, I draw on an ethnographic study conducted over 22 months in a non-profit professional association called Managers du 21e siècle (M21S),[1] the members of which promote managerial innovations based on features of openness such as participation, transparency, and autonomy. They also aim to radically embody these open principles in their own organizing. The specificity of this case lies in exploring an organization driven to the edge of extinction by an escalation of crisis since its adoption of open organizing. My findings outline what I coin as 'organizational necrosis'. In medicine, necrosis is the process that causes damaged cells to destroy the living tissue of their containing organ. In M21S, organizational necrosis led its members toward the unintentional self-destruction of their organization. This phenomenon was driven by three mechanisms: (1) an extremist conception of openness that shaped the judgment and behavior of regular actors, (2) a form of depersonification, to ensure the total congruence between the actions of members and open values, and (3) disempowerment, characterized by strategies that enabled members to avoid all initiatives which failed to fit with open values.

This article aims to expand the critical approach of open organizing through the examination of this two-fold case of failure, the organizational necrosis illustrating both a threat to the organization's sustainability and the decline of radical openness. As a first contribution, the research contained herein pinpoints how, by perpetuating the mechanisms of depersonification and disempowerment, extremist open ideals can lead to passivity at the organizational level to the point of

[1] 'Managers of the 21st century' in English.

compromising the organization's survival. Medical metaphors and their usefulness in explaining a variety of organizational decline processes, including closure and critical performativity failure, constitute a secondary meaningful contribution of this article.

Literature review

The inherent tensions of open organizing

The 'open' attribute has been used to characterize various alternative, emancipating (Parker et al., 2007) and more democratic forms of organizing (Armbrüster & Diether, 2002; Dobusch et al., 2019) based on three principles: (1) participation, (2) transparency, and (3) autonomy. In open organizing, especially when actors share a collective identity (Dobusch & Kapeller, 2018), these dimensions are subjected to inherent contradictions introduced within this section.

First, openness invites greater participation of previously excluded internal and external audiences (Hautz et al., 2019; Seidl et al., 2019). This includes different degrees of participation, ranging from simply voicing opinions to actively engaging in decision-making in the most radical forms of open organizing (Dobusch et al., 2019; Vaara et al., 2019). This dimension raises specific challenges, the first of which relates to decision-making, as numerous actors engage in a sense-making process (Bencherki et al., 2019). More specifically, it entails an agreement is achieved despite the various interests defended by the participants (Adobor, 2020; Mack & Szulanski, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). Another dilemma, based on commitment (Hautz et al., 2017), suggests that actors can disengage if they are disappointed by the low impact of their contribution, particularly when their voices are not heard within their expectations (Baptista et al., 2017). The tensions related to participation finally question the distribution of decisional rights in open organizing, that is, who can participate and how participants are selected, whether contribution is facilitated or hindered, and is the meaning of the participatory dimension shared or resisted (Vaara et al., 2019).

The second principle, transparency, promotes greater diffusion of information in terms of quantity and sensitivity (Seidl et al., 2019). This dimension also relates to the conversational nature of openness (Heracleous et al., 2017; Turco, 2016), which is grounded in the principle of open communication. It involves that participants freely express their position by defending, but also criticizing, the suggestions brought to the agenda (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987; Turco, 2016), creating a full disclosure meant to promote greater accountability for deciders and contributors alike (Ohlson & Yakis-Douglas, 2019). However, some studies highlight how the oversharing of information can erode understanding (Luedicke et al., 2017; Ripken, 2006), trust (Ringel, 2019), and ultimately participation.

In addition, critical studies on organizations claiming full transparency reveal the production of new forms of secrecy or dissimulation practices, illustrating the difficulties actors face in embodying their promoted ideology (Gibbs et al., 2013; Lingo, 2023; Ringel, 2019).

The third principle invites greater autonomy, referring to total freedom in the type and degree of contribution made. This principle largely stems from open-source development, where developers can work on freely chosen and decentralized tasks they may fulfill however they want, based on their interests and competencies (von Krogh et al., 2012). A knock-on effect of greater autonomy is that it delegitimizes centralized forms of control (Raymond, 1999; Turco, 2016), which leads to the emergence of tensions between structure and fluidity, or centralized authority and decentralization (Heracleous et al., 2017; O'Mahony & Ferraro, 2007). Members' willingness to participate in an open project is, however, an overlooked factor in open innovation or open strategy scholarship (Smith et al., 2018). Full autonomy implies that actors hold the ability to self-manage their degree of contribution and commitment to the open initiative and to join or leave the organization whenever they want. It thus requires for the organization to heed the expectations of its participants, as disregarding them may impede the inclusive and transparent qualities of the organizing (Hautz et al., 2017; Reischauer & Ringel, 2023; Ringel, 2019), which are associated with improved organizational performance (Chesbrough, 2003; Janssen et al., 2012; Raymond, 1999).

Open organizing carries within itself the tensions that can lead it astray, which begs the question of how the actors engaged in such types of alternative organizations navigate these inner pitfalls. This observation calls for a contribution to the critical performativity debate (Learmonth et al., 2016; Spicer et al., 2009), some scholars advocate for a better understanding of the practical challenges of alternative and open practices of organizing (King & Learmonth, 2015), and an 'affirmative engagement' with them (King & Land, 2018).

Closure, a necessary counterpoint in open organizing

To address the inherent tensions of organizational openness, the literature has defined closing mechanisms as a requirement (Armbrüster & Diether, 2002; Dobusch & Dobusch, 2019). More specifically, Dobusch and Dobusch (2019, p. 326) propose to consider this relationship as constitutive, meaning that 'openness and closure appear contradictory but yet simultaneously depend on each other'. These authors especially emphasize that implementing closure is the best way to ultimately preserve openness. Closure relies on the ability to ban specific participants, information, topics or behaviors

considered as inappropriate in the application of exclusionary criteria or processes, which therefore sets the questions of organizational boundaries in open organizing.

Some closing mechanisms can be seen as legitimate by the members. This is notably the case when closure draws on an explicit account of information-sharing, participation, or decision-making rules, such as formalized procedures or discussion spaces (Dobusch et al., 2019; Husted & Plesner, 2017). Another legitimate means of closing relies on a culture that values self-responsibility and self-regulation (Gibbs et al., 2013; Lingo, 2023). In Premium-Kollektiv, Luedicke et al. (2017) showcase the personal strategies that actors enact to counterbalance an unequal distribution of knowledge and power, coupled with an information overload. On her end, Turco (2016) highlights that TechCo employees manage the tensions of openness by drawing on the only official policy of the company: 'Use good judgment'. However, Turco (2016) also suggests that this form of self-regulation can lead to authoritarian deviations, which questions the potential domination relationships behind closing practices.

