Selective permeability of boundaries in a boundary spanning team

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Boundaries

❖ Frontiers or demarcations

❖ Delimit the perimeter and scope of a given domain

❖ Reflect the sociocultural differences between groups

❖ Potentially lead to discontinuities in action or interaction

❖ Contestable

❖ Have dual nature:
   ❖ Barriers v Junctures
   ❖ 'Thick' v 'Thin'
   ❖ 'Open' v 'Closed' teams

Boundary spanning teams

- ❖Heavily rely on boundary spanning activities to accomplish their tasks

- ❖Boundary spanning is a core part of their formal remit

- ❖Increase the permeability of 'sticky' boundaries

- ❖Promote integration, coordination and joint working between different organisations and/or professions

- ❖Seen as preferential over individual boundary spanners

- ❖May be part of broader 'boundary organisations'

Boundary work

❖Strategies used to establish, obscure or dissolve distinctions between groups of actors

❖*Strategies of engagement* – boundary spanning – boundaries as 'junctures'

❖*Strategies of disengagement* – boundary maintenance – boundaries as 'barriers':

❖Boundary buffering – an outward-facing strategy of disengagement, whereby a team closes itself off from exposure to the environment to protect itself against external uncertainties and disturbances

❖Boundary reinforcement - an inward-facing strategy of disengagement, whereby a team internally sets and reclaims its boundaries and sharpens team identity
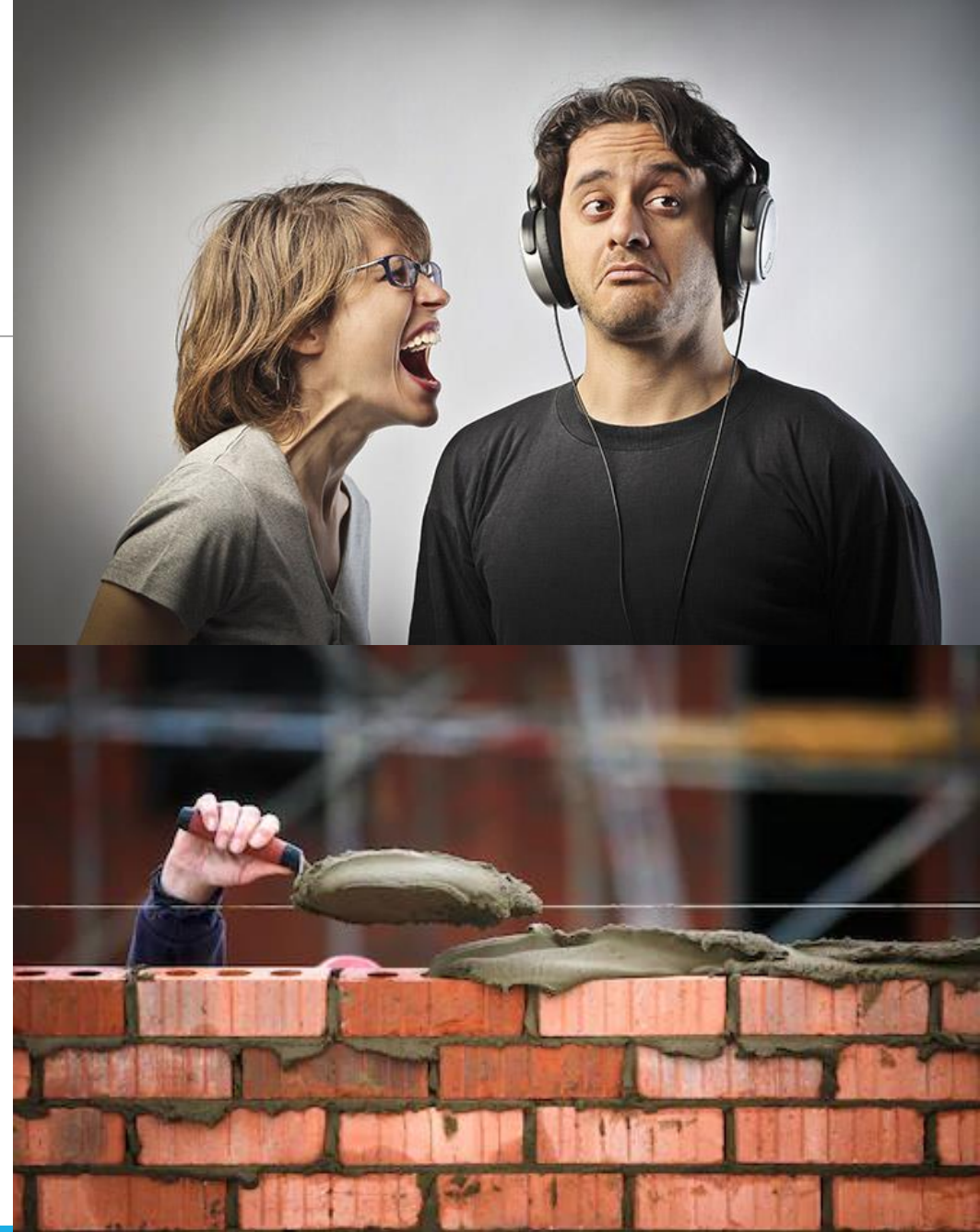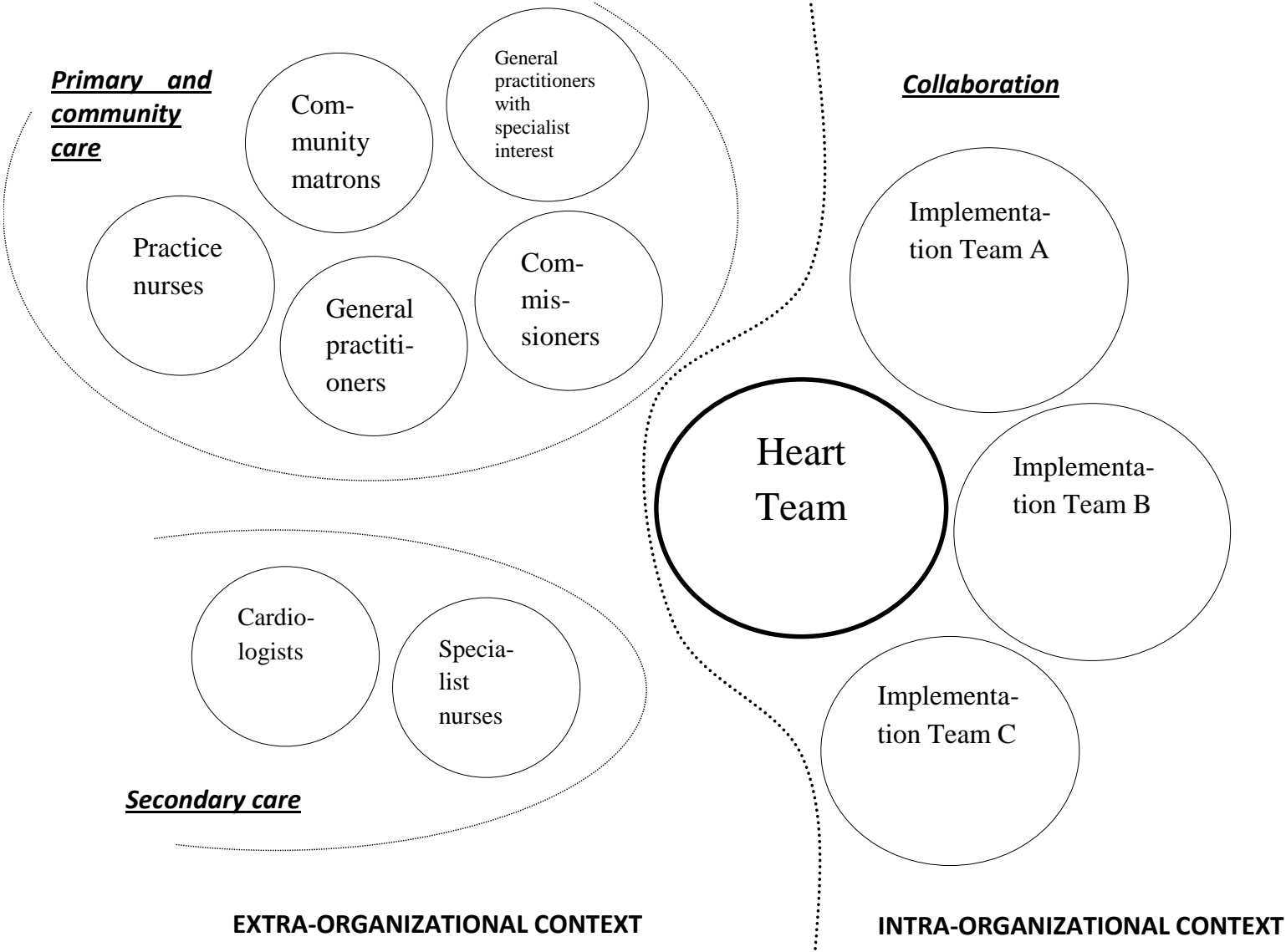
Paradox of boundary spanning teams

