BOUNDARY-SPANNING COLLABORATION
An integrative sensemaking perspective
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Research interest
This research contributes to the discussion about what happens when people work together in (globally) dispersed teams and why many of these collaborations fail to meet their objectives. The term ‘boundary-spanning collaboration’ is introduced for describing collaborations that not only span cultural boundaries, but also geographical, organizational and functional ones.

Boundary-spanning collaborations in transnational organizations are often heralded as the means for realizing synergies and competitive advantages. Yet, in practice, these collaborations often encounter various problems and difficulties, especially when it comes to cross-boundary knowledge sharing and organizational learning. Explanations, adopting a cultural perspective, are often contradictory and critical.

IB/M scholars have asked for more in-depth research in this regard. This research aims to contribute to theory development and open up new vistas for investigating the complexities of working together in transnational organizational contexts. It investigates boundary-spanning collaboration in dispersed teams by adopting an interpretive sensemaking perspective, integrating insights from knowledge management and social identity theory.

RESEARCH QUESTION
"How do organizational members make sense of boundary-spanning collaborations in dispersed teams and how is this enacted in the collaboration?"

Sub-questions
1. How are boundary-spanning collaborations designed and evolving between the headquarters and subsidiaries and among subsidiaries of Mirai Corporation?
2. What are Dutch and Japanese organizational members’ sensemaking mechanisms of boundary-spanning collaboration in dispersed teams?
3. How are these sensemaking mechanisms enacted in the collaboration?

AT MIRAI CORPORATION

Research approach: holistic case study of Mirai Corporation
The research is a holistic case study of strategic, knowledge-intensive collaborations between the headquarters and subsidiaries and among subsidiaries of a Japanese transnational organization, named Mirai Corporation (a pseudonym).

Research design
The investigation of several sub-cases of boundary-spanning collaboration, taking place on different hierarchical layers of one transnational organization, allows a detailed understanding of a unique case. Together with the longitudinal character of this study, this not only makes possible between-case and cross-case but also within-case analysis.

Method of analysis
Narrative analysis & qualitative content analysis
- Within-case analysis of all 4 projects
- Cross-case analysis of all 4 projects
- Step 1: Analysis of individual narratives
- Step 2: Analysis of collective narratives
- Between-case analysis of project 3 & 4

Keywords
Boundary-spanning collaboration
Dispersed teams
Knowledge management
Sensemaking
Social identity

Table 1: Research design

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<th>Project</th>
<th>Part organization</th>
<th>Project 1: Integration project</th>
<th>Project 2: New opportunities project</th>
<th>Project 3 &amp; 4: Hogo and Zeni project</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Middle managers</td>
<td>R&amp;D scientists &amp; engineers</td>
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<td>Within and between-case analysis</td>
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<td>Project 5</td>
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TIME LINE

Outline dissertation
Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Theoretical background
Chapter 3: Design of the study
Chapter 4: Empirical article 1: Within case analysis of top-management project
Chapter 5: Empirical article 2: Within case analysis of middle management project
Chapter 6: Empirical article 3: Between-case analysis of 2 R&D projects
Chapter 7: Empirical article 4: Cross-case analysis of all projects
Chapter 8: Summary, conclusion & discussion