The promotion of participation, autonomy and transparency might also conceal implicit closing dynamics. Tkacz (2012) thus argues that the neoliberal focus on efficiency and productivity in open processes is often used to justify closure. In initiatives of open data, Heimstädt (2017) depicts that the advocacy of open principles in public discourse hides illegitimate backstage practices, which are enacted to manipulate the sharing of information. These acknowledgments bring us to interrogate the potential utilitarianism behind open processes and whether members can suffer from their implementation. Other implicit closing mechanisms that draw upon neo-normative forms of control and aim 'to help exploit workers [...] via the indoctrination of shared corporate beliefs, norms and values' (Sturdy et al., 2010, p. 116), have been observed in open communities. Such subordinating norms are mobilized to sanction non-contribution and to privilege highly involved contributors (O'Mahony & Ferraro, 2007; Puranam et al., 2014), or to develop particularly exclusive membership dynamics (Clegg, 1994; Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015).

These examples of improper closing mechanisms lead me to question the potential drift toward an extremist or totalitarian conception of the open principles, which can be instigated by the members themselves, as they often possess the right to reject contributions and claims of membership (Dahlander & O'Mahony, 2011; Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015). Indeed, referring to the 'ideology of openness' (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987; Gibbs et al., 2013) is a way for critical authors to denounce the absolute vision of openness that pervades the literature. The dilemma of escalation (Hautz et al., 2017), according to which openness calls for its own ever-greater strengthening, shows that this unlimited view of open ideals is

also conveyed by field actors. However, as noted by Dobusch and Dobusch (2019), closure is required to preserve openness. This is reflected in the research of Ringel (2019) and Heimstädt (2017) by recreating backstage concealment and secrecy practices. In this article, I thus suggest that an overcommitment to openness might reinforce the open principles beyond what the organization and its members can endure. Closing processes, even when explicitly implemented, can therefore create additional frustration among contributors as only partial embodiments of openness (Dobusch et al., 2019; Heracleous et al., 2017). Ultimately, such an extremist approach questions the conditions under which openness constitutes a sustainable alternative organizing principle. Accordingly, this article addresses the following research question: what occurs when actors disregard any forms of closure in the name of openness?

Empirical work

Research setting

To understand what happens when organizational members dismiss any form of closure to promote openness, I draw upon the case of M21S as an instance of an organization based on openness and faced with numerous crises that threaten its sustainability.

Founded in 2013, this non-profit brings together professional actors interested in collective intelligence and managerial innovation that aims to 'move away from blind servitude […] to give the power back to the field to make decisions in real time' (from the M21S website). According to the M21S website, its mission is, more specifically, to promote organizational forms based on 'trust and autonomy' by organizing conferences, 'learning expeditions', debates, and training sessions. Members are supposed to contribute, based on their preferences, to at least one of the circles comprised in the organization, which are presented in Appendix 3: territorial circles in the regions, operating circles (e.g., communication), and thematic circles (e.g., entrepreneurs for the 21st century).

This case appears as a mise en abyme, where members promote organizational principles related to openness while simultaneously endeavoring to apply their own interpretation of open values. This self-fueling process emerged in response to a governance crisis which led M21S actors to ban the founder and his autocratic organizing in favor of a new constitution based on organizational openness. In this context, the General Circle (GC) was created to collectively manage the functions that had previously been held by the founder, including the overall coordination of the association (e.g., concerning investments or membership processes) and its administrative obligations. The GC was composed of the board (president, secretary, and treasurer) and elected

leaders from the various circles, making for around a dozen individuals.

This new way of organizing the association fostered a radical conception of key openness principles. Radicality here entails that actors try to enact open values in all their organizing processes while minimizing official closing mechanisms. First, members are supposed to enjoy uncompromised autonomy by having no obligations governing the way they are meant to contribute to M21S, and they can do only what they are willing to do. Then, transparency is observed through a formalized principle of full disclosure of activity-related information, and through authentic communication, in which members regularly voice their feelings – both positive and negative. Finally, even though participation is formally framed in the governance charter, a principle of total inclusion leads members to disregard the rules of exclusion (e.g., who is able to attend GC meetings), thus anyone who wants to participate effectively can.

M21S can be considered as a case of failure, or at least of an open organization in great difficulty because it faced an escalation of crises right after its change in governance. Firstly, the late cancelation of a costly event, the 'Frigate of Joy' hastened the departure of the chief salaried delegate and almost resulted in the dissolution of the association. Secondly, there was a decrease in internal[2] and external activity,[3] which led to difficulties in member retention, as they felt they were paying 'a membership fee for nothing' (André, in his chairman's speech at the 2017 Annual General Meeting [AGM]). Thirdly, the auditor refused to certify the accounts because of an incomplete follow-up of accounting by past treasurers and a suspicious debt left over by the founder. Finally, M21S saw an important portion of the members who organized external activities quit the association on very bad terms, notably the whole Western Circle.

Data collection

The fieldwork consisted of an ethnographic study, characterized by inductive research led over an extended period of time, using various data sources and adopting a participatory observation stance (Neyland, 2007). Ethnography is also known to offer the potential to explore the tacit, emotional and political dimensions of an organization, all of which are especially intertwined (Ybema et al., 2009). My 22 months in M21S challenged me with some uncomfortable situations that ultimately contributed to the emergence of my research issue, that is, what happens in an organization in which actors refuse to set means of closure in the name of openness.

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2. From an internal survey, 40% of the members of M21S did not know that they were expected to join a circle.
3. In 2018, externally oriented actions were mostly organized by the Western Region Circle.

First, I was concerned by the lack of action within M21S, which led me to qualify this case as an open organization with great difficulty. Despite the slow activity, I still gathered 'real time' data (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010): (1) I attended almost all in-person events or online meetings (around 70 h of participant observation) during which I took notes and transcribed the discussions; (2) I used a netnographic approach (La Rocca et al., 2014; Neyland, 2007) by getting added to email lists and Slack channels; (3) I also took notes during informal exchanges with the members. I further completed my collection process by using retrospective data (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010); (4) I conducted open interviews that were fully recorded and transcribed; and (5) I gathered secondary data (meeting minutes, operating charters, official communications, etc.). This data enabled me to cover a 2-year period before the start of my fieldwork to understand how the implementation of open practices had influenced the crisis encountered by M21S. Details of the dataset are reported in Table 1.

As a secondary challenge, I struggled with negative emotions during the fieldwork, even if it ultimately helped me draw out and define the question of extremism within openness principles (Munkejord, 2009). In the beginning, I felt pressured to adapt to the inclusive practices employed in M21S, though some members continued to criticize my interventions, especially when I questioned their open values. In addition, the rare events or meetings that the members organized turned out to become episodes of conflict. During such crises, I was shocked, and sometimes irritated, by the (lack of) reaction of actors, and more specifically their use of open principles as justification for their passivity, even in the face of potentially illegal behaviors or the struggles of other members. I felt uneasy with the lack of critical thinking surrounding the open values preached by M21S members, which led me to question my participative stance as a critical researcher, as I felt that I was endorsing a totalitarian conception of openness. However, it ultimately allowed me to identify some ideological underpinnings.