❖ Teams participate in all types of boundary work

❖ Boundary spanning increases the permeability of the team boundary

❖ Boundary buffering and boundary reinforcement reduce the permeability of the team boundary

❖ Boundary spanning teams require a permeable boundary

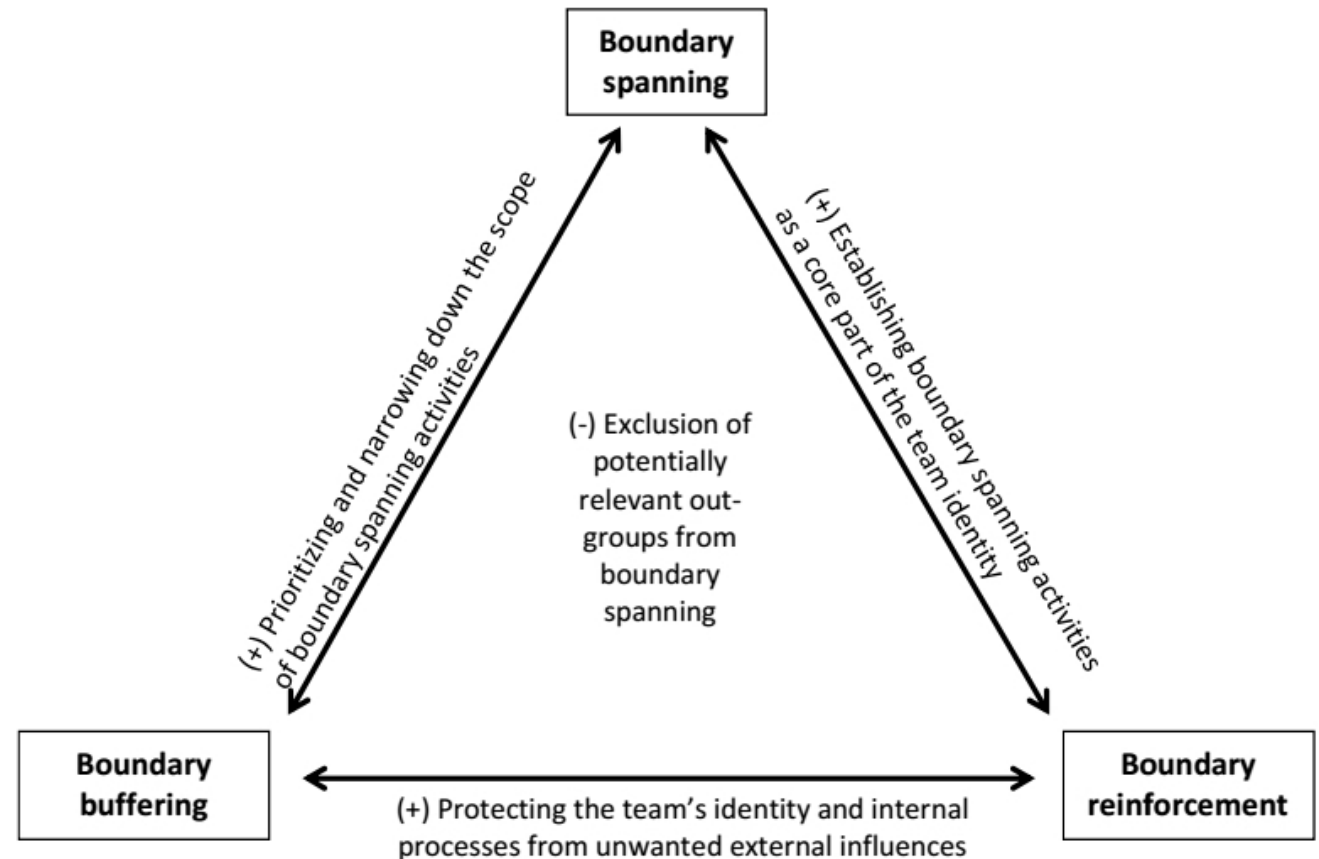❖ **What is the interplay between different types of boundary work in boundary spanning teams?**

❖ **How does this interplay influence the permeability of the team boundary?**

❖ **How do these phenomena change over time?**

Qualitative longitudinal single case study

Primary and community care

Community matrons

General practitioners with specialist interest

Practice nurses

General practitioners

Commissioners

Cardiologists

Specialist nurses

Secondary care

Heart Team

Collaboration

Implementation Team A

Implementation Team B

Implementation Team C

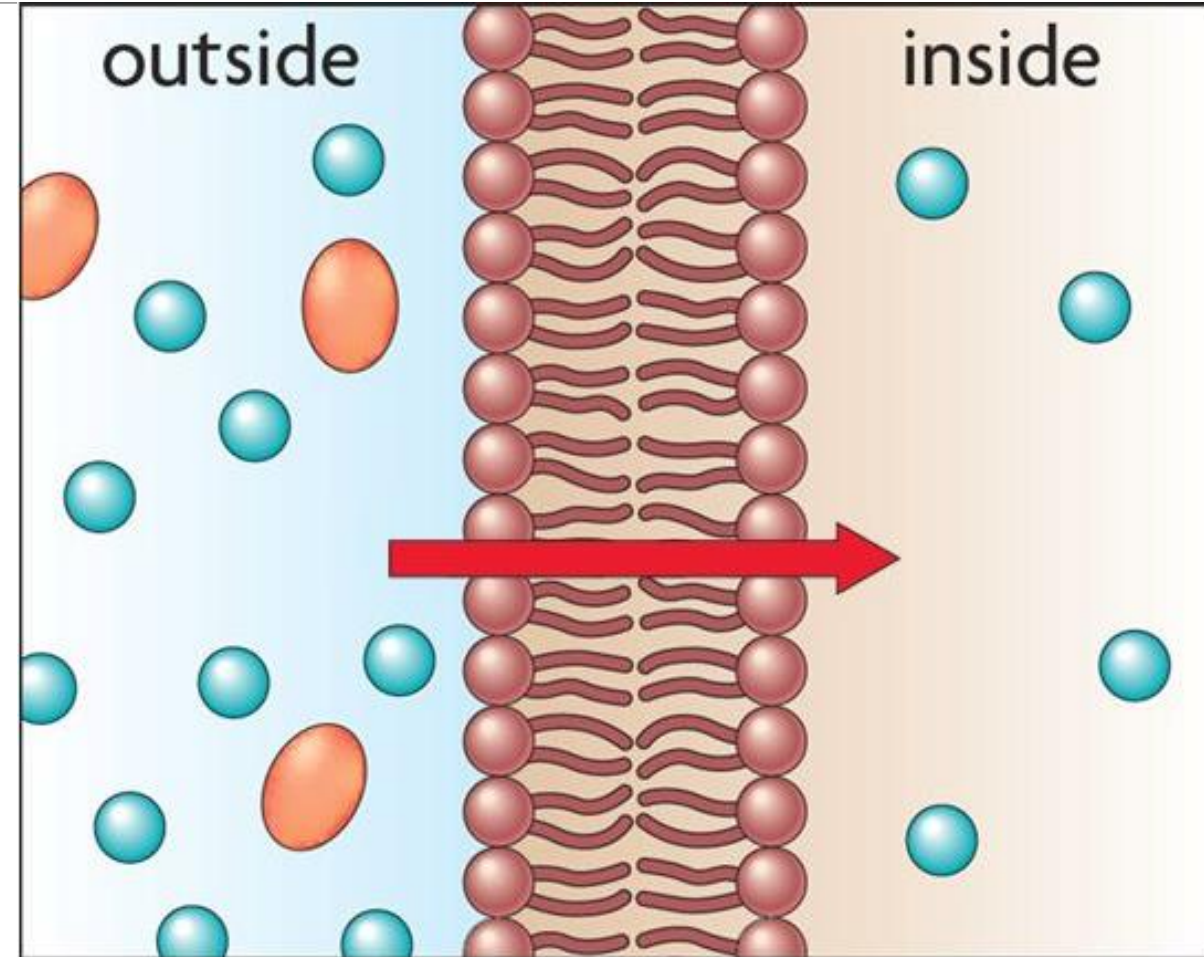**EXTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT**

INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Interplay between different types of boundary work

❖Strategies of engagement and disengagement can co-exist at the same team boundary without cancelling each other out

❖They are directed at different out-groups

❖Strategies of disengagement exercise both negative and, rather unexpectedly, positive influences on boundary spanning:

  ❖Adaptation

  ❖Prioritisation

  ❖Identity formation

Boundary spanning

(+) Prioritizing and narrowing down the scope of boundary spanning activities

(+) Establishing boundary spanning activities as a core part of the team identity

(-) Exclusion of potentially relevant out-groups from boundary spanning

Boundary buffering

(+) Protecting the team's identity and internal processes from unwanted external influences

Boundary reinforcement

Selective permeability

❖Team boundary is not *either* 'thin' *or* 'thick'

❖It's **selectively permeable** in relation to different *out-groups* with which the team interacts

❖Selectivity is shaped by:

❖ perceived characteristics of the out-groups;

❖ the out-group's modes of participation; and

❖ the individual boundary spanner(s) deployed

Factor	Dimensions
Perceived characteristics of the out-group	➤ Relevance of the out-group's knowledge and/or skills to the boundary spanning project ➤ Authority and legitimacy of the out-group in its respective social field ➤ Alignment of interests between the out-group and the boundary spanning team ➤ Degree of difference between the out-group and the boundary-spanning team ➤ Competition for recognition and resources between the out-group and the boundary spanning team
The out-group's mode of participation	➤ Full participation in shared practices ➤ Knowledge exchange without participation in shared practices ➤ Non-participation
Characteristics of individual boundary spanner(s) operating between the team and the out-group	➤ Complementarity between the designated boundary spanner and the representatives of the out-group involved in the boundary spanning project ➤ The degree to which the designated boundary spanners are involved in the development of the cross-boundary practices ➤ Position of the individual boundary spanner in relation to the core/periphery of the boundary spanning team and the out-group involved

Temporal dynamics of boundary phenomena

'Exploration' stages:

❖ Combination of boundary spanning and boundary reinforcement

❖ Boundary spanning is broad and shallow, mainly targeting multiple extra-organisational groups

❖ Boundary reinforcement unfolds mainly in response to intra-organisational groups:
  ❖ Intra-organisational competition
  ❖ Exaggeration of differences between similar teams ('othering') as part of team identity formation

'Exploitation' stages:

❖ Combination of boundary spanning and boundary buffering

❖ Boundary spanning is more narrow but deeper in focus, targeting several extra-organisational groups

❖ Intra-organisational boundary reinforcement can be counterbalanced by an organisational intervention:
  ❖ Boundaries are amenable to change under pressure
  ❖ Shared cross-team work practices