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3rd International Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives in Management Research

Guest Editors: Marja Flory and Oriol Iglesias

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CONTENTS

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CONTENTS
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GUEST EDITORIAL
Once upon a time
The role of rhetoric and narratives in management research and practice

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss a critical review of the role of rhetoric and narratives in management research and practice.

Design/methodology/approach – Conceptual implications are drawn from the analysis and discussion of the papers of this special issue, as well as from previous literature.

Findings – Managers and researchers will be unable to explore the potential of narratives and stories fully if, at the same time, they do not deeply comprehend the underpinnings of rhetoric.

Originality/value – The paper further discusses the role of rhetoric and narratives in management research and practice and also explores the relationships between rhetoric and narratives.

Keywords Rhetoric, Narratives, Management research, Management technique

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

It is quite obvious to anyone that managers spend a huge portion of their time talking with other people, negotiating, selling, discussing, sharing, questioning, organising, reporting, motivating, encouraging, challenging, and – in essence – persuading. Interesting empirical evidence of the importance of talks as a managerial activity was put forward by Mintzberg (1973). However, despite the claims made by some authors, the role of rhetoric and narratives in management research has been underscored for many years.

Rhetoric has constantly been viewed as superficial, unsubstantial and superfluous (Hunt, 1994; Goldber and Markóczy, 2000), thus being considered as totally inappropriate and vacuous in management research. Even worse, rhetoric has been associated with obscuring manipulation and with the exercise of power and control over employees (Barley and Kunda, 1992; David and Strang, 2006). Even today, rhetoric has still not been fully accepted and integrated into the repertoire of management research, as opposed to narratives, despite strong claims in its favor (McCloskey, 1983; Eccles *et al.*, 1992) and some recent encouraging and inspiring contributions (Green *et al.*, 2009; McCloskey, 2009).

Narratives and storytelling have also been treated as unscientific (Sarbin, 1986; Eisenhardt, 1991) and been given little attention. However, during the past decade, the influence of narratives in management research and practice has considerably grown

(Boje, 1991; Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 2000) and nowadays it is well accepted that they have brought a rich new method of analysis and interpretation (Brown *et al.*, 2009).

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of persuasion by words. Words we use to tell our stories, words by which we give meaning and interpretations to the "facts" of our daily life. Eccles *et al.* (1992, p. 26) took up this rhetorical perspective to recognize that:

> The way people talk about the world has everything to do with the way the world is ultimately understood and acted in, and that the concept of revolutionary change depends to a great extent on how the world is framed by our language.

And the way we tell our stories can provoke readers to broaden their horizon (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Thus, there is a clear connexion between rhetoric and narratives and we claim that they cannot be isolated. Narratives and stories are extremely powerful rhetorical devices that managers should know how to use, because they can be, for instance, drivers of organisational change. But more importantly, we should know what kind of impact these stories can have.

The meaning we give to stories is generated in the interaction between the storyteller and the listener. Stories are relatively open to multiple interpretations. The openness of stories enables narrators and listeners to retell a story and to derive meanings from it that are relevant in their own social context. In other words, the multiplicity embedded in stories offers a wonderful source for social negotiations and conversations between people, as well as for learning from one another's experiences (Abma, 2003).

Rhodes (2002) concludes that if we see organisations as a multiplicity of stories then it is important to realize that there are also multiple ways of writing about these stories and multiple effects that these ways of writing can have. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000), reflection means critically attending to one's own interpretations and perspectives rather than claiming authority as interpreter and author.

In order to hear multiple voices, we consider how stories are reconstructed representations of experiences. Even as we use the method of storytelling in organisational research, we need to remember that we are the ones telling the stories, choosing what to tell and what to exclude from the telling. When writing the stories down, we select, change, and construct meaning. Therefore, it is important as researchers that we look at our role as meaning creators. However, managers and researchers will be unable to explore the potential of narratives and stories fully if, at the same time, they do not deeply comprehend the underpinnings of rhetoric.

This special issue is associated to the 3rd Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives in Management Research that was held at Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas (ESADE) in Barcelona on 12-14 March 2009. This conference belongs to a long history of doctoral programmes, research and International collaboration.

The narrative of this conference was initiated in 1991 when ESADE created the PhD Programme in Management Sciences. Since then, Professor Eduard Bonet has run a course on epistemology of science, based on the logical and rhetorical forms of reasoning, whose evolution has incorporated the subjects of rhetoric of science and the function of rhetoric in management activities and management research. The European Doctoral Programmes Association in Management and Business Administration (EDAMBA)[1] network made it possible for Professor Hans Siggaard Jensen to establish the foundation of another critical course on social constructivism and other philosophical topics. Afterwards, Professor Deirdre McCloskey joined the EDAMBA

Summer School (now transformed into the Summer Academy) in the South of France. Moreover, she also joined the group at ESADE and introduced the subject of virtues, economics, and management.

As the group was convinced of the theoretical and practical importance of rhetorical arguments, persuasion, meanings and virtues in management, and management research – and was aware of the insufficient attention that professors and managers were giving to the topic – ESADE decided to offer a Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives. The first conference was held in 2006, the second in 2007, and the third in 2009, with the idea of holding them every two years. With that purpose, ESADE invited Professor Barbara Czarniawska, who kindly agreed to participate as a guest speaker and a member of the scientific committee. The 3rd Conference had the support of the EIASM and the collaboration of the Erasmus Business School, which was an important development and opened up many future possibilities.

The papers presented at this conference and the interesting discussions that took place in Barcelona have made it possible to publish this special issue on the role of rhetoric and narratives in management research and practice.

Rhetoric, narratives, management research, and interpretativist methodologies

Rhetoric and narratives are based on an interpretativist approach to management research and practice that allows the researcher to obtain details about feelings, emotions, and processes, all of which are very difficult to extract by means of traditional quantitative methodologies. In the words of Hollis (1994), exploratory interpretativist methodologies allow the researcher to reach a much more comprehensive understanding about certain phenomena, rather than the positivist quantitative methodologies, which are much more focused on an explanatory understanding. Thus, rhetoric and narratives are extremely powerful devices used to comprehend organisational processes and changes.

The use of interpretativist methodologies in scientific research has been conceptually justified by a wide range of authors, inspired to a large extent by the ideas of Schutz (1953), for whom the social sciences have the necessity, and at the same time the right, to interfere in the field of the meanings, values and intentions of the actors, as a system for understanding and interpreting their actions. Schutz' ideas are substantiated in turn in the phenomenology of Husserl and in the interpretative sociology of Weber.

In his paper "Rhetoric in management and in management research," Eduard Bonet discusses the importance of interpretative methodologies and the relevance of rhetoric and narratives in creating meanings and interpreting actions. Furthermore, Eduard Bonet also proposes a revision of the history of rhetoric, and that this is essential in order to understand the changing role of rhetoric in science, and even in society, since the ancient Greeks. He defends the idea that Aristotle established a new grounding for rhetoric and gave it a central role that was even expanded in the Renaissance when it was considered the Queen of all arts. However, the rise of modern philosophy and the Enlightenment constrained rhetoric to a literary and poetical technique. It was not until the twentieth century that rhetoric recovered a central position in philosophy and science due to the contributions of Perelman, Toulmin, or Burke. Bonet maintains that management and management research are placed between rhetoric and logic.

Hans Siggaard Jensen in his paper "Management – decision and interpretation" claims that, in many management areas, the essential type of knowledge is interpretative and not analytical or deductive, as the model of the rational decision maker traditionally defended. From this perspective, the main managerial activity is the creation of meanings based on interpretations. In this context, rhetorical narratives allow the creation of communities of action.

Rhetoric, narratives, and organisational change

The importance of talks as a managerial activity was well described by Mintzberg (1973), who gave evidence that this was the task that took up most time in the agenda of managers. He also made clear that these talks had a defined objective and purpose. As Austin *et al.* (1975) would also support, managers do things with words, as they use language to communicate their ideas and to convince their collaborators to follow a certain strategy. According to Grint and Case (1998), rhetoric can in fact be conceived as the language used to promote managerial change. In this same line, relationships between storytelling and change have also been explored (Barry and Elmes, 1997; Carr, 1986). Faber (2002, p. 21) makes this point clear when he claims that "Change itself is a story and stories are acts of change." Thus, we support the idea that managers promote organisational change through rhetoric and narratives. This perspective on rhetoric and narratives is also aligned to a certain constructivist world view under which language creates reality (Hartelius and Browning, 2008).

In his paper on "The reluctant rhetorician: senior managers as rhetoricians in a strategic change context," Tomas Nilsson explores the idea that managers can be viewed as rhetoricians. In fact, he found in his case study that managers expressed the idea that communication is "immensely important" when managing change. At the same time, however, all the managers interviewed in his research were remarkably reluctant to use the word "rhetoric" or "rhetorician." By and large, it was difficult to get them to talk about rhetoric or persuasion at all.

If persuasion is an essential managerial activity, this means that rhetoric also plays a central role in leadership. Every leader should be a persuasive leader. However, it is worth making clear the point that a true leader is one capable of engaging in persuasive conversations or, as expressed by McCloskey (2009) one able to engage in "sweet talk." In this sense, he or she needs not only to be able to persuade, but also to carefully listen to others. So, leaders should not only be excellent persuaders, but should also be open to being persuaded.

Leaders can use rhetoric to influence others and storytellers tell stories to persuade others, but the main question is: who are these others? Who do we have in mind when we tell our stories? According to Kyrill A. Goosseff, meaning needs not only a relationship with context, but will also be determined by the one who experiences the meaning. He or she is called the superaddressee, a term used by Bakhtin in his writings. And in his paper on "Autopoesis and meaning: a biological approach to Bakhtin's superaddressee," the author explains this superaddressee via the autopoeitic theory of Maturana and Varela as, "who we are talking too." Every author (speaker) presupposes an audience (readers) and a relation between the two leads to a mutual understanding of what the author has put down on paper.

Stories are open to multiple interpretations due to the fact there are multiple readers of our stories. Narrative is the reflective product of looking back and making sense of

stories constructed to make sense of life. Narratives are socially constructed discourses that not only derive their meaning from that context but also frame policies for subsequent action and interpretation. Before understanding, every interpretation takes place in a framework of the larger whole of implicit shared presumptions (Flory, 2008).

It is not only by words we tell stories, but also by visual devices. In his article on the "'Slumdog Millionaire' rhetoric of change or sentimental management of inequalities in pulp fiction," Slawomir Magala explains – via a critical analysis of the film "Slumdog Millionaire" – that narrative is not neutral. The purpose of his paper is to reinterpret rhetorical inventions in global multimedia and to re-conceptualize the theoretical analysis of processes involving the sentimental representation of global inequalities, unfair terms of exchange and attempts to balance them. He gives another interpretation of the film *Slumdog Millionaire* and, in doing so, retells the story; he gives the watcher and the reader the opportunity to derive meaning from the film that is relevant in their own social context. For him, meaning, as language, should be regarded as a mode of action, not just a frozen trace of a thought with value in the background.

Hugo Gaggiotti, in his paper on "Official chronicles of corporate globalization and unofficial stories of international mobility: resisting patronage of meaning?," shows us how important images are in constructing stories, as he points out that, "Chronicles are constructed not only by words but also by images." And these images are present in the construction of memories in the company he investigated. According to him, chronicles could be considered the discourses of the managerial elite who decide which events are "real" and should be remembered, and which ones are "false" and should be erased; which ones have a name and which ones do not; when they happened and in which order (not always chronological); and which places and commemorations, sometimes expressed through monuments, plaques or visible artefacts or festivities, have to be built or celebrated.