Data analysis

The investigation into what occurs when actors of open organizations disregard any form of closure was an iterative process, using various techniques (coding, writing, and discussing) to inductively theorize based on empirical data (Locke et al., 2022). I started by observing how open principles were expressed in M21S. I carried out open coding (Miles et al., 2013) on my interview material using the attributes of openness (i.e., autonomy, inclusion, transparency) as interpretation anchors. This helped me (1) identify the presence of values related to openness principles in the discourse of actors, and (2) pinpoint the practices and behaviors that organizational members associate with said values. My preliminary findings were presented during academic conferences, research seminars, as well as feedback-gathering sessions, and the discussions they generated led me to aggregate the identified practices and behaviors in categories labeled as 'depersonification' and 'disempowerment'.

Table 1. The dataset

Observations

Over 70 meeting hours observed, including:

- One meeting to prepare the annual general meeting (AGM)
- One 1-day AGM (in 2017)
- Four 1-day meetings of the GC (12/2018; 03/2019; 06/2019; 12/2019)
- Dozens of circle meetings (each averaging 2 h) between April 2018 and June 2019
- My experience as a member of the Research Circle starting January 2019
- Informal discussions on meeting days

Open interviews

- Three interviews of GC members, averaging 90 min each (with the chairman, GC member 1, and GC member 2), recorded and transcribed in full

Netnography

- Being on the mailing list of the GC and the BizCom Circle as of April 2018 (around 50 emails)
- Being a member of the Slack channels starting January 2019 (around 5000 messages exchanged; mostly public)

Secondary data

Access to the shared folders of M21S, containing:

- Operating charters, legal statuses of the association
- Meetings and AGM reports
- Workshop reports (e.g., brainstorming workshop for a new tagline)
- M21S website and official communication supports (newsletter)

Source: Author's own elaboration.

To further characterize depersonification and disempowerment, I drew on my field experience to highlight these mechanisms as particularly salient during moments of crisis. Using the retrospective data and my direct observations, I wrote a narrative (Miles et al., 2013) of the crises that occurred between the shift in governance and the election of a new board almost 3 years later, to fully understand the part played by depersonification and disempowerment in the organization's difficulties. This timeline is available in Appendix 1. This revealed a pattern based on the passivity of members in promptly resolving problems as they arose and explained how this failure to act ultimately came to threaten the survival of M21S. I decided to use the deductive metaphor (Cornelissen et al., 2008) of 'organizational necrosis' to emphasize this internal deviance and its consequences on the sustainability of the organization. More specifically, I borrowed the domain-interaction model of metaphor (Cornelissen, 2005) in which two domains are blended, organization and medicine in this case, to project a new meaning. Necrosis is a medical term for progressive injuries and the premature death of cells that generally affects a limited area of living tissue but can extend to the whole organ. This metaphor stresses the severity of the situations that M21S encountered and deliberately left unaddressed.

In line with my participative stance, I organized a roll-up report of my work-in-progress analysis with the M21S members of the studied period (former members included). The presentation was interspersed with moments of discussion to strengthen the plausibility of my interpretations. According to the actors, the depersonification and disempowerment mechanisms were representative of their experience. They also cited the key role played by their adherence to open principles as the trigger that sparked the process of necrosis. I thus further mobilized the domain-interaction approach of metaphor to identify the potential cures to necrosis in the practices of members, which, combined with their suggestions, helped to highlight the value of studying such an extremist conception of openness.

In light of this added category (extremist openness), I conducted a final round of analysis on the crises narrative to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the extremist open principles at play in M21S and the other mechanisms of necrosis (i.e., depersonification and disempowerment). Doing so helped me grasp that such an extremist view on open values defines what is perceived as a problem, while depersonification and disempowerment serve to preserve congruence with these principles by defining how selected issues should be addressed. On this basis, I refined my themes and categories using a systematic coding method. I focused on coding information (discussions that occurred, and the associated secondary data) related to the key events faced by M21S,
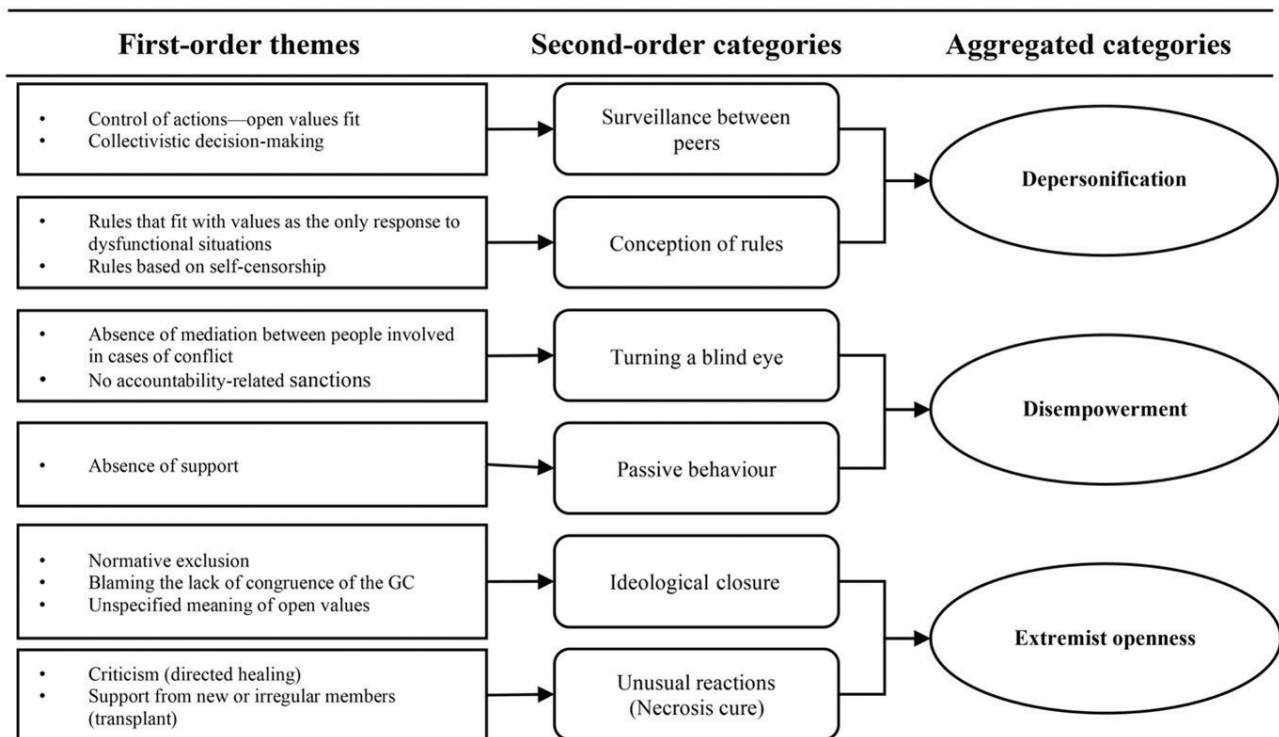

Figure 1. The coding.
Source: Author's own elaboration.

which were identified in the narrative. Figure 1 reports the final version of the codes. Additional evidence supporting the coding is available in Appendix 2.

The findings illustrate the mechanisms of depersonification, disempowerment, and extremist openness that underpin the necrosis process within M21S, which drove the association to failure. The names of the organization and actors have been changed.

Empirical findings

While their common conception of open values led the members of M21S to join the association and bond around a shared identity, their drive to fit these principles to the extreme after the governance crisis quickly became pathological.

Depersonification

This section illustrates depersonification as the first mechanism that fuels organizational necrosis. Depersonification combines (1) techniques of surveillance between peers to control adherence to open values, which instill eroded individuality and homogenized behaviors, and (2) rules designed to best fit the organization's radical principles of openness. Similar bureaucratic mechanisms have been observed in an open-source community by O'Mahony and Ferraro (2007), but were, in their case, used to legitimate meritocratic exclusionary norms rather than reinforce openness principles, as was the case in M21S.

As an act of surveillance, the members of M21S closely control the congruence of realized actions with open principles. The non-fit with values of openness is seen as a primary problem to manage, even in times of major crisis. Such was the case after the critical financial loss caused by the late cancelation of the Frigate of Joy, for instance, which led the GC to encourage members in organizing events to bail out the accounts. However, the organizers put their personal brands forward during one of these events, even though self-promotion was prohibited as it collided with the openness principle of total inclusion. As explained by a GC member, the non-compliance with open values was considered a more serious issue to address than the Frigate of Joy's crisis: 'We spent the beginning of the year on a feedback process on two events that had apparently not gone well. [...] I think we spent a lot of time on it, whereas for me the real problem was the Frigate of Joy. There was still somebody who messed up [without being sanctioned]' (Interview of GC member 2). Thus, no further checks and balances or transparency on the accounts was implemented. This episode highlights how the actors focused on their will to fully adhere to open principles at the expense of individual frustrations and sound crisis management. While M21S members did value securing strategic resources, the

people who successfully brought in money for M21S received no recognition for putting the association's finances back on track in this case and ultimately decided to quit the association.

Controlling the action-value fit is also enabled by collectivistic decision-making practices based on two rules. First, the governance charter states that 'decision-making is ideally done unanimously', which can reduce the expression of individuality and tends to homogenize the direction chosen by a group (Haug, 2015). Second, in the GC, decisions are to be exclusively taken during in-person meetings that make both the process and outcome collectively examinable. It is, for instance, the case for agenda setting during GC meetings, even when it had been emailed to the group beforehand: 'All the decisions that were made or attempted outside [of the GC] created huge conflicts: we therefore don't make decisions outside of the GC. [...] We decided that no decision was to be made by email' (Senior GC member voicing his disagreement at the introduction of a GC meeting agenda). This extensive surveillance, which exists to ensure decisions are congruent with open values continued to generate tensions in the GC as showcased by the reaction of a newcomer: 'I am quite shocked by everything you say. [...] In our circle we work like that: the one in charge does it their way'. Indeed, this in-person regulation inhibits decentralized arrangements and the principle of subsidiarity (i.e., uncompromised autonomy).

In M21S, the conception of rules serves as the only response when members face a dysfunction or demand. This enables actors to conceive solutions that best fit with their open principles as illustrated by the 'questioning tool'. This checklist is formulated as a series of questions to be answered before organizing an event to 'be accountable and avoid turning the Deontology and Maturity circle into an enforcer in charge of censorship or policing. [...] There is confidence that everyone has a clear picture of what they have to do and will do it in due course'. The latter emphasizes that guidelines designed within M21S are largely based on self-censorship to align with the organization's uncompromising stance on autonomy. As the fit with openness values is the first priority of M21S members, this checklist also recalls the other open principles of the association, such as not displaying the logos of the organizers' personal brands.

In sum, depersonification gradually reduces the scope of conceivable action within M21S through an extreme focus on congruence between members' behavior and openness principles using surveillance and rules.

Disempowerment

This section focuses on a second mechanism that worsened M21S's difficulties, disempowerment, which enabled members to push their problems aside by either (1) deliberately turning

a blind eye to identified issues or (2) adopting avoidant behaviors.

At M21S, rather than attempting to deal with problematic situations, GC members consciously swept them under the rug, fearing that they could threaten the organization's open values. This strategy is first portrayed through the absence of accountability-related control or sanctions, notably whenever formalized rules are neglected (i.e., the procedures and duties of a role). As an example, while delivering his annual report, treasurer 1, announced a discrepancy in the accounts, which was only partially justified by the Frigate of Joy's fiasco. Regarding the unexplained part of this gap, treasurer 1 failed in providing the related information because 'the previous treasurer was on vacation, and [he] had other things to do'. Treasurer 1 explicitly stated that he did not mark all the receipts and payments during his tenure even though it was part of his collectively validated duties, which he could have refused when he was elected as treasurer. While an irregular member of the Western Circle noted that 'the treasurer's job was poorly done', GC members did not react despite the treasurer's blatant disregard for his duties. The absence of task-related control or sanctions appears to be justified by the precept of uncompromised autonomy, with members considering that '[laissez-faire] is really our house philosophy. Rubbing someone's nose in it will only get you so far' (Informal discussion with the chairman). This stance also led to the establishment of a contextual prioritization among open values – in this case, to compromise on transparency around the M21S accounts in an effort to preserve the organization's autonomy principle. In other words, this entails a hierarchization of the most relevant issues to address.

Another strategy employed by GC members to avoid handling situations that challenged their open values was to not meet with actors who were openly in conflict with M21S. This was notably highlighted by a newcomer when attending her first GC meeting, the agenda of which addressed the collective resignation of the Western Circle and the unpaid debt left by the founder:

> We're regulating a major conflict with the Western Region, and nobody is present. Same for the founder. So, the very process of managing this conflict raises questions. I'm not comfortable with the idea that the problem is still being brushed aside on the provision that the Western Circle has wanted its independence for years.

This instance showcases another contextual prioritization of open values in which the autonomy of the western team in organizing their own events is criticized for conflicting with the principle of total inclusion.

The GC also adopts a passive stance by not addressing those demands of members that could conflict with open values. More specifically, the GC either ignores or postpones such demands even in times of crisis, which demonstrates an absence

of support. This was the case when treasurer 2, who succeeded treasurer 1, found that the incomplete bookkeeping prompted the auditor to not certify the association's accounts. Treasurer 2 also discovered the unregistered debt that had been contracted a few years prior by the founder. Treasurer 2 requested the help of the GC and made suggestions on how to manage these issues, but no concrete decisions were implemented by the GC: 'There is […] an absence of sincere and expressed intention to change these situations: these facts have not prompted any kind of reaction from the GC, no openness to regulation, no willingness to operate otherwise' (from the resignation email signed by the Western Region members, including treasurer 2 who was also one of the Western Circle's referents).