The role of rhetoric and narratives also appears to be extremely relevant in the construction of identities. Organisational identities are created in a social context through a constant negotiation (Hartelius and Browning, 2008) that can be understood as a narrative process. So, organisational identities are constructed through shared narratives that evolve (Humphreys and Brown, 2008) and which are continuously re-imagined and re-interpreted (Sparrowe, 2005).

The paper "Narratives: a powerful device for values transmission in family businesses" by Maria Jose Parada and Helena Viladás discusses how core values and organisational identities are transmitted through generations in family businesses via narratives. The authors also argue that for the family members of the firm, the company is an expression of their individual and collective identity and a source of pride and recognition.

Finally, we want to point out that narratives are also essential devices that help us make sense of evolving identities and of organisational change processes (Brown *et al.*, 2009). In this regard, Peter Simpson talks about the potential function of narratives of personal experience in engaging with unknowable reality. In his paper, "Engaging with the unknowable through narratives of personal experience" he discusses that change processes will inevitably have greater levels of uncertainty than the status quo. Uncertainty can be disabling, resulting in a diminished sense of agency. According to Peter Simpson, it may free the leaders involved in change processes if they embrace an agnostic position. An awareness of the potential of this "unknowing knowing" might

encourage the leader to explore alternative sources of insight in their deliberations, perhaps through sharing their personal experience narratives with others.

Some final reflections and wishes
In this editorial, we as editors have tried to persuade you to read the various papers in this special issue carefully; and we have made use of our rhetorical skills in order to do so. We hope we have succeeded.

We also hope that you will feel engaged with the narratives proposed by the authors and that you will find their points of view interesting and challenging. We experienced the liveliness of these narratives as we read them: they have become living stories, which have given birth to intense, exciting, and evolving dialogues between ourselves, the editors, and the authors. We therefore sincerely hope that you will also experience this as a reader.

Finally, we would also like to encourage you, if you have been persuaded by the reflections of this special issue, to join the 2011 Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives in Management Research (see announcement in this special issue) where we will continue these dialogues and further explore and share the role of rhetoric and narratives in management research and practice.

Note
1. EDAMBA, created in 1991 with the mission to promote collaboration among programmes, professors, and students.

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Rhetoric in management and in management research

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present a critical view of rhetoric, science, scientific research, and management that discloses the role of rhetoric in these fields and that offers a conceptual framework for this special issue of the *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach taken is a critical and historical analysis.

Findings – The following main topics are uncovered: first, even if we think on scientific theories in terms of the classical concept of proven knowledge by empirical evidence and logical deduction, they are constituted by propositions accepted by reasonable rhetorical arguments, which depend on the paradigm of each scientific community. Second, even if we consider that scientific research is a strictly rational activity that follows precise methods, it continuously involves rhetorical reflections, judgements, arguments and debates. Third, even if management sciences usually conceptualize management as activities led by rational arguments and decisions, management constantly involves rhetorical conversations, in which managers use language for achieving their aims.

Originality/value – Beyond the scope of many research papers and books that emphasize the role of rhetoric in science and in management, the paper offers a systematic approach on the foundations of the functions of rhetoric in science and in management.

Keywords Rhetoric, Logic, Epistemology, Management research

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

It is not always easy to maintain a fruitful conversation on the role of rhetoric in management, in science and in management research, because, many times, different radical views make it impossible. In the present occasion, we cannot suppose that all of us, writers and readers of the special issue on rhetoric and narratives in management research, offered by the *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, will share the same basic ideas. Some researchers will be very interested in these subjects, and others will dismiss them as irrelevant or even as crazy contradictions in terms. These attitudes and judgements reflect the present academic situation. On one hand, a recent tradition publishes important findings on the new discipline of the rhetoric of science and on the field of the rhetoric of management. On the other hand, current opinions, which dominate our culture, sustain that rhetoric has to be excluded from science and management activities.

A conceptual common ground, in which productive conversations can uncover, identify and legitimate roles of rhetoric in management and in science, has to include many critical reflections. With the purpose of introducing one of the such grounds, the present paper will focuses on the following subjects: the history and the main theories of rhetoric; the nature of managerial work; the complexities of research; and the status

of scientific theories. This is a challenge that will require long travels to different
academic worlds. But, before we will start them, we can present some central subjects.

First subject

Persuasion, considered as a concept and as an activity, constitutes a main link between
the classical theory of rhetoric and the activities of modern management. In the field of
rhetoric, Aristotle (1991), in his book *On Rhetoric* (we use the translation and comments
by George Kennedy), defined this art as "an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the
available means of persuasion." Persuasion pervades all kinds of personal, social, and
public activities. We persuade people to accept new ideas and to undertake some
specific activities. In that sense, we can consider that rhetoric is both a form of verbal
action, and a logic that makes possible any kinds of activities. In the field of
management, modern management, in more or less democratic countries, is not to run
gangs of slaves, but is based on persuasion. Managers persuade other economic actors,
are persuaded by them, and persuade themselves, whenever they undertake new
projects, make decisions and try to achieve their aims. Mintzberg's (1973) book *The
Nature of Managerial Work* provides an initial empirical evidence on the importance of
talks in management.

Second subject

The concepts and activities of creating meanings, sense making and symbolic action
relate contemporary rhetoric to modern management. From a rhetorical point of view,
Burke (1950) in his book *Rhetoric of Motives* claimed that the object of this discipline is
the study of meanings and symbolic action. From the point of view of sociology and
management sciences, Mead's (1934) book *Minds, Self and Society*, emphasizes the role
of meanings and symbolic interaction in social activities, and has been very influential in
some theories of management. Meanings are basic in the construction of individual,
social and corporate identities. Weick (1995), in his book *Sensemaking in Organizations*,
considers that an important activity of managers is to create meanings and make sense
of the objects, situations, and events. Opportunities are not out there waiting to be
discovered, but they are created by managers.

Third subject

The theory of argumentation establishes important relationships between rhetoric, on
one side, and epistemology of science and scientific research on the other. From a
rhetorical point of view, Aristotle (*On Rhetoric*) emphasized that one of the most
important means of persuasion by words, which usually was not commented by earlier
rhetors, is *logos*, or the arguments presented by the speaker. In this line of thought, he
developed a theory of argumentation based on the following ideas: there is a parallelism
between logical proves and reasonable (rhetorical) arguments. In logical deductions, if
the premises are true, then the conclusion is necessarily true. In reasonable arguments,
we can only claim that, if the premises are true, then it is reasonable to accept that the
conclusion is true.

   From an epistemological point of view, scientific knowledge and in general episteme
is defined as a belief that is formulated in precise propositions that are true and whose
truth has been rigorously proven. In the example of geometry, we start with axioms
that are evident, in the sense that our mind directly realizes that they are true, and,
from them, we prove theorems with valid deductions. In that way, it seems that there is

no room for rhetoric in science. But if we consider other disciplines such as medicine, we will find that they are developed using reasonable arguments or, in other terms, using rhetorical persuasion. Management theories based on the interpretation of the meanings and values of the actors are highly rhetorical. Science is involved in continuous rhetorical debates and we can consider that Kuhn's (1962) book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is an important precedent of the rhetoric of science.

Fourth subject
From a modern point of view, rhetoric is an important theory of communication, which focuses on persuasion, meanings, and arguments. Even if along its history, it has focused on public speeches, it has been very influential in the ways of writing. Rhetoric of science considers that writing articles and books is a central operation of research, and studies how the forms of communication influence the development and acceptance of theories.

Fifth subject
Rhetoric involves a humanistic approach to science and to management research because persuading people by words and creating meanings require not only logical and reasonable arguments but a good understanding of the feelings, motivations, purposes, interests and values of people. For more than 20 centuries, rhetoric has offered an impressive and successful programme for educating people in the basic civic values. In that line, we think that rhetoric has to be introduced in management education in relation with the profession and responsibilities of managers, researchers and management schools in the present financial and economic crises and in the social crises that globalization will produce in many countries and cultures.

2. On the history and theories of rhetoric
In our society, rhetoric has a very bad reputation. When we say that a speech or writing is rhetorical, we mean to disqualify it on the grounds that it is presented in a literary form, but it has not a relevant content, it tries to divert the audience from real reflections and actions, or even it pretends to manipulate subjects and deceive people. A large number of professionals, university graduates and professors are not acquainted with the concepts of rhetoric and ignore that it has a brilliant history, in which, for more than 20 centuries, it was the basic discipline for training citizens on the values and virtues of civic life.

In our critical study, we will point out that the concept of rhetoric, as the art of speaking and persuading people with words, has three different meanings. First, it is important to emphasize that people possess innate capacities for speaking and persuading and that they exert them in all kinds of situations. Of course, the development of these capacities depends on the cultural and social context, and it is influenced by formal education. But in oral cultures that have not formal education, some people are extraordinarily skilful in verbal persuasion. In this sense, the concept of rhetoric means the actual persuasive practices of specific persons, cultures, periods, and ideologies. So, we can speak, for instance, on the rhetoric of Winston Churchill or Barak Obama, the rhetoric of managers and researchers, and also the rhetoric of liberalism and nazism.

Second, since the Heroic Ages, Greek people loved discussions, and we find impressive testimonies of them in the Homeric poems *The Illiad*, and the *Odyssey*.

Out of this tradition, in the fifth century BC Greek city-states, and especially in Athens, a new discipline emerged: rhetors (or teachers of rhetoric) trained people and wrote handbooks on what they conceptualized as the art of speaking well. In this sense, we will consider that rhetoric is an art or a set of theories on persuasion with words.

Third, since Alexander the Great (356-323), rhetoric was taught in formal schools following a unified curriculum, in all countries and cultures of his vast empire. In this sense, we will see rhetoric as an educational programme for civic life which was successful for more than 20 centuries.

Rhetoric in the Greek and Roman cultures

The beginning of the art of rhetoric. In the fifth century BC, Athens was living an extraordinary period of economic, democratic and artistic development. It has been called the Golden Age of the Greek Culture and the Century of Pericles (495-429 BC) in honour to this leader. Regarding political and public activities, projects were submitted to the assembly, which was constituted by a very large number of members and each of them had a vote. Young people who wished to make a political career had to be very good persuasive speakers. Rhetors were aware that this situation involved an educational challenge and introduced themselves as teachers on speaking well, even if, in our language, they were the first professors and consultants in politics and in public administration. One of the most important rhetors, Protagoras (485-410 BC) was an advisor of Pericles and wrote a constitution for a new Athenian colony. His form of training, was based on discussions, in which students had to present arguments for a claim, and after, against it.

Regarding legal affairs, Greek city-states did not have professional lawyers and people had to present themselves their claims to a jury, which was constituted by a large number of people. In that context, rhetors helped their clients to organize their arguments and to defend them in persuasive speeches. Gorgias (483-380 BC) was another important rhetor. He came from Sicily, the cradle of legal rhetoric, and in his teaching he insisted in the poetical power of words. Regarding public celebrations, festivities, and commemorations were the other kinds of occasions for public addresses and rhetors also organized sessions in which they displayed their abilities and attracted new students.

Philosophers, especially Socrates (469-399 BC) and Plato (429-347 BC) considered that rhetors were sophists, in the sense that they were supposed to defend that the truth of a claim was created by their arguments. Philosophers also criticized that rhetors persuaded people on believes and not on proven knowledge, that their training was based on examples (case studies) and not on general concepts and theories, and that they sold their sessions at very high prices. We will emphasize that these kinds of discussions are going on in modern management schools.