The members of the GC recognized that they had not moved to help treasurer 2 because they were uncomfortable with her suggestions:

> I wouldn't want the founder to be dragged in, brought to his knees and forced to take action, but I do want us to bring order back to our house. (Senior GC member)

> The support that treasurer 2 could have asked for and expected during her investigation… I didn't give her that support because I didn't agree with her approach. (Chairman)

Once again, this situation resulted in a loss of strategic human resources: the disempowerment manifested by the GC prompted the whole Western Region Circle to collectively resign. Their defection especially raised questions around how the members of M21S could replace them and address the resulting drop in activity.[4]

Extremist openness

This section introduces extremist openness as a third mechanism that plays a key role in organizational necrosis. I characterize the open principles of M21S as extremist because its regular actors (i.e., members, especially of the GC, who constantly attend meetings) are so deeply committed to embodying their open principles that these values affect their judgment and behavior. This overcommitment to openness (1) fuels an ideological form of closure, referring to implicit and normative exclusion criteria to punish deviation from the action-open values fit, (2) which is emphasized by newcomers and irregular actors (i.e., members who rarely attend M21S meetings) displaying behavior that the usually engaged members would not. M21S has been introduced as a case of 'radical' openness that is distinct from extremism, as it is characterized by the application of open principles in the entire organizing process; and values that also devalue official means of closure in the name of openness.

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4. In 2018, the externally oriented actions were mostly organized by the Western Region Circle.

While official forms of closure appear as improper in M21S because they clash with open values, its regular actors still enact implicit exclusion to sanction the non-fit with the principles of openness. This normative exclusion draws upon public criticism (e.g., holding the western members responsible for the GC's lack of initiative) and manifests as aggressive behavior oriented toward those actors whose actions are considered inappropriate. This was portrayed when a GC member accused the Western Circle referent of the illegitimate reimbursement of her travel expenses to attend GC meetings because 'the previous referent of the West validated for her reimbursement herself', whereas in reality 'it had been decided in harmony with the board members'. Other examples of hostile behavior, as a form of implicit exclusion, are illustrated in the findings, such as toward the actors who displayed their personal brand during the event they organized to bail out M21S's accounts.

While it is the gatekeeper of the action-value fit in M21S, the GC is still blamed for its lack of congruence by newcomers and irregular actors, especially regarding the principle of uncompromised autonomy. These accusations notably reflect an attempt at normative exclusion:

> I felt angered by the criticism on the 'independence of the west' [because the circle self-organized events] […] It is a dynamic group that wants to build – and on a small scale we experienced that in Bordeaux too – , to move and grow on its own two feet, free from group inertia. There is some potential in M21S, but this crisis marks a turning point. If we don't take it, I do not give much hope for our skin in the years to come. (Irregular member, at a GC meeting)

While M21S members work toward an imaginary total congruence with open values, the data also reveal divergences in their conception of these open principles: 'Within the GC, there are differences as to what M21S is, its values, its vision, etc.' (Irregular GC member, during a meeting to prepare the AGM).

Even though members are committed to fitting with the values of openness, these values have not been outlined or even discussed as a step toward defining a collectively accepted meaning. Open principles are brandished at every debate on organizing as an ideal to be achieved, without ever specifying a shared vision of said principles. Some members even refused to put the issue of their definition on the agenda as it 'polluted' the atmosphere of the meetings. Their avoidance in defining open values demonstrates that extremist openness, as an ideology, cannot be challenged by its adherents.

This ideological form of closure is especially evident in the reactions of newcomers and less regular members, which appear unusual compared to the behaviors of more engaged actors. Just like a transplant can replace the necrosed tissue, criticism from new or irregular members, who are less subjected to extremist open principles, serves to sway the GC's course of action. For instance, during the AGM, Thomas, an unusual actor, directly criticized the behavior of the GC, which had refused to entrust some of the association's money to the Western Circle to organize events: 'That's all I've heard since I've been in this organization, trust… Trust the Western team! You are in control!' (See also the other quotes of newcomers and irregular members in the findings section.) Combined with other arguments, this remark led the GC to change the investment process. Yet, these singular attitudes appear as inappropriate as they collide with the value of uncompromised autonomy and its related prohibition of external control.

Another medical cure for necrosis is based on a directed healing process. Along the same lines, new or irregular actors make decisions and take initiatives, which the GC chooses to especially disregard during moments of crisis, even though they prove effective in solving the encountered problem. For instance, as the GC was passive in managing the issue of the founder's debt, a senior but irregular member of M21S accompanied treasurer 2 to meet with the founder and the auditor. This meeting resulted in a commitment letter signed by the treasurer, the auditor and the founder in which the founder agreed to look for 'proof of these loans as well as any repayments that may have taken place'. A few months later, during the AGM, the members of the association, particularly irregular ones, then asked the founder to sign an acknowledgment of debt. However, as shown by the following quote, the GC was still uneasy in applying this solution: 'These financial issues must be dealt with as proposed at the AGM, […] there is no need to procrastinate: the founder has committed himself to repaying. We can see where the solution lies' (New member during the GC meeting after the AGM).

These less committed actors thus allow themselves to act against the extremist values when necessary and provide the crisis management support that GC members had failed to procure.

Discussion

This article scrutinizes what happens in open organizations where actors reject any official form of closure in favor of their ideals of openness through the study of M21S, an association that encountered great difficulties due to its reliance on extremist opening principles. M21S appears as a two-fold case of failure related to a process of organizational necrosis, which appears (1) as an inner threat to the survival of the organization and (2) as a self-decline of openness. The discussion first explores the conditions under which necrosis can infect open organizing and expand, then focuses on the value of metaphors to better grasp processes of decline in organizations.

Extremism threatening the open organization's sustainability

This article provides a first contribution to the open organizing and critical fields by highlighting how the drive to implement extremist openness can spiral into organizational necrosis. As informed in Figure 2, this process depicts how, through depersonification and disempowerment, extremist open principles can necrose the organizing, that is, drastically reduce action at the organizational level, which fuels crisis escalation to the point of threatening the organization's survival. The limitation of the members' scope of action (i.e., autonomy) reflects that organizational necrosis also results in the self-decline of openness due to overcommitted actors.

In open phenomena scholarships, authors have identified how endemic tensions related to information overload (Luedicke et al., 2017; Ripken, 2006), or commitment (Hautz et al., 2017; Hutter et al., 2017) can damage the contribution dynamic that is vital in sustaining open organizations. In other words, they do not relate this problem to the ideological dimension of openness, while existing research on ideological deviations rather sheds light on the emergence of normative forms of control in open-source communities (O'Mahony & Ferraro, 2007; Puranam et al., 2014). Similar subordination dynamics have also been documented in post-bureaucratic and neo-participative organizations, which share with organizational openness an emphasis on participation, autonomy, and transparency (Daudigeos et al., 2021; Puranam et al., 2014). In these organizations as well as in M21S, supervisor control has been replaced by comparable systems of peer surveillance and normative regulation (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Fleming & Sturdy, 2009; Sewell, 1998). A specificity provided by extremist openness lies in the actors' quest for a total fit with open values, which pinpoints consistency with mechanisms described by Picard and Islam (2020) and Daudigeos et al. (2021) in liberated companies by fostering comparable fantasies of full congruence across the group and by excluding actors who fail to embody their values. Such means of normative control can affect individual wellbeing and health (e.g., anxiety, guilt, and burnout in Picard & Islam, 2020) and thus cause disengagement and absenteeism (Daudigeos et al., 2021; Fleming & Sturdy, 2009), which differs from the necrosis described here, as regular members of M21S continued to express their engagement, attend and actively participate in meetings. Moreover, in addition to its negative consequences on people, which notably manifested in M21S through defection, this case illustrates an as-of-now neglected risk of extremist ideological deviance of openness that can drive these organizations into a particularly precarious position.

Shedding light on the necrosis process in open organizing also contributes to the literature on critical performativity. In this paradigm, scholars are called on to promote alternative and domination-free organizational forms (Spicer et al., 2009), built around normative values such as democracy, autonomy and participation (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992), which echo the openness principles (e.g., Parker et al., 2007; Pearce, 2013 consider open source communities as alternative organizations). In particular, some authors assert that critical research must now turn to a practical engagement, notably by 'producing narratives to inform others' (King & Learmonth, 2015) and by providing recommendations to assist in organizing 'otherwise' (Land & King, 2014). How can the durability of alternative forms of organizing be guaranteed is in line with these practical considerations, and necrosis therefore questions under which conditions, and even whether, open organizing principles can be sustainable. One of the difficulties observed around such alternative practices lies in the issue of performative failure (Fleming & Banerjee, 2016; King & Land, 2018), that is, when critical discourse does not result in action, which especially highlights that a receptive institutional context is required to translate words into action. In M21S, however, actors were especially supportive of openness, and organizational necrosis, as a case of performative failure, relates more closely to their overcommitment to this ideal.

By leading to the self-decline of openness, organizational necrosis thus highlights the unsustainable nature of an extremist conception of opening ideals. In organizational necrosis, extremist open values first dictate what is considered as problematic, then depersonification and disempowerment fuel the process by defining how issues should be addressed.
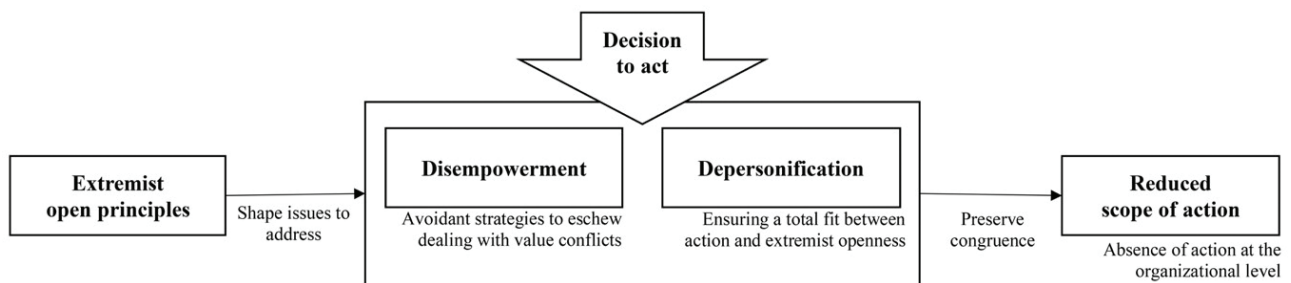

Figure 2. Process of organizational necrosis.
Source: Author's own elaboration.

Disempowerment, as an upstream means of control, is primarily observed whenever a problem is identified, and potential solutions are discussed. Whenever an action is implemented, depersonification prompts members to assess its congruence with open principles and conceive corrective solutions if the fit is unsatisfactory. Actors thus focus essentially on the optimal fit with open principles at the expense of addressing other problems that arise around them in the organization, more specifically when the options offered during deliberation on how to address their problems clash with their open ideal. Put differently, necrosis is related to the process of eventalization (Hussenot, 2021), which refers to the definition, configuration and narration of past, present and future events by organizational actors to create a shared frame of reference, manifested here as extremist openness. This extremist conception is then regularly reinforced through disempowerment and depersonification, which always serve the same narrative of total open values-action fit as a collective (re)configuration of events. This resulted in the passivity of the GC and a general lack of action, which led to a loss of strategic human resources, much like necrosis can lead to the loss of a limb, and to a decrease in activity, like the dysfunctional nature of a necrosed organ. Ultimately, this enabled the necrosis to expand through crisis escalation because actors opted to focus on their fit with open principles rather than curing the necrosis itself.

In line with the practical turn taken in the critical performativity field (King & Learmonth, 2015; Land & King, 2014; Learmonth et al., 2016), I finally discuss how M21S could have prevented the necrosis. Some studies have shown how actors struggle to embody the (radical) openness principles they promote, leading them to apply implicit closing practices (Gibbs et al., 2013; Lingo, 2023; King & Learmonth, 2015; Ringel, 2019). Based on what happened in M21S, these improper forms of closure could have sustained a less absolute but more viable implementation of open principles. This reinforces the suggestion of Dobusch and Dobusch (2019) on the crucial role of closure in preserving openness and the survival of open organizing. The open values of M21S were unspecified, like in the case of Cookiz (Daudigeos et al., 2021), which contributed to fueling a fantasized total congruence, despite members raising the issue of inaccuracy several times. Specifically, the meaning of open principles was neither discussed nor defined in M21S, thus considered as natural and, to some extent, implicitly understood in the same way by every member. The open principles thus took on an absolute meaning, closed to potential reinterpretation depending on the situation, which led to conflicts. In this context, closure to sustain organizational openness might thus entail the elicitation of open principles and their meaning, which appears as a closing mechanism because it consists of defining appropriate but also improper ways to embody these values (i.e., exclusion criteria). Another implementation of closure could have relied on a clear division between spaces dedicated to the organization of events and spaces of dialogues in which ideological questions on openness principles could have been tackled without hindering individual action. In the alternative group La Barbe, such separations encouraged mobilization by preventing dissensus related to values, which were too time and energy consuming and therefore revelatory of the potentially destructive aspect of extensive communication (Hildwein, 2020).

Using metaphors to better grasp the process of decline in organizations

This article offers a second contribution by highlighting the role of medical metaphors in studying organizational decline, such as organizational degrowth, closure or failure of critical performativity, as manifestations that endanger the sustainability of alternative organizational practices. Metaphors are communicative devices that invite the receiver of a speech to grasp a thing as something else (Cazal & Inns, 1998). By shaping how we discuss social reality, these tropes help us understand the complexity of social life (Cornelissen, 2005; Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Metaphors are increasingly used in social sciences, notably in management and organization studies, as a means of theorizing, either inductively (i.e., to reflect the actors' words) or deductively (i.e., when projecting the vision of scholars or members) (Cornelissen et al., 2008). In this article, I draw upon the domain-interaction model (Cornelissen, 2005) to blend the organizational and medical areas into the metaphor of organizational necrosis. As it results from my analysis of what occurred in M21S, the necrosis appears as a deductive metaphor as well as a decontextualized one, which is used as a heuristic to help readers make sense of the two-fold decline process that occurs in the association.

The domains blended into the organizational necrosis (i.e., organizations and medicine) follow a long tradition in management research (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Morgan, 1986) in which organizations and their components are compared to a living body or to organisms. Rooted in an essentialist approach, these organic comparisons emphasize the principle of contingency and the impossibility to fully control what happens within organizations, which tends to downplay the role of human agency. Unsurprisingly, the metaphor of 'organizational death' has also been mobilized to illustrate when 'the physical and social arrangements of (part of) an organization cease to exist' (Arman, 2014, p. 25), such as the downsizing or closing of workplaces. Referring to such situations as deaths highlights the difficult emotions experienced by those involved (Bell, 2012; Sutton, 1987; Winegardner et al., 1984), as well as the seriousness of these conditions (Burrell, 1998). Most death metaphors rely on a similar essentialist view, hence people who remain in the organization are labeled as 'survivors,' those

who are dismissed as 'victims' (Brockner et al., 1994; Devine et al., 2003; Van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012), and those who end the organization's life as 'executioners' (De Vries & Balazs, 1997; Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). In contrast, Arman (2014, p. 37) develops a more 'contextualized, agentic, and dynamic' view of organizational death by analyzing three metaphors that are implicitly enacted by actors to make sense of their company's closure (i.e., murder, sacrificial killing, and palliative death). These tropes highlight the different reasons and processes associated with the organization's passing, and how the death metaphor has changed alongside the steps of closure and according to the members' roles. Accordingly, I discuss the benefits and drawbacks of disease and medical metaphors to grasp decline processes in organizations.

In the necrosis comparison, the organization appears as a patient who suffers from a specific affliction that has been related to (1) its agency (i.e., here not treating the disease) and (2) the role of external factors (e.g., the institutional context in Fleming & Banerjee, 2016; King & Land, 2018; or the arrival of new members in my case) in the propagation or healing of the disorder. Thanks to their complexity, medical metaphors offer the potential to provide (3) a holistic and nuanced view of decline processes through potential treatments and probable complications of the disease. In organizational necrosis, a focus on complications sheds light on the threat it poses to the survival of M21S, while analyzing the (absence of) treatments emphasizes the extremism of openness principles displayed by regular members and the healing possibilities offered by newcomers. Finally, thinking in medical terms allows one to pinpoint (4) the processual dimension by depicting the evolution of the illness and its steps. We can thus imagine the application of original medical metaphors in exploring new cases of organizational decline such as an autoimmune disorder or cancer, notably when such processes are related to a specific part of the organization. Of course, metaphor analysis also presents some limits, particularly when the comparison is too simplistic or superficial (Cornelissen, 2005; Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). In the case of medical metaphors and organizational decline, it thus requires scrupulous adherence to the domain-interaction model guidelines and careful consideration of the four elements mentioned above (agency of the patient, external factors, treatments, and complications and development stages) to ensure the match between the blended domains (Cornelissen, 2005).

Boundary conditions and directions for future research

Compared to studies on open organizations and neo-participative firms (Daudigeos et al., 2021; Tkacz, 2012), firstly, the domination mechanisms observed in M21S are not linked to an underlying instrumental purpose, which

questions where precisely things went wrong with the values of openness in this case. To understand how extremist open values can drive to ideological closure, the work of Paul Ricœur on ideology (Ricœur, 1984, 1986) appears as a particularly appropriate framework. Indeed, Ricœur (1984, 1986) studied how this form of social imaginary can become either 'constructive' (i.e., enabling the integration of history in collective memory) or 'pathological' (i.e., as an illusion to protect the status quo). Future research could thus mobilize a Ricœurian approach to grasp how radical open ideals, and potentially other alternative and emancipating organizational cultures, might fuel a 'healthy' or 'destructive' ideology.

Secondly, M21S depicts a two-fold instance of failure of open organizing, the organizational necrosis threatening the association's survival and leading to the self-decline of openness. However, there are several other cases of radically open organizations that have existed for years, decades even, such as the Anonymous (established since 2003), Wikipedia (created in 2001), or the Swedish Pirate Party (founded in 2006), showing that openness can be sustainable. This questions which conditions fuel sustainability in open organizing and specifically how actors have avoided transforming openness into a necrosing ideology that future research might address.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Timeline of the studied period.

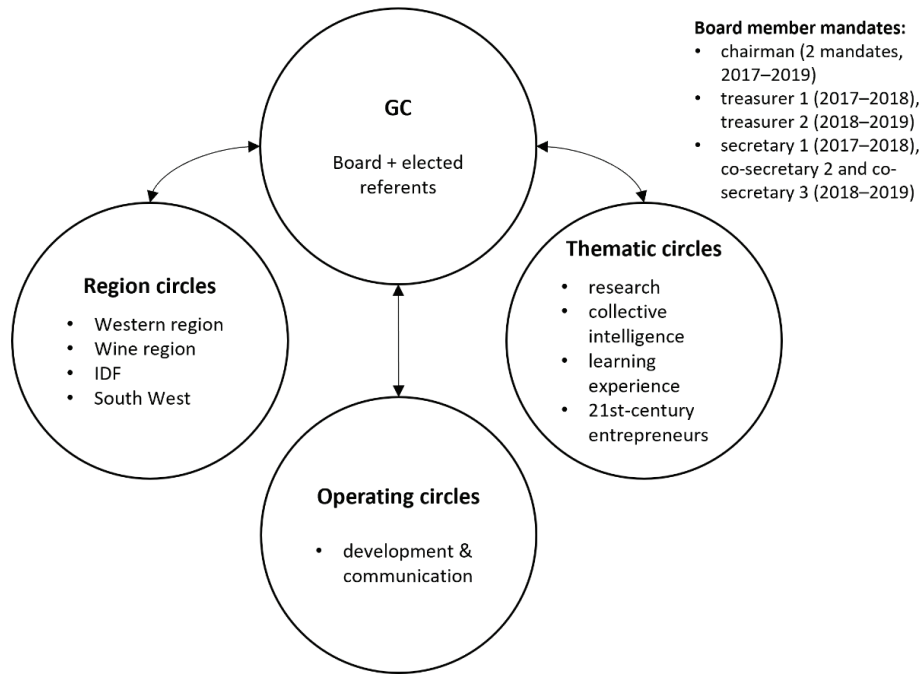| Dates	Events
June 2017	*Vote to adopt the new constitution in extraordinary general assembly*
	'Frigate of Joy' event canceled, but too late to recoup all the financial outlay
July 2017	**First GC meeting, a new board was elected (with André as chairman, Clovis as treasurer, Germaine as secretary)**
	Departure of the salaried chief delegate
	André, the new chairman, encouraged planning as many events as possible in order to bail out the accounts
Fall 2017	First externally oriented event organized, a movie projection
	After-work meeting organized by the Western Region circle
October 2017	Negative feedback on the movie projection event
	Second externally oriented event organized, a workshop on collective intelligence
November 2017	Diffusion of a video of the event that put forward the organizers' own personal brand, which contravenes the rules of the association
	Diffusion of the 'questioning tool' and definition of the dead-weight rule
December 2017	M21SMeter training session, externally oriented event organized by the Reptile Circle
January 2018	**GC meeting**
February 2018	**GC meeting, with feedback on the Frigate of Joy fiasco on the agenda**
March 2018	**GC meeting, in which the members decided to stop addressing finance-related topics during their meetings**
May 2018	**GC meeting, the 2017 AGM was on the agenda**
April 2018	M21Smeter training session, externally oriented event organized by the Reptile Circle
June 2018	Meeting dedicated to the organization of the 2017 AGM
July 2018	Plenary session, externally oriented, organized by the Western Region Circle.
October 2018	*2017 AGM, in which the members found out about the financial difficulties of M21S in the wake of the 'Frigate of Joy' affair*
December 2018	**GC meeting, with the election of a new board and vision of M21S on the agenda**
	The elected board members: André as chairman, Nora as treasurer, Irma & Jonathan as secretaries
March 2019	Plenary session, externally oriented, organized by the Western Region Circle.
	GC meeting, in which Nora spoke up about (i) how she had discovered that part of the €24,000 discrepancy was the result of a debt contracted by the founder and not shown in the accounting records; (ii) incomplete bookkeeping prompted the auditor to refuse to certify the association's accounts
	The last hour of this one-day meeting was dedicated to budgetary autonomy
April 2019	Plenary session, externally oriented, organized by the Western Region Circle
June 2019	**GC meeting, the topic of budgetary autonomy was on the agenda**
July 2019	Plenary session, externally oriented, organized by the Wine-Region Circle
October 2019	*2018 AGM, in which the members found out about the debt contracted by the founder and asked him to sign a promise to pay it back*
November 2019	Externally oriented workshop organized by the Paris-Region Circle
	Collective resignation of the Western Region Circle
December 2019	**GC meeting, with the departure of the Western Region Circle on the agenda**

Source: Author's own elaboration.
Note: **GC meeting**, *AGM*, externally oriented action.

Appendix 2. Additional evidence.

Second-order categories	First-order themes	Vignettes and example quotes
Surveillance between peers	Controlling for action – — open values fit	'I'm not comfortable with the idea that the problem is still being brushed aside on the provision that the Western Circle has wanted its independence for years'. (Newcomer, during the debrief about the defection of the whole Western Region circle)
	Collectivistic decision-making	'Very often, when a decision is made, if a person who is absent has an objection, it leads to a clash'. (Interview with the chairman)
Rules conception	Rules to fit with values as the only response to dysfunction	While treasurer 1 was delivering the financial report, the topic of the financial autonomy of the circles came up on the agenda:
		An irregular member: 'Each circle should be able to manage its own budget, and then we would be in agreement with our raison d'être. […] Do we decide now? Or is it the GC's decision? […] This needs to be addressed'
		[…]
		Treasurer 1, ironically: 'You already know how to do it, so that's good'.
		The topic was brought to the GC's agenda to work on a detailed process.
	Rules based on self-regulation	During a debate about the financial autonomy of circles:
		A senior GC member: 'The key is: we do what we want but it's transparent. It's based on autonomy, the principle of the envelope is that we can act without authorization, as long as we're transparent'.
Turning a blind eye	No mediation with the people involved in case of conflict	'I felt like I was being judged without having an opportunity to debate the situation: it's not fair and it's not easy to live with'. (Newcomer, during a GC meeting)
	No accountability-related sanctions	'I am concerned: we have this recurrent pitfall at M21S. We start a process, then we stop it right in the middle'. (Senior GC member, during a meeting)
Passive behavior	Absence of support	At the 2017 AGM, the Western Region circle raised the topic of giving budgetary autonomy to the circles to help organize events by using the funds on the association's accounts, which would be a more facilitative process than having to adhere to the self-finance obligation.
		Chairman: 'That's one operating account per region. We've always been against it. But we can talk about it'.
		The former leader of the Western Region circle, annoyed: 'But we've never talked about it! It always gets put off. In the regions, we're treated like children, we're not autonomous'.
Ideological closure	Unspecified meaning of open values	'We don't give ourselves the means to deploy our values' (GC member, during an informal talk)
	Blaming the lack of congruence of the GC	'The experience shared over the past two years with the GC at the AGMs […] shows that the principles of M21S are neither respected nor embodied. Indeed, there are significant gaps between the intention (vision, values) and the reality of the practices within the GC; lack of respect for the M21S principles […] which leave room for the emergence of ego in all its forms'. (Letter of resignation of the Western circle)
	Normative exclusion	'If there is a real problem of legitimacy [of a person] that arises, it's not in those moments that we want to conduct a real decision-making process by consent because there is nothing more annoying than dealing with the objections of someone you consider illegitimate'. (Interview of the chairman)
Unusual reactions (necrosis cure)	Criticism (directed healing)	'I can't stand it when people talk about absentees in the GC, I find it very deviant, I could have not been there, I have too much work, I couldn't make progress … I'm going to mention my failures, but, please, those who are not there are just absent' (New member, during a GC)
	Support from new or irregular members (transplant)	During the election without a candidate to replace treasurer 1, someone proposed the name of treasurer 2, who recently joined the GC, but a GC member objected.
		Treasurer 2, answering the objection: 'We asked for services and we waited to reimburse a caterer, as a matter of principle, I commit myself to pay the suppliers quickly, that's what bothers me the most. […] Treasurer 1 does not have the time to enter all the expenses in the books, and no one does, and it is a priority that this work be done by either the treasurer or the circle leaders'.
		As a new GC member, treasurer 2 thus stepped up to be elected as a new treasurer by committing to do the expected work correctly.

Appendix 3. Composition of the association.

GC

Board + elected referents

Region circles

- Western region
- Wine region
- IDF
- South West

Operating circles

- development & communication

Thematic circles

- research
- collective intelligence
- learning experience
- 21st-century entrepreneurs

Board member mandates:
- chairman (2 mandates, 2017–2019)
- treasurer 1 (2017–2018), treasurer 2 (2018–2019)
- secretary 1 (2017–2018), co-secretary 2 and co-secretary 3 (2018–2019)

Source: Author's own elaboration.