Aristotle's rhetoric. In the context of the discussions between philosophers and sophists, Aristotle refounded the art of rhetoric and presented it in his work *On Rhetoric*. For all rhetors, rhetoric is an instrument at the service of speakers and writers, and Aristotle takes in account the audience in the following ways: in deliberative rhetoric, the audience has to judge the possible benefits and harms of a future action and make a decision about it. Decision making involves rhetorical arguments. In judicial rhetoric, the audience has to judge past actions from the point of view if they were just or unjust. In celebrative or epideictic rhetoric, the audience are spectators and the speaker exhibits

his or her abilities. The Aristotelian vision of epideictic rhetoric did not capture the important functions of celebrative speeches for creating meanings and maintaining social identities. Since the three species of rhetoric are closely related to the kinds of occasions for public speeches in the Greek society, rhetoric was mainly associated to public addresses; but contemporary rhetoric is applied to all kinds of communicative situations.

Aristotle pointed out three means of persuasion: *logos* or the arguments on the subject under discussion that are presented by the speakers. *Ethos*, or the words of the speakers that show their good will, competence and reliability; *ethos* is a manifestation of the speaker's moral character. *Pathos* is the feelings that the words of the speakers produce in the audience. These means of persuasion usually work together. Aristotle insisted on the importance of *ethos* and introduced *logos*, which was not examined in previous handbooks of rhetoric.

Aristotle worked on the following parts of rhetoric: first invention of arguments, which included the three means of persuasion. The second was the arrangement of the speeches in parts. Speeches are usually organized along an introduction, an exposition of the subject, a proof of our thesis, a refutation of possible counter arguments and a conclusion. Third, the style introduced the linguistic and literary means and led to the text (usually a written text) of the speech. Style included tropos, such as metaphors, which change the usual meanings of the words.

Aristotle created the discipline of logic, whose central notion is the concept of valid logical deduction or logical proof, and developed this field in the six books that, some centuries later, were collected in the *Organon (instrument)*. In that context, he developed the theory of *logos* or rhetorical arguments, taking as a model the idea of logical proves.

Basic concepts of logic
Propositions. From a linguistic point of view, the expressions "what time is it?" and "Let's go out" are sentences, called performatives because we use them for doing things such as asking questions and giving orders. The expression "John is a manager" is a sentence called declarative or constatative because it says something about things and gives information. From a logical point of view, the content of a constatative sentence is a proposition. Propositions can be true or false and have one and only one of these values. Aristotle believed that all propositions can be reduced to the form of the example "Socrates it mortal," which has a subject (Socrates) a copula or link (is, are) and a predicate (mortal).

Kinds of propositions. For the development of the logic of predicates, Aristotle introduced the kinds of propositions as shown in Table I.

A universal affirmative proposition is true, if, and only if, all its individual propositions are true. It is false, if, and only if, one of its individual propositions is false.

	Affirmative	Negative
Universal	"All men are mortal"	"No man is mortal"
Particular	"Some men are mortal"	"Some men are not mortal"
Individual	"Socrates is mortal"	"Socrates is not mortal"

Table I.

A particular affirmative proposition is true, if, and only if, at least one of its individual propositions is true. It is false, if, and only if, all its individual propositions are false.

We are interested in universal propositions because they allow us to formulate universal laws and scientific theories, and we are interested in individual propositions because they allow us to formulate the results of each observation, measurement and experiment in empirical sciences.

Valid logical deduction. In a naïve way, we can present that concept as the kinds of inferences that go from the general to the less general or to the individual. This top-down image is suggested by the following example of syllogism:

> All men are mortal.
> All Athenians are men.
> Therefore, all Athenians are mortal.

In it, the first couple of propositions constitute the premises and the third proposition is the conclusion. They are related in such away that, as the example exhibits, they have the characteristics of the following definition: a valid logical deduction is an inference in which, if the premises are true, then the conclusion is necessarily true. So, it is an instrument with which we prove the truth of a new proposition when we know that other propositions are true.

Induction is the kind of inference that goes from the particular to the general or from the less general to the more general. It is a bottom-up form of reasoning. Aristotle considered that induction, in a narrow sense, does not belong to the strict realm of logic, but he included it in the books collected in the *Organon* and, in a broad sense, it became a logical subject. We can introduce induction through the following example: in a large number of experiments we heat pieces of metal and observe that all of them, without exception, expand. From these experiments, we infer the universal law "all metals expand when they are heated."

Basic concepts on rhetorical arguments

Rhetorical syllogisms or enthymemes. Aristotle defined enthymemes as deviations of logical syllogisms that are characterized by the following property: they keep implicit a premise or the conclusion, or change the order of these propositions. He pointed out that long chains of syllogisms are boring for a general audience and that enthymemes have more persuasive power than them. We can see it in the following example, which stimulates the audience to get the conclusion:

> All men are mortal.
> And Socrates is a man!!

Reasonable arguments. Beyond the Aristotelian ideas, we can introduce the concept of reasonable argument through the following example: Peter Brown has been murdered at home and was found with a dagger in the chest. The case was judged in a court of law in which the main suspect, the defendant, was John Smith. The public prosecutor established the following evidences:

> 1. The dagger belongs to John and bears his fingerprints. 2. A jacket of John has some stains of Peter's blood. 3. John has not an alibi. 4. Some witnesses saw John around Peter's house at the time of his death. 5. John hated Peter because Peter seduced his girl friend. 6. John had publicly threatened Peter with death.

In these kinds of cases, the jurors normally agree with the conclusion that John was the murderer, and it would be unwise to claim that the argument is not a valid deduction. Detective stories and thrillers exploit that property and, with additional information, they prove that the murderer is a third man who manipulated the evidence. In these kinds of human actions, we cannot require logical proves, and British courts of law ask the jurors to get a conclusion "beyond any reasonable doubt."

Rhetorical induction. Aristotle identified rhetorical induction with a form of reasoning based on an example. In these kinds of inference, we transfer knowledge from a case to another case, as we can see in the following instance: in the past, Darius invaded Egypt and afterwards Greece. Xerxes invaded Egypt and afterwards Greece. Therefore, if the present king of Persia invades Egypt, he will invade Greece. Aristotle explained the transfer of knowledge from the past cases to the future case in the following way: from the first case, we induce a universal law and, from this law, we deduce what will happen in the future case. He critically commented that this inference is not rigorous because is based on one or two cases; and also the process of induction, the general law, and the process of deduction are implicit and we are not aware of them.

Roman rhetoric: Cicero and Quintilian
The Roman culture, in many aspects inspired by the Greek civilization, was very practical. Romans conquered an immense empire and ruled it for many centuries with an efficient administration. Lawyers formed a recognized profession and were very influential in politics. Rhetoric became the basic discipline for educating young people who wanted to pursue a public career in law or politics, and rhetors were very powerful.

Marcus Tulius Cicero (106-43 BC) was the most important Roman rhetor. He wrote the book *De Inventione,* in which he translated from Greek into Latin, the basic rhetorical terms and adapted the theories of persuasion to the Roman mentality. The last 50 years of the Republic were very turbulent, with bloody conspiracies and Cicero was forced several times to retire from public affairs and even was exiled from the city of Rome. In those periods, he wrote the great book *De Oratore*. Even if his rhetoric followed the lines of Aristotle, he was not really interested on the theory of argumentation but insisted on eloquence. He divided the study of rhetoric in five parts, the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style (already considered by Aristotle), memory and delivery. Memory introduced mnemotechnic rules for memorizing long speeches, and the delivery focused on the ways of presenting them.

Marcus Favious Quintilian (30-95 AD) wrote the 12 books of *Institutione Oratoria (On the Education of the Orator)*. The emperor paid him a permanent salary for teaching rhetoric because this discipline was basic for training the administrators of the empire. The main purpose of rhetorical education in the Roman culture was the development of the moral character of people for civic live.

Middle Ages rhetoric
Roman rhetoric influenced the rhetoric of the Middle Ages. (Saint) Agustine (354-430) was an influential professor of rhetoric and, after his conversion to Christianity; he became a priest and a bishop. His book *De Doctrina Christiana* was addressed to priests who prepared sermons. Religious rhetoric in cathedrals and churches constituted the most important kinds of public speeches till the beginning of the Renaissance.

Rhetoric from the Renaissance to Romanticism
Rhetoric in the Renaissance. In the fifteenth century, the Renaissance flourished in Italy, and, in the sixteenth century, it extended to many European countries. It introduced new values, moving from a culture centered on God to another centered on the development of individuals in all kinds of artistic and scientific activities. Greek and Latin texts were recuperated and, in that context, rhetoric was considered the Queen of Arts and Sciences.

Courses on rhetoric followed Cicero's approach with the five cannons. But professors and students were only interested on style and eloquence. In that way, this discipline was reducing itself in scope. With few exceptions, humanists were professors of classical letters and rhetoric. Erasmus of Rotherdam (1466-1536) was one of the most important. His book *On Copia (On Abundance of Style)* insists on the ability to express an idea in a large number of different ways, and his work *The Praise of Folly* emphasizes the creative value of intuition and feelings not produced by reason.

Logical fundamentalism versus rhetoric: Petrus Ramus. By logical fundamentalism, we mean the following philosophical doctrine: only valid deductions are acceptable, and reasonable arguments have to be excluded because they do not prove anything at all. Since the beginning of logic, this position has always existed, and it found an active defender in Petrus Ramus (1515-1572). He was a professor at the University of Paris and had an important influence on the art and education of rhetoric, which he reduced to style and eloquence.

The raise of modern philosophy and science. Descartes (1596-1650) established a new conception of philosophy with his principle that we cannot accept any kind of knowledge that has not been rigorously proven. With the methodological doubt, he even did not take for granted that he existed (he could be a dream). After a long time of reflection, he accepted as a solid foundation for his system the statement "*cogito, ergo sum,*" "I think, therefore I exist." He rejected rhetorical theories and education, but in practice, he was a very skilful rhetorician for defending his ideas.

The Enlightment. The society of the eighteenth century called itself the enlightened society following a brilliant metaphor: the light of reason will dissipate the darkness of ignorance, prejudices, myths, traditions, and religion. In that context, rhetorical education was reduced to literary and poetical techniques. But the situation was more complex. Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a good professor of moral philosophy and rhetoric, interested in social and moral development. An exception to the Enlightment mentality was Giambattista Vico (1668-1746), a professor at the University of Naples who tried to base science on rhetorical methods and symbolic interaction.

Romanticism. At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, romanticism reacted against the universal reason of the enlightment and focused on the individual feelings and experiences. Its supreme value was the creative genius of the poet, who does not need rhetorical techniques. That belief led to the rejection of rhetoric in its last domain of poetry.

The revival of rhetoric
In the twentieth century, rhetoric was recuperated and developed, following two main lines of thought: the Aristotelian tradition, with the work of Chaim Perelman and Stephen Toulmin, and the symbolic approach, with the works of Kenneth Burke.

Chaim Perelman (1912-1985) was interested in the philosophy of law and specifically in the rationality of moral judgements. This subject led him to the creation of the new rhetoric, which he considered as an updated version of the Aristotelian approach.

Stephen Toulmin, born in 1922, was interested on reason and ethics and that subject led him to the topic of arguments. His book *Uses of Arguments* (1958) was not well received by the British philosophers, who were influenced by the logical positivism; however, in the USA, it was appreciated by scholars on rhetoric and communication.

Kenneth Burke (1897-1993) was interested in many disciplines, such as philosophy, science, politics, religion, drama, literature, and rhetoric. In his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he focused on the creation of meanings, which has a rhetorical character, and on symbolic interaction.

3. Logic, rhetoric, and epistemology of science
Logic and classical epistemologies
The concept knowledge (episteme) and logic. Knowledge, in the sense of episteme, is defined as a belief formulated in precise propositions that are true and whose truth is rigorously justified (proven). We can comment that concept starting with some reflections on geometry. In that discipline, we accept theorems because they have been proved by valid deductions, even if they are not developed in the form of syllogisms. If we look forward at this deductive activity, we realize that from some theorems we prove other theorems, and, from them we prove other theorems, in a never-ending process. If we look backwards, we find a difficulty. For proving a theorem, we need previous theorems, which need some previous theorems. We cannot repeat that argument forever; we have to start with some propositions that are not proven deductively and we call them axioms or principles. This is the structure of axiomatic-deductive theories, and their basic problem is why we accept that the axioms are true. Different answers to that questions lead to different epistemologies of science.

Classical epistemology of geometry. The axioms of geometry, such as "each couple of points determine a straight line that joints them," are evident. In other terms, our mind immediately captures, without any argument, that they are true.

Aristotle's epistemology of physics. Aristotle introduced the following ontology, on which he based his epistemology of physics: matter is constituted by five elements: earth, water, air, fire (for terrestrial bodies), and the fifth element (for celestial bodies). The elements are distributed in five layers in that order, and the layers constitute their natural place. When we remove a body from it and then we let it free, it moves towards its natural position. That theory explained gravitation, or why some bodies, such as lead, fall down, and levitation or why some bodies, such as fire, go up. It had an enormous influence in the history of thought and Galileo had to fight against it.

Inductive-deductive theories. After the scientific revolution, which we especially associate to Galileo, the epistemology of empirical sciences was based on the following ideas: we start with observations, measurements and experiments, whose results are formulated in individual propositions. With the principle of induction, we generalize these individual propositions in universal laws, which constitute the principles or axioms of our theories. We develop these principles with valid deductions, which can have a mathematical character, and in this way we expand the theory. Deductions from

universal laws to individual future cases, allow us to make predictions. In more specific terms, the principle of induction requires the following conditions: first, we make a large number of observations. Second, in each observation, without exception, we get the same property. Third, observations cover all kinds of factors or circumstances that can influence the phenomenon that we study. These conditions were supposed to allow us to discover a universal law and to prove that it is true.

Hume's criticism of induction. David Hume (1711-1776) proved that the principle of induction does not justify (prove) universal laws. This finding opened crises on the epistemological foundations of empirical sciences.

Popper's falsificationism. Karl Popper (1902-1994) looked at Hume's criticism in logical terms: a universal proposition is true, if and only if, all its individual propositions are true. In that way, the truth of a universal proposition cannot be proven by a large number of observational propositions. A universal proposition is false, if, and only if, one of its individual propositions is false. In that way, a single observational proposition can prove that a theory is false, and, in that case, we say that it has falsified the theory. Falsification constitutes the philosophical foundation of empirical sciences.

Rhetoric and epistemology

Rhetoric and doxa. Many sciences, such as medicine, are not based on evident axioms or on inductions, and are developed with reasonable arguments. In that line of thought, Greek philosophers introduced two other notions of knowledge: *doxa*, or well-informed believes, and *techné,* or practical knowledge. Many modern scientific theories belong to the category of *doxa* and their arguments are rhetorical.

Rhetoric and research. When we move from scientific theories to the ways of doing research, we find another conceptual landscape. Even in geometry, research for problem solving, discovering theorems and their proofs, and defining concepts is a creative process that involves guesses and rhetorical arguments. Moreover, when we prepare a research project, we work on expectations, and when we write a book, an article or a dissertation, we develop communicative strategies, which are rhetorical forms.

Rhetoric, debates, and paradigms. The scientific world is submitted to constant debates, whose arguments and strategies are rhetorical. Kuhn's (1962) book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, based on his research on the debates between Galileo (1564-1642) and the Aristotelian philosophers, introduced important concepts: in a period of normal science, researchers constitute a single scientific community in the sense that they share the same paradigm. A paradigm includes the basic conceptions of the world, the principles, theories, methods, aims, relevant problems, values, and meanings of a discipline. When a paradigm comes to crises, we have a scientific revolution. Debates are different in a scientific community, among different communities and in scientific revolutions.

The rhetoric of science emerged in the 1980s with the development of the new rhetoric, the critical views of science, and the awareness of the real character of research work. It examines present and historical arguments, debates, and strategies of researchers, and sustains the basic idea that rhetoric is an essential instrument for epistemology of science. In that line of thought, McCloskey (1985) uncovered the rhetorical arguments and narratives in economics, in her books *The Rhetoric of Economics* and *If You're so Smart: The Narrative of Economic Expertiese* (1990).

Epistemologies of social sciences
The rhetorical dimensions of science that we have pointed out are important both for natural and social sciences. Beyond them, we will also focus on specific aspects of the epistemologies and methods of social sciences.

Positivism in social sciences is a generic approach that sustains that these sciences can only use the methods of natural sciences. In practice, it usually means that social theories are based on measurement scales, mathematical models and statistical analysis. From a philosophical point of view, this conception comes out from Auguste Comte's (1784-1857) general positivism, Ernst Mach's (1818-1916) psychological positivism and the Circle of Vienna (1930-1960) neopositivism or logical positivism.

Interpretative methods. Beyond positivism, interpretative methods are closely related to hermeneutics, based on interpretations of texts, and phenomenology, based on the flow of individual experience and consciousness. They were justified, among other researchers, by Max Weber (1864-1920) and Alfred Schutz (1898-1958) with the following arguments ("Common-sense and scientific interpretations of human action": Alfred Schutz in *Collected Papers*). To understand the actions of other actors, it is necessary to capture their meanings, motives, aims, and mental plans, which induce their physical acts. As these meanings, motives, aims and mental plans are not directly observable for us, we have to interpret them. We do it in common life and in research. In consequence, social sciences have the right, and many times the obligation to introduce subjective meanings and interpretations. Moreover, they take in account common interpretations of the actors and scientific interpretations of researchers. That property is called the double hermeneutics of social sciences.

Two important ways of creating meanings are metaphors, based on a similarity or analogy between two domains of objects, and narratives, which organize a sequence of events in a plot that has a narrative ending (Czarniawska (2004), *Narratives in Social Science Research,* and Yiannis (2000) *Story Telling in Organizations*). As this couple of concepts belong to rhetoric, this discipline has a place in the center of the epistemology of social sciences. Metaphors and narratives pervade management research.

4. Rhetoric in management activities and research
Provided with the rhetorical and epistemological background that we have commented, we can discover many rhetorical functions in management activities and research, which we were not aware of. A strategy for uncovering them is to look, from a rhetorical point of view, at our own experience as managers, students or researchers, at our practical and research activities, and at modern theories of management, science and philosophy. Following the points presented in the introduction, we can do together the exercise of examining some examples, which emphasize at the same time the role of persuasion and the role of creating meanings.

Conversations
In the line of Mintzberg's (1973) research on managerial activities, we will focus on three examples. In the field of organizational learning, Senge's (1990) book *The Fifth Discipline* emphasizes the (rhetorical) conditions of conversations that make possible to learn and to share knowledge in managerial activities. In the field of regional economic development, Gustavsen's (2001) paper "Theory and practice: the mediating discourse" (in the *Handbook of Action Research*) formulates some rules for a creative and

democratic conversation between stake holders. In the field of intensive knowledge companies, in which different teams work in different parts of a research project, we found the following results: in contrast with normal projects which require clear norms of work, research projects need a longer period of rhetorical conversations, with ambiguous aims and meanings for facilitating creativity.

Legitimating theories and methods
This important rhetorical practice is related to constant debates on science. For instance, the Preface and Introduction to the *Handbook of Action Research* (2001) by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury are examples of rhetorical persuasive activity. In front of classical ideas on the neutrality and objectivity of researchers, action research breaks these conditions and tries to transform social reality. This challenge requires important rhetorical arguments. Even in the extremely logical paper "My solution of the problem of induction" in the book *Objective Knowledge* by Popper (1972), involves rhetorical strategies, some of them in the subtle order of the subjects.

Decision making
Classical decision theory is based on the maximization of a utility function submitted to some constraints. This approach of economic and technical rationality is very useful in many kinds of subjects, such as those of operations research. But usually, we make decisions engaging in rhetorical debates with other people and with ourselves. In that line of thought, March (1994) emphasized the real process of deciding in the book *A Primer of Decision Making: How Decisions Happen.*

Social constructivism
A large number of researchers in management claim that they are social constructivists. This concept, with its philosophical ambiguities and problems, was introduced by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in the book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1968). We can interpret it in different ways, but in all of them, it is clear that we construct meanings, values and institutions, and that we do it with rhetorical instruments, even if we are not aware of it. We will present this line of research with an example: Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker, in the paper "The social construction of facts and artefacts" claim that the evolution of the bicycle was not determined by technological rationality, but by the tensions between meanings such as those of sport and risk sustained by brave young men and those of safety ways of transportation sustained by other people (Pinch and Bijker, 1984). Only when a rhetorical closure was achieved, did the standard model become established.

Meanings, sense making, and symbolic interactions
Social constructivism is not the only school of thought that focuses on the creation of meanings. Sense making and symbolic interaction are basic in many recent theories of management. We can introduce the following example: in the car industry, there is not rhetoric in the production line, and companies invest important resources on research for technological improvements. The problem is that these innovations are very soon "imitated" by other companies. In that context, creative companies try to keep clients creating brands, which are systems of meanings and are related to the identity of organizations.

Leadership
There are many approaches to leadership, and we think that a theory that could be applied to politicians and prophets, to managers of multinational corporations and managers of small firms, to plain citizens and civic activists, has to include the following topics: the leader creates a vision or, in other words, a system of meanings. She formulates it in terms of general values, such as democracy, justice, progress. Out of that vision, she proposes a programme of action, which deals with practical problems. The leader has to influence the ideas and to move the feelings of people in order to obtain their commitment in the execution of the programme. We have not to insist in the rhetorical dimensions of the different steps of that process.

Virtues and management
The aim of classical rhetoric was to educate people for civic and professional activities. In the present financial and economic crises, it could be a reference for management and for management schools. McCloskey (2006) has worked for many years in these kinds of subjects and has published the first volume of *Bourgeois Virtues: An Ethics for an Age of Commerce*. Her main arguments can be synthesized in the following way: Adam Smith (1723-1790) was a professor of rhetoric and a moral philosopher. His book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) points out the virtues that are necessary for a free society, and his renowned book *The Wealth of Nations* (1787) founded the lines of thought of modern economic theories, and focused on economic prudence. Unfortunately, posterior thinkers, such as Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) reduced his system to economic maximization of utility. That reduction had devastating consequences, because in a commercial society all virtues are necessary.

Deirdre McCloskey focuses on the classical moral virtues of prudence (wisdom), justice, courage and temperance (self control), and on the theological virtues in relation to God, which also have a secular dimension: faith is related to the identity of people, hope to their projects and expectations, and love is addressed to our fellows. Excelling on a single virtue without the others is a disaster, as we can see in the Homeric poem *The Illiad*: Achilles is the supreme hero in war courage, but he lacks all other virtues and his behavior leads to tragic events. Managers need economic and social prudence, courage and all the other virtues.

5. Conclusion
This critical review on rhetoric, logic, epistemology, and management has uncovered the following main topics: first, even if we think on scientific theories in terms of the classical concept of proven knowledge by empirical evidence and logical deduction, they are constituted by propositions accepted by reasonable rhetorical arguments, which depend on the paradigm of each scientific community. Second, even if we consider that scientific research is a strictly rational activity that follows precise methods, it continuously involves rhetorical reflections, judgements, arguments and debates. Third, even if management sciences usually conceptualize management as activities led by rational arguments and decisions, management constantly involves rhetorical conversations, in which managers use language for achieving their aims. As Hans Siggaard Jensen claims, management activities and management research are activities placed between science and art, logic, and rhetoric.

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Management – decision and interpretation

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present the main characteristics of the model of persuasive management, comparing it with the model of scientific management and the model of rational management. The paper also offers a model of management education based on the education of leaders in the classical world, which involves three kinds of abilities: skills of persuasion (rhetoric), knowledge and practice of virtues (protreptics), and knowledge of science, society and conceptual and practical instruments.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach taken is a conceptual and historical analysis.

Findings – The paper finds the identification of the characteristics of persuasive management, and the skills that it requires.

Originality/value – Beyond the scope of many research papers, the paper offers a systematic view of the aspects of management that involve persuasion.

Keywords Management technique, Rhetoric, Influence

Paper type Conceptual paper

There has been a recent interest in the relation between rhetoric and management. This is based on the idea that rhetoric is about persuasion and management is about persuading people to do things in one way rather than another. The underlying assumption is that persuasion rather than coercion is the way to manage. Again, this has to do with changes in the conception of management. When scientific management hold sway it was all easy, because you only had to secure higher pay for the actions you as manager wanted, then they would be forthcoming. The relation between worker and management was in that paradigm determined solely by the economic and financial facts in that relation. If you wanted quality and that paid you would get it. With the demise of scientific management things changed and there was a place for rhetoric. Soft talk would matter, and the talk of money was not the only type of talk or the only language that management could speak.

Still there are many models of management and the manager. The model of the manager we most often see is the model of the man of action basing his actions on rational decisions. This is a conception of management as the day-to-day running of a – sometimes quite complex – organisation. In contrast the model of leadership – understood as management plus something extra such as motivation or charisma – we most often see is the model of the man of action who is able to get others to follow – that is for others to execute the decisions of the leader and to be convinced of their rationality or reasonableness.

Very often, on the basis of generalised models of management and leadership, we look for the essence of management in the sense of that which distinguishes it from other forms of activity. It is thus often assumed implicitly that there is such an essence. We could call this essentialism in the theory of management. We often find essentialism about certain types of activities. We look for the essential traits that make

an activity an artistic activity – but are often disappointed as there is no such essence. The same holds for management. Then, on the other hand, management is certainly about decisions, action and implementation and about persuasion and about results. But all this can mix in a myriad of ways, and there might not be any one that is the essence.

So an alternative position is that there are many types of models and characteristics of management and leadership, and that various forms and various situations might demand very different models.

Let us look at the origin of management thinking. This goes back to the classical Greek thinking that we find in the period of Plato and Aristotle. It had to do with the emergence of political leadership in the city-state. In this period, the focus in management was on management education understood as the attempt to develop the right character in the future leader. This is a tradition that Jaeger (1944) has described in his magnum opus *Paideia*, and he sees leadership and education closely connected in the Greek city-state and also in the later Greek "kingdoms". An important example is the tutoring of Alexander the Great by the philosopher Aristotle. The basis of the educational enterprise is a theory of virtues and a theory about how to develop the virtues in a person and how to make it possible for a person to actually act virtuously.

An important connection between the education of the virtues and the development of management and leadership is the protreptic discourse, which is an exhortation to take up ones values and life and focus it. Many Aristotelians, stoics and cynics wrote treatises in this genre. Plato in the *Phaidon* refers to it when he defines rhetoric as "psychagogia tes dia logon" – leadership of the soul through talk, that is development with a focus on the right and true values through talk – in Plato's case, probably the dialogical activity for which he is so well known. The leader would not only need to be able to use rhetoric as an instrument for the persuasion of others but would also need to have a firm basis in the virtues and need to know on what values to base the persuasion. So, leadership would at least involve the following three elements: an ability to persuade others – rhetoric – a fundamental understanding of basic values and an ability to focus ones own life – protreptic – and an ability to understand the situation in which values and persuasion were to be applied – otherwise neither rhetoric or protreptic would be appropriate or relevant to the situation. This we might call the hermeneutic or interpretative dimension of management and leadership.

The interpretative dimension is connected to the psychological demand on managers and leaders to have empathy. To be able to understand others and the situations, they find themselves in. This is different form the dominant tradition which has shaped modern thinking on management, which is of course, the model of the rational decision maker capable of action. This model is based on an assumption about the possibility of taking action based on analysis and deduction. The model assumes that there are given goals and various ways of reaching them some of them more rational or efficient than others. There is thus an optimizing form of rationality at work. The basic assumption is that it is possible to create models – in the sense of mental models or explicit models of a "mechanical" nature in which one can carry out a sort of experiments (investigating possible outcomes of possible actions) – that reflect reality. This is a very modern assumption which assumes that the use of reason is a sort of calculation. For us to make decisions, we need models to reason inside. For us to act successfully, our models need to be reflecting reality.

There are clearly areas of management where such a concept of management is usable. But, it is not generalisable. In many areas of management, the essential type of knowledge is not analytical and deductive but rather interpretative. It is not the formulation of models of reality and calculations in them, but the construction of interpretations that is central. This again actually has to do with the persuasive power of management. In a decision model, this is based on an assumption of common rationality, in the sense that if I as manager can understand something then others that are also rational can too. I can persuade others because my rational arguments will convince another rational person. Of course, the phenomenon of strategic rationality sets limits and creates paradoxes – but nevertheless we act on reasons because we assume that others do the same. In an interpretative understanding of management, the essential activity of management is the formulation of an interpretation of a situation and thus the creation of meanings. The reason there is action is the connection between the interpretation of the situation and the relation between the virtues of the agent and the values of the situation. And this relation is explicated in a rhetorical narrative. The narrative in this case is an adhortation to focus on the essential values of a person or a situation. So, it is not on the basis of a common rationality that there is a community of action but because of a common set of virtues that can be the focus of a protreptic activity. Protreptic here understood in the sense that we together try to focus on our basic values.

Incidentally, we find in the books of Barack Obama modern versions of the protreptic genre and of course, also a renewed focus on the forms and values of rhetoric. It is of course, interesting that such renewal of old genres comes from the area of political leadership rather than from the business world.

It is also interesting to note that in very essential modern areas of management such as innovation-management and management of knowledge the essential activity is one of interpretation in the sense of creation of ambiguities that open up rather than close and thus create possibilities for the radical new.

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The reluctant rhetorician: senior managers as rhetoricians in a strategic change context

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper explores strategic change communication, framed by the idea that managers can be viewed as rhetoricians. The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss senior managers' subjective experiences of rhetorical aspects of change management.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper draws on a case study from ABB Sweden (a power and automation technology company). In-depth interviews with senior managers, with vast experience of change management, constitute the empirical source.

Findings – The most important finding is the managers' overall reluctance towards rhetoric. According to the managers in this study, a rhetorician is an over-enthusiastic person who "waves his arms when speaking". To master the art of rhetoric is not believed to be of particular importance when managing strategic change.

Research limitations/implications – Senior managers' potentially negative attitude concerning rhetoric should be taken into account when researchers situate change management within a rhetorical frame.

Practical implications – Given the large interest in "efficient" communication, generally managers should be encouraged to overcome their reluctance towards rhetoric to improve their ability to "manage meaning" constructively.

Originality/value – This paper contributes to change management communication insofar as it gives voice to the individual manager. This voice indicates; in a time when rhetoric, storytelling, and charismatic leadership are making ground; that the understanding of rhetoric is much more limited than the general impression might suggest.

Keywords Organizational change, Communication, Rhetoric, Senior managers, Sweden

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Concerning organizational change, Finstad (1998) argues that change is conditional to the "explicitness of the rhetorical elements in the situation", and accordingly suggests rhetoric as a fruitful perspective for understanding the phenomenon of change. However, conventional research on management communication and strategic change is short of references to rhetoric.

Management communication as a research field has its roots in business communication, but has emerged beyond business writing and speaking to embrace further aspects of communication, for example, interpersonal communication (Feingold, 1987). In this respect, Hartelius and Browning (2008) underscore that a manager and a classical orator in many respects face the same challenges.

Still, the existing literature on management communication seems to reveal an inclination for communication, generally and on an organizational level. In-depth

studies of how senior managers acquire commitment to strategies are very rare (Jarzabkowski and Sillince, 2007). This is a serious limitation for advanced understanding of management communication, at least if we leave the mainstream normative literature and turn to the growing strategy-as-practice research field (Johnson *et al.*, 2007).

This paper represents an answer to the call for further empirical studies of rhetorical aspects of management communication, in a strategic change context. Interviews with senior managers in ABB Sweden constitute the empirical source. Two topics will be highlighted:

(1) The perceived role of communication when managing strategic change.

(2) Senior managers' views of their own roles as rhetorician.

The purpose is to present and discuss senior managers' subjective experiences of rhetoric in strategic change. A knowledge contribution will be offered mainly to the fields of management communication and change management.

Theoretical framework

The ability to initiate, plan, and carry out change is so valuable in our time that successful change managers become mythic heroes as champions of change (Nadler, 1998, p. 7). However, Mintzberg (1994) emphasizes that strategic plans are hardly ever carried out to the last letter. For this reason, it is more fruitful to recognize strategy work and strategic change as something emergent. By and large, strategy work is to some extent about planning and implementation of plans, but it is also about power distribution, myths, rewards, self-actualisation, and other less rational expressions (Mason, 1994).

Weick (2001) suggests that management of organizational change should be understood as a sense-making process, with a bounded rationality and rather short of consensus concerning cause-effect relations. Weick argues that meaning emerges from action, not the other way around. In our context of strategic change, when we have done "managerial things", we might look back and label these actions "strategy". In any respect, a change plan, clearly expressed or not, will be an excuse to get us going, and in this momentum we learn and make meaning. Hence, "when you are confused, any old strategic plan will do" (Weick, 2001, p. 346). What then is a real change, based on a rational planning process with causal relations between intention and outcome, is practically impossible to determine.

If a manager wants to accomplish strategic change (that is, create the impression of strategic change), he/she per definition will have to persuade people. As Smircich and Morgan (1982) underscore, leadership is "the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others".

So, managers are meaning-makers (Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Weick, 2001). In this perspective, managers are also enactors of the environment (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985), symbol manipulators (Peters, 1978), storytellers (Adamson *et al.*, 2006), and managers are rhetoricians (Hughes, 1996).

The list of manager labels could be longer still, but the last notion of a manager as a rhetorician, or rhetor, is well motivated in this paper where we focus on rhetorical aspects of change management.

According to Quintilian (2001), rhetoric should not be reduced to mere persuasion. Rhetoric is a reliable companion for the rhetorician. If rhetoric in itself is good or evil is not a major issue. Rhetoric is simply "useful" for the good man (Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 2.16.11). But what has a contemporary senior manager to say about the rhetorical aspects of strategic change? His or her subjective thoughts on communication and rhetoric have not been explored. Thus, a serious inquiry, bringing out the personal voice of the manager/rhetorician, needs to be carried out in order to better understand management communication and strategic change.

Method
A case study of strategic change communication in ABB Sweden, conducted in 2003, constitutes the empirical source of this paper. ABB is one of the world's leading companies in power and automation technologies. The company operates in around 100 countries and employs 120,000 people. ABB Sweden employs 8,700. The Swedish headquarters are situated in Västerås. The main reason for choosing ABB was the author's personal network within the company, gained as an external marketing consultant. This personal network opened doors to senior managers, doors that are usually closed for researchers.

When research involves a wide range of "soft" data, as in this interpretive study of human communication, a qualitative methodology should be favoured. In-depth interviewing was the preferred method because it provides the researcher with well-grounded and multi-faceted descriptions of everyday events (Malhotra and Birks, 2007).

The following managers were interviewed: a former chief executive officer of ABB group, a Head of Group Function Human Resources Sweden, a Head of Group Function Corporate Communications Sweden, three senior managers responsible for different business areas in ABB Sweden, and one internal senior management consultant. Two of the interviewed managers were women, and six were men. The author was informed by his personal contacts within ABB that these eight managers had considerable experience of strategic change.

The interviews were conducted in Västerås, in Swedish, and lasted between 45 and 120 minutes. All the interviews started with a general question: "what importance has communication when managing strategic change?" and then evolved into semi-structured conversations regarding strategic change, communication, and rhetoric.

The interviews were transcribed, interpreted, sorted, and re-interpreted in order to produce a concentrated and yet rich description of the interviews. The analysis was based on inductive logic and drew on recommendations by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The interpreting and sorting generated nine overlapping themes concerning strategic change and/or rhetoric:

(1) The importance of communication.

(2) Strategy as practice.

(3) Today's strategy.

(4) Management of strategic change.

(5) Rational and emotional rhetoric.

(6) Strategy as discourse.

(7) Metaphors and stories.

(8) Managers as rhetoricians.

(9) Support for rhetorical improvement.

Elaborating each theme would be beyond the ambition of this paper. Instead, a number of illustrative quotes will be presented in "Findings" section. They will be quotes mainly from themes one, four, five, and eight that are positively related to the two questions introduced earlier: what is the role of communication when managing strategic change? How does a senior manager view his or her own rhetorical practice?

Findings

Communication is important, sort of

All the interviewed managers expressed the idea that communication is "immensely important" when managing change. Communication is often seen as a "resource" or "tool" utilized by the manager. There were also numerous comments emphasizing that communication is ineffective without content, as if a clear separation could be made between form and content. "Just communication" only creates frustration:

> Communication is of course, very important. But, the strategy must be good and relevant in itself. We have the problem that strategy never gets past the surface. It does not influence our work.

The problem experienced in change communication was to formulate a coherent message and then "reach out". The suggested solution to the problem was to be intelligible, set measurable objectives and present your intention in a strategic plan.

Several different corporate slogans have been used in ABB over the years, supported by substantial investments in marketing communication. When asked how company slogans were integrated in the managers' personal change communication, they all answered that no deliberate connection was made. Managers did not co-operate to any extent with the communication department to create stories and metaphors which would be useful when managing strategic change.

We are squareish engineers, motivated primarily by logic

"Honest" and "plain" communication based on rational argumentation was believed to be absolutely necessary for accomplishing strategic change. But, strategic change also involved emotions:

> When beginning a strategic change, it feels positive even if the profit from the change can't be seen. But emotions will cool off, and become neutral, and then negative. The risk is that people give up on emotional grounds just when the change starts to pay off. Then you throw in new managers, starting new change projects, following the same pattern. People will sway between hope and despair, and changes will never be implemented.

To avoid this emotional dead-end situation, managers distributed only small pieces of highly relevant information:

> You have to break down big changes into small parts. Otherwise it's difficult to get everybody to understand. Engineers are [. . .] it sounds like they are a bit stupid, but they are the total opposite. Even so, they want to understand what a change means to them

as individuals. If we are about to cut twenty percent of the cost, they want to know what that means. Will I have to use one pencil less every year, or what?

A rhetorician is someone who waves his arms and fire off one-liners

We don't talk about rhetoric. But we talk a lot about communicative leadership and operation development.

When asking the managers to articulate their own role as a "rhetorician", the managers answered rather unwillingly:

I have never regarded myself as a [. . .] rhetorician. I have no clear picture of rhetoric. But I like to do presentations. I like to work with people, and I think I'm rather good at it.

The managers turned out to be very suspicious about "rhetoric":

When we have several people sitting in the room, we can't have one person standing up and waving his arms, and being [. . .] rhetorical. [. . .] Some sound very persuasive, at least until you think about what they are actually saying. A person with one-liners does not always have the best ideas.

All the managers were remarkably reluctant to use the word "rhetoric" or "rhetorician". By and large, it was difficult to have them talk about rhetoric or persuasion at all. "Communicator" was the term used on the rare occasions when the managers actually explicitly referred to their own roles as practitioners of communication.

Discussion

One finding in this study of management communication and rhetoric was the logistic view of communication. The manager expected messages to be transferred from sender to receiver, not co-created. Keywords are precision and efficiency.

The theoretical foundation for this transactional view of human communication can be traced to the cybernetic perspective of information, formulated by Shannon and Weaver (1949) in the *Mathematical Theory of Communication*. The Shannon and Weaver transactional and technical model of communication has very little to say about the meaning of the message, or its effect on the receiver. The same seems to go for the ABB managers. The challenge they experienced was basically to find the correct distribution for different messages. Formulation of sophisticated messages, and analyses of the different meanings the receiver might create, appeared to be of minor interest. In the terms of Grant *et al.* (2005), the managers are more interested in demonstrating the "hard" actuality of the change than the "soft" rhetoric.

In a way, this approach to communication restricts the rhetorical duties of a manager, since managers only acknowledge their role as unbiased initiators or carriers of messages, not active meaning makers. We can make a comparison with classical rhetoric where the orator had three duties to accomplish regarding his audience: *docere* instruct his listeners, *movere* stir their emotions and *delectare* give them pleasure (Cicero, *Br.* 185; Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 3.5.2). Turning to ABB, when asked about strategic change communication, the managers to some extent recognized *docere* as an overall communication duty. *Delectare* might become necessary, but was not recommended. *Movere* was not an issue for the managers in this study.

Managers were without exception recommended to be honest, low-voiced, unsophisticated, listening, competent, and natural. On the other hand, when the

managers portrayed their own communication practice they accentuated enthusiasm, passion, swiftness, philanthropy, self-distance, irony, and self-confidence.

Nevertheless, being regarded as charismatic and rhetorical is not without complication in an organization like ABB. In ABB, the word "rhetoric" gives rise to rather negative connotations, for example, exaggerated, expressive, emotional, superficial, and provocative. Making your message "artful" would be equivalent to manipulating it, and then you *per se* have abandoned the straightforward, simple and honest approach to communication the managers celebrate. As they perceive it, rhetoric and "honest communication" are incompatible.

In this perspective, it is understandable that the managers felt uncomfortable when they had to talk about their rhetorical practice. However, no contemporary study has indicated that senior managers hold such a negative attitude concerning rhetoric, and particularly their own rhetorical practice, as this study suggests.

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this paper is to bring forth new understanding of managers' experiences of the communicative practice when outlining, implementing and making sense of strategic change. In-depth interviews with senior managers in ABB Sweden constituted the empirical setting. Two questions were raised:

(1) What role does communication have when managing strategic change?

(2) What are senior managers' views of their own roles as a rhetorician?

To answer the first question: the managers in this study undoubtedly considered communication very important when managing strategic change. Communication was seen as a logistic challenge. Strategy formulation by senior management was believed to come first, and then communication was called for to transfer strategy to the rest of the company, with precision and accuracy. Communication was referred to as "the tool to get people to understand what change is about".

To accomplish strategic change, a manager must perform "plain natural communication" to appeal to engineers in ABB. Altogether, you win sympathy when criticizing "lack of planning", or "strategic change without direction", or "action without measurement".

To deliberately target emotions in change communication was not recommended by the managers in this study. You might capture your audience momentarily, but break the implicit rule of simplicity and straightforward communication. This finding illuminates the second issue in this study; being a rhetorician. Furthermore, senior managers in ABB talked about rhetoric only unwillingly. When asked "how do you use rhetoric in change management" they replied, at best, in general terms of communication. Using rhetoric is "is not how we do it in ABB". Consequently, rhetoric is not the supporting companion for an ABB senior manager, as Quintilian suggests that rhetoric is for the classical orator.

As this is a relatively limited study of eight senior managers in one company, one should be careful not to take the conclusions too far. Even so, this paper contributes to management communication and change management insofar as it explicitly gives voice to the individual manager. And this voice tells us, at a time when rhetoric, storytelling and charismatic leadership are making ground, that the understanding

and acceptance of rhetoric is perhaps much more limited than the general impression might suggest.

Finally, a somewhat personal comment from the author of this paper: given the large interest in "efficient" communication in business, senior managers' lack of enthusiasm concerning rhetoric is not only surprising, it is stupid. Really, what else other than a comprehensive well-tried normative theory of "management of meaning" does a manager need?

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Autopoeisis and meaning: a biological approach to Bakhtin's superaddressee

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the connections between autopoiesis, as described by Maturana and Varela, and Bakhtin's work on dialogue in understanding successful organizational rhetoric.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper reviews two foundational texts in order to see the connection between them.

Findings – The concept of "organizational closure" will govern the domain of communication and therefore also any act in rhetoric.

Originality/value – This is a first attempt to link "organizational closure" as it exists in autopoiesis to Bakhtin's notion of a superaddressee.

Keywords Rhetoric, Communication

Paper type Conceptual paper

In my 20 years of coaching managers and employers, I heard hundreds of stories. In the beginning, I expected the stories to represent the objective truth of what had happened to individuals within the organization. I trusted in "objective reality" in the social domain because of my firm belief in the philosophy of natural science (having a degree in biophysics). Additionally, the person telling the story certainly considered them to be a report of real circumstances and outcomes. The experiences described were not perceived as subjective, but rather as truthful, as "objective." When stories varied among different tellers, I considered my job to be to find out how true to the "objective" facts the varying accounts were.

However, my attempts as the coach to find out how "objective" or "true" to the facts these stories really were proved to be inadequate at best. In fact, looking for objectivity in the subjective accounts was rarely helpful, and in fact wasted my clients' and my own time. I found it a more productive line of inquiry to consider each story a reflection of a unique personal and very subjective experience. However, given my fondness for the tools of natural science, I did not abandon the promise of a helpful relationship between "objective" and "subjective" orientations.

I remember coaching a manager of a self managing R&D team (SMT) in an international oil company who really got stuck between different layers of stories which all took their view on organizational reality for granted. It was too hard for me as consultant or as coach to find an objective view within the organization about itself.

In particular, Maturana and Varela's (1980) autopoietic theory has taught me that the evolution of species and processes of "struggle for life" cannot be understood based upon the distinction of objectivity versus subjectivity. Those concepts do not exist in

nature and do not make any sense as natural phenomena. What makes more sense in helping us understand the ways in which autonomous living systems (including human beings) are structurally composed is the concept of meaning.

I will start by explaining those parts of autopoiesis that are meaningful to rhetoric, followed by the concept of the superaddressee developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, and I will end with some implications for management.

Organization

In biology, different species are different from one another because they have a different basic design. Autopoiesis names this design: "organization." In autopoiesis, the organization of a system resembles a "blueprint," it is a dynamic design (relations). A living entity with all its properties is a structural manifestation of its organization. Similar manifestations of a single organization can be recognized as belonging to a particular class. Consider, for example, the variations among the local versions of McDonald restaurants.

Internal dynamics

Not observable from the outside is what happens inside. The theory of autopoiesis regards internal processes as "internal dynamics." Internal dynamics refer to processes, but do not include the actual internal components and the actual tangible relations between components, which are called "structures." So when I think, what to write down, this thinking process is part of my internal dynamics. It does not, however, refer to what else is going on structurally like the firing of synapses to make it possible for me to think. Internal dynamics processes are only possible within the constraints of its organization.

Organizational closure, operationally closed

Organizational closure is a fundamental concept in autopoiesis governing all processes of communication and information processing. Organizational closure means that living systems can only react within themselves to themselves. Organizational closure is similar to Kant's (1929) claim that the knowing subject can never transcend his experience towards knowledge of things as they are in themselves, i.e. objectively and independently of our experience. Self-reference is the source of all knowledge:

> [...] fundamental was the discovery that one had to close off the nervous system to account for its operation, and that perception should not be viewed as a grasping of an external reality, but rather as a specification of one, because no distinction was possible between perception and hallucination in the operation of the nervous system as a closed network (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. xv).

An important property of this "specification" is that it can never leave its source. Specifications are internal constructions and are determined by the organization of the system. Different organizations with different internal dynamics will make and experience different "specifications."

For example, the roar of the crowd at a match I am attending seems to be a sound that reaches my ear. However, according to autopoiesis, there are no sounds that are property of the crowd. Instead, the sounds I hear are properties of me, the listener, as the bodies in the stadium move air in particular ways that cause vibrating air

molecules to reach my ear in certain frequencies and vibrate my eardrum. Moving air and moving eardrums or any moving structure(s), however, do not equal sound. Sound is the inner experience the brain of the listener constructs as a kind of metaphor for only the state of its own ear (vibrating ear drum). Just as the nature of the sound experienced is not a property of any external source, neither are colors, contrast, brightness and darkness or any property in the visual, or any sensory, domain.

Outside our senses is a world of events that may, depending on the nature of the species, trigger internal properties of the living entity. Properties of external triggers themselves are impossible to imagine or to experience. So in a sense developing nervous systems and brains are interested in knowing the world but only from the specific point of view of that particular system. The key question looks to the internal experience of meaning: "What does this internally generated experience mean for the system that generates it?"

Autopoiesis and the outside world: structural coupling
Triggers reference the existence of an outside world but in experiencing them, systems experience themselves by perceiving, reflecting on, and responding to the triggers as perceived.

From the standpoint of autopoietic theory living systems including humans, interact openly with that, which they are not; in other words, with their environment. This is called "structural coupling."

The physical structure of a living system interacts in an open way with an observable physical environment. This description coincides with the description of an observer who denies or ignores his own closure and only through this operation can distinguish other living systems as interacting (structural coupling) with their surrounding.

Internal equilibrium
Through evolutionary processes, a system learns how to maintain from within (self-reference) a cyclical and dynamic equilibrium. Processes that disturb this internal equilibrium are compensated with other internal operations until equilibrium is restored. This equilibrium, which is essential, obeys its organization by maintaining and supporting it, by keeping its manifestation alive. The way equilibrium is restored is system specific.

Structurally (organization) determined meaning
The function of a living entity is to keep itself alive by responding appropriately to environmental triggers in a way that it is faithful to itself, by obeying its organization. But how does the entity know what to do, when it meets a perturbation because of outside triggers. System-specific, the perturbation is an inside response to the trigger, awakening assignments of meaning. Some are experienced as dangerous; others as desirable. A more limited range of possible meanings indicates more instinctual behavior; but instincts need "fixed" very predictable environments to be effective.

Process determined meaning
To cope with (much) more complex and unpredictable and dynamic environments within the lifetime of an entity, species evolve into species with a bigger and (much)

more complex central nervous system and brain. Proportionally with the complexity of the brain is the entity's handling of unpredictable diversities of structural coupling processes.

Next to structurally determined meaning (instincts), process determined meaning arises. The autopoietic system creates within itself (internal dynamics) processes of sense making in order to make sense of the internal constructions that triggers awaken. Responses that reestablish internal dynamic equilibrium are learned.

Sense making (learning-) processes can also lead to mistakes and alternative "solutions" leading to differences between members of the same species. Systems, which create social domains in which reacting to one another becomes a major characteristic of that species (group behavior/group dynamics/relationships), especially need these internal processes of sense making. For internal processes of sense making in the social domain, relationships are a necessity.

Identity
With meaning processed (learned), entities start to develop a unique identity. The more freedom the entity gets by its organization to construct meaning, the more it individualizes and develops a "personal" identity. Identity is in a sense a self made dynamic construction of meaning. More evolved systems do not so much obey their organization anymore but their identity. Still autopoietic entities obey meaning in the same way, be it structurally determined or "process driven": it must all lead to the maintenance of their autopoiesis. For identities to develop, they need an ongoing structural coupling (relationships) with other identities.

Language as a consensual internal domain
To understand the forming of language in autopoietic systems is an impossible task when language is considered to be a denotative symbolic system for the transmission of information. Autopoiesis leads to the conclusion that language can only be connotative.

The origin of language equals a specific kind of structural coupling domain: the domain of communication, where entities recursively interact with each other (relationships) with the maintenance and continuation of their autopoiesis. So language next to other behaviors used by a single entity strives to maintain its identity. For the authors of autopoiesis the linguistic domain is a consensual but internal domain (part of internal dynamics) where the participants orient themselves within themselves because of interactions that have been specified during their coupled (shared) history of interactions:

> The linguistic domain, the observer, and self-consciousness are each possible because they result as different domains of interactions of the nervous system with its own states (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 29).

Autopoietic view on a conversation
Our manager, assigned as "sponsor" of a SMT sits in a room at a table with six members of his SMT. He opens the meeting by welcoming them for being there. The topic of the meeting is the growing conflict between him as sponsor and his SMT.

What is factual inside the room are space, objects and people engaged in their structural coupling processes. These coupling processes were recorded by a video camera and a microphone.

One of the SMT members said to the sponsor in an angry tone: "[...] and this meeting is another example of your interference." Many in the room nodded.

"Now Thom," utters one of his colleagues of the SMT, "We better have an official meeting about our difficulties, don't we?"

"All our previous conversations ended up nowhere" said Thom, "he just doesn't want to listen."

Those present react differently to the meeting, to the man (sponsor) and to the history of the team that binds them all together. It is obvious that they do not share the same experience. There are as many realities (specifications) in that room as there are identities. The meeting did not resolve the conflict as too opposing interpretations existed of visions, responsibilities, and power.

What has been said, the utterance, whatever meaning it may have for the author, is in autopoietic theory for the addressee a "meaningless" trigger. Meaning cannot leave the system of the author. The "meaningless" utterance belongs to the structural coupling domain.

This is the very reason the machine cannot record meaning while it can record the utterance. Sense-making processes cannot obey the observed, but perfectly obey the inner world of entities:

> For such systems, all apparent informational exchanges with its environment will be, and can only be, treated as perturbations within the processes that define its closure, and thus no "instructions" or "programming" can possibly exist (Varela, 1979).

> The denotative function of the message lies only in the cognitive domain of the observer (Maturana and Varela, 1980, p. 32).

Meaning needs a relationship with contexts but always will be determined by the one who experiences the meaning.

"Tigers are dangerous animals" said by an observer does not really explain the tiger, but does explain the speaker: "I don't know how to guarantee my safety when I meet a tiger." The tiger could respond with: "How is what he cannot guarantee, a property of me?"

The conflict between this sponsor and his team was an effect of that all involved used their logic faithfully to maintain their autopoiesis. A first hand spectator of the mechanics behind conflict of visions and power leading eventually to civil war was Mikhael Bakhtin.

Bakhtin

Bakhtin was born in Orel a city in southern Russia on November 16, 1895, almost 20 years before the renunciation of Tsar Nicholas II and the end of the Romanov dynasty. From a family of nobility, Bakhtin's extensive education included lessons in poetry, literature, and language at the University of Odessa. He finished his studies in 1918 in St Petersburg amidst the turmoil of the Russian revolution, whose violent clash of ideologies led Bakhtin to think and write about how people act and think, speak, and persuade. After the 1960s, his ideas became more known outside Russia and were later welcomed by academics in philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory.

Bakhtin argued that in order to understand language, one needs to look at how people use it in a given context. Language is a human interaction that cannot be understood apart from its users in their lived contexts. An utterance is the activity of the speaker until he is interrupted or stops speaking and the addressee takes over.

By speech genres, Bakhtin refers to different contexts in the "sphere of human activity." Contexts determine the style and meaning of words uttered by delineating utterances that have preceded any given dialogue, including that of texts. In one of his later books, "Speech genres and other late essays," Bakhtin explains speech genres as a stable type of forms of utterances. He opposes the view of those who approach the analysis of language as a mechanical structural tool of the speaker. He is fundamentally against the idea that language is about speaking (or writing) as if language is active because of the immediate obvious observable part. The hidden "passive" part of language (listening and reading) is structurally intertwined with the existence of language and cannot be separated from it. What Bakhtin emphasizes here is the relational basis of language.

The superaddressee
Not only does Bakhtin observes the dialogical nature of all communicative acts, but he also makes it clear in his theory, that the very source of language, before a word is spoken or a letter put on paper, is dialogue based. Any author (speaker) presupposes an audience (readers) and a relation between the two that leads to a mutual understanding of what the author is putting on paper. If an author is convinced of being misunderstood, then the writing project becomes in vain. Instead, language functions insofar as we imagine a reader or listener capable of understanding – a superaddressee:

> If there is something like a god concept in Bakhtin, it is surely the superaddressee, for without faith that we will be understood somehow, sometimes, by somebody, we would not speak at all. Or if we did, it would be babbling. And babble, as Dostoevsky shows in his short story "Bobok," is the language of the dead (Holquist, M. (introduction); Bakhtin, 1986, p. xviii).

This superaddressee is not referring to the actual addressee (the second party) who listens, but to an internally created addressee within the speaker:

> But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher superaddressee (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 26) (italics by me).

Only then does a speech act, according to Bakhtin, become understandable. Bakhtin's work building upon his theory of the utterance "discovered" quite independently from autopoiesis the existence of organizational closure.

Who is this someone? Can this be the real person in front of you? According to autopoiesis it is not. The someone primarily addressed is internally generated and faithful only to the maintenance of the autopoiesis of the author. As Maturana and Varela (1980, pp. 32-3) puts it:

> If it appears acceptable to talk about transmission of information in ordinary parlance, this is so because the speaker tacitly presumes the listener to be identical with him and hence as having the same cognitive domain (which is never the case).

Any rhetorical act is and can only be determined by the superaddressee. But the presumption or the presupposition that the real addressee equals the superaddressee

is faulty. In spite of this, the use of language as-if it were a denotative system and as-if meaning could be transferred works. Only that which works, despite its reasons, keeps species alive over millions of years in their struggles to cope with perturbations.

Professional rhetoric

Business or organizational identities are practically comparable with (third order) autopoietic systems which operate in groups. For organizations to cope with perturbations and to maintain their autopoiesis, the art of communication becomes one of the major capabilities of the business organization. The successfulness of managerial rhetoric following Bakhtin's superaddressee or the concept of organizational closure is not based on the transfer of meaning between entities because this really is not possible. What actually seems to happen when a sender is understood by the real addressee, as-if the sender's meaning "got across," is that the sender successfully created a linguistic context in the domain of structural coupling, which helped the real addressee to construct within meaning as-if the meaning of the author.

So what is this "successful linguistic context"? The more the addressee is understood, the easier it is for the author to rely on his superaddressee, which sufficiently equals the addressee. Only between author and superaddressee a perfect transfer of meaning is possible. So a successful "transfer" of meaning in rhetoric is primarily based on the "match" between superaddressee and addressee.

So in the case of our sponsor he forgot to question or to match sufficiently his superaddressees of the SMT. The competence to match is a core responsibility of a successful communicator to get his message across.

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Slumdog Millionaire

The rhetoric of chance or sentimental management of inequalities in pulp fiction

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to reinterpret rhetorical inventions in global multimedia and to re-conceptualize the theoretical analysis of processes of sentimental representation of global inequalities, unfair terms of exchange and attempts to balance them ("Bollywood" of Mumbai vs Hollywood of LA).

Design/methodology/approach – Philosophical and qualitative analysis of the rhetoric of communication forged by global power games and applied to symbolic strategies of resistance, with a case study of a particular highly successful movie in global multimedia network, namely *Slumdog Millionaire*, which had been coproduced jointly by professionals from the former "colonial power" (the UK) and from the former "conquered colony" (India) in order to challenge the latest superpower (Hollywood and the USA).

Findings – Yesterday's underdogs are talking back and winning the symbolic game of multimediated communications by inserting a new professionally shaped response to the international inequalities laid bare and exposed to a growing critique. However, the ironies of the international division of labor and local cultural contexts can turn "sweatshops" into "*boudoirs*" subverting the rhetoric of Western domination. More Bollywood-like strategies are needed to redress the imbalance.

Originality/value – Apart from the very specialist studies in the aesthetics of the film as an art form, this is the first attempt to demonstrate the common theme of resistance to the dominant rhetoric of multimedia industries on the level of coding symbolic meanings and disseminating them through aesthetically successful cultural commodities by groups and regions "cast" in subordinate roles by cultural industries.

Keywords Multimedia, Rhetoric, Film, Communication

Paper type Conceptual paper

Rhetorically, critical narratives recycle the Marxian class struggle, or Gramscian ruling class hegemony, or postcolonial studies (Bhabha). These are robust traditions for socially sustainable critique of market and democracy's failures. Critical analysis of subversive visual rhetoric of "balkanized" film artists trying to talk back to mainstream audiences are less frequent. Where academy keeps silent, pulp fiction speaks up. *Slumdog Millionaire* is the most successful example of pulp fiction turned into a pastiche of *The Prince and the Pauper*, stripping global inequalities bare. They show how sweatshops can become *boudoirs* in a clash of generations. Will *Slumdog Millionaire* replace *The Wealth of Nations* and *Communist Manifestos* in the emergent rhetoric of multimedia pulp fiction?

We live in an age of virtual *flaneur*; slum dwellers can learn about affluent lifestyles at the push of the button, the affluent can wander through slums without leaving their villas. Cell phones ring in slums and palaces, laptops can be accessed

everywhere, multimedia enwrap senses in thick fog of signals. Inequalities stand out. On February 22, 2009, the film *Slumdog Millionaire* won eight Oscars. Vikas Swarup's and Simon Beaufoy's novel and script gave Loveleen Tandan and Danny Boyle an ample chance to produce a male *Cinderella* story. The film represented a symbolic marriage of Hollywood and Bollywood and the recognition of the latter. Recognition, however, laid bare the underlying asymmetries of power, wealth, and fame. First, the novel by Vikas Swarup and the co-directing by Loveleen Tandan were by far less frequently mentioned in the media than Danny Boyle (the director) and his main (British) producer, Christian Colson. Moreover, there was a commotion in India about the film's "poverty tour" and unequal treatment of the "west" and the "rest." Indian children had been paid a few $1,000 each (for instance Azharuddin Ismail for his role as a child Salim and Rubina Ali, acting as Latika in childhood), while the film, produced at the modest cost of US$15 million, had already grossed more than 80 million by the time Oscar winners had been announced. The producers have countered these charges with a promise of a scholarship fund for slum children (payable when they reach the university-going age) and with an argument that children have been paid three times more than an average working adult earns per year in their neighborhood.

From the point of the plot, the movie is deliberately kitschy. Even the poorest of the poor stand a chance of making it to the top or at least moving upwards, which the lower classes were always dreaming about, but now stand a real chance of accomplishing in real life, not only in dreams. Once we step into the world opened by sentimental rhetoric of pulp fiction, we shut down our awareness of social injustice and "privatize" our experience of ups and downs, rights and wrongs, etc. The rich enjoy peeping into "how the lower half lives". The poor enjoy betting on ultimate victory of the ambitious "arriviste." Everybody watches. Everybody pays for the next installment. Can this rhetoric be subverted? Can pulp fiction contribute to a more serious attention to "fair trade," poverty reduction programs, female empowerment, microcredits, and the like?

Readiness to accept the melodramatic sugarcoating of a brutal rendering of the world of slums and sweatshops is only partly related to the "*nostalgie de la boue*," which made Mick the Knife and Carmen, or Bonnie and Clyde attractive heroes and heroines of popular operas, musicals and films in the past. Another part of the amazing attractiveness of *Slumdog Millionaire* can be explained through systematically growing significance of consumption and emotional experience in making sense of individual lives, which are evaluated according to the matrix of an upward social mobility. The main protagonist of a *Slumdog Millionaire* first encounters the popular TV program *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* when serving tea to the call center employees in Mumbai. Call centers perceived from the western outsourcing manager's point of view are contemporary sweatshops. True. Compared to a stable career in professional bureaucracies of the most affluent "core" capitalist countries – they are. But they still pay more than companies, which are less globally connected and less linked to the outsourcing networks. As Shehzad Nadeem rightly observed, "the sweatshop has become the boudoir" – both because the ambitious young professionals can use their higher income to sustain a life style, which liberates them from traditional sociocultural constraints[1] and because managed emotional experience is becoming an advanced branch of managerial control technologies. The young Indian employees of the call centers enjoy the privileges of a globally networked and better paid job and

only slowly realize that they are being manipulated in a much more subtle way than their parents and employees from outside of the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector. After the shock of discovering the "boudoir" aspect of managerial control based on internalized employee-identities and individualized psychological contracts, a "total emotional commitment" begins to give way to the disenchantment with the sweatshop realities[2]:

> Just as the contradictions inherent in colonialism turned agreeable subjects into nationalists, Archana and Anil's enthusiasm for globalization has been irreparably diminished by their perceived mistreatment. "We are treated as a bonded labor" Archana says with a catch in her voice, referring to the high level of surveillance in the workplace [...] Employees also complain of unpaid overtime and managerial favoritism (Nadeem, 2009, p. 119).

There is no reflection on the fact that in call centers and in sweatshops elsewhere "collective resistance is lacking and the major trade unions have shown little interest in organizing workers" (Nadeem, 2009, p. 119). Thus, the film allows the audiences in the west to enjoy the music and action with a clean conscience and an alibi of political correctness, while disturbing questions "what should I do now that I know what I have learned" are discreetly "detoured." Concluding: the slum dwellers have been given a symbolic "voice" in multimediated production aiming at globally distributed audiences – but these voices of the underdogs (slumdogs) had been "framed" and "neutralized" through the artistic form of a sentimental ("romantic") musical (classified by the distributors as "crime, drama, romance [...] and more"). Their fate was made "easier" to suffer through the ideology of equal chances of upward mobility for all. Shyamal Sengupta from a Mumbai-based Whistling Woods Institute for Films, Media, Animation and Media Arts has labeled the film as a story of a:

> [...] white man's imagined India. It's not quite snake charmers, but it's close. It's a poverty tour (Sengupta, 2009).

Another controversy engulfed Loveleen Tandan. She has been listed in film's credits as a co-director responsible for work on Indian locations (the entire movie had been filmed in India) and feminists protested that she should have been a co-nominee for the Oscar awards. Tandan herself did not support this campaign (she had been clearly treated as inferior collaborator) and Colson commented by saying that Tandan's title was "strange but deserved" and that she could be best described not as a partner-director on equal footing with Boyle – but as "one of our key cultural bridges" (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 2009). Colson's comments raise the question of the inbuilt, tacit asymmetry between "values" and "prices" ascribed to the "western" and to the Indian collaborators.

One is tempted to analyse the controversies around *Slumdog Millionaire* as a knot of narratives, antenarratives (in Boje's sense) and counternarratives with the aid of comments by Todorova, Zizek and Marciniak on the cinematographic representation of the Balkans and Milcho Manchevski's strategies of:

> [...] subverting either a xenophobic or xenophilic illustration of the Balkan struggle or in representing violence against the usual scheme of sexualized entertainment or sublimated, sentimentalized brutality. How to enunciate the workings of the logic of ethnic violence without either demonizing or exoticizing the inhabitants of the Balkans? These are important questions because they involve opening up of representational practices that would allow for more complex registers of cinematic signification. In this context, these registers might give

voice to the critique of the logic of ethnic cleansing, propelled by the idea of privileged and authentic citizenry (Marciniak, 2006, p. 130).

Perhaps, it is too early to expect a coherent and sustainable response to the challenge of the slumdogs ripe enough to start generating emergent alternative elites and networks seriously committed to real action in the slums of the former "third world." Perhaps, it is too early to hope for a backlash against the academic domination of theoretical frameworks, paradigms and research methodologies, which obscure the view of the "new capitalism," of the persistent unfairness of unequal exchange and unequal distribution of poverty. One speaks, for instance, about the "globalization of nothing" (or "grobalization, Ritzer, 2004) or about new manipulation of both producers of knowledge and emotion intensive services and products and of their consumers (Franck, 2005):

> Cynicism is what Adorno had in mind when he suggested that in contemporary culture consumers feel compelled to buy and use advertising products even though, at the very moment, they see *through* them. Seeing through and obeying, Adorno tells us, is precisely the dominant mode of using consumer products in late capitalist societies (Illouz, 2007, p. 89).

In *Slumdog Millionaire*, the TV host of Jamal demonstrates cynicism trying to legitimize the superiority of the westernized upper-middle class in India and inferiority of the "slumdogs," who are victims of the market forces and neoliberal hegemony (dictating terms of economic growth) but are blamed for not being westernized and successful enough. When Jamal threatens to undermine this ideological hegemony and win the game, becoming "one of us," the host Prem Kumar, played by a top Bollywood star (Anil Kapoor), decides that police violence, not fair play under the public scrutiny, is the best way to deal with this threat from below. Jamal's symbolic victory reverberates through slums but also through the middle class sitting-rooms and media professionals" community gossip. Middle classes are stirring. Perhaps, the eradication of poverty should not be replaced with a class excuse of those who managed to become part of the global professional, economic, political and symbolic elites? Perhaps, loyalty to the native underdogs, Orwell-like, will go first, loyalty to former colonizers' hierarchies – obediently honored by former Indian elites, but not necessarily by the future ones – second? Let me close with a quote from myself:

> In communications, especially in hyperlinked societies, meanings can be imported and smuggled and thus the unfinished project of democracy can be retrieved, reinvented, rejuvenated and retried. Meaning, as language, should be regarded as a mode of action, not just a frozen trace of a thought with value in the background (Magala, 2009, p. 220).

Notes

1. After five years of managing an Indian workforce, a young American BPO executive could ask despairingly, "Why does everyone want to become American Workers?" he says, "are so psyched up about scooters and sunglasses. Everyone wants to be American in terms of jeans and freedom" (Nadeem, 2009, p. 113).

2. Eva Illouz claims that we are dealing with the rise of the homo-sentimentalis and the perverse influence of the narratives of self-made man and woman upon individualized and rationalized masses exploited by managers of "emotional capitalism" (Illouz, 2007).

156

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Official chronicles of corporate globalization and unofficial stories of international mobility
Resisting patronage of meaning?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyse contradictions, similarities, and differences between official corporate chronicles and individual stories of international managers of a multinational company.

Design/methodology/approach – The analysis was made following methodological and technical approaches of critical analysis of narratives and organizational discourse of an ethnography conducted in a multinational corporation.

Findings – It is suggested that contradictions, similarities, and differences are ways that managers have to resist patronage and imposition of meanings. Implications for organizations are suggested.

Originality/value – The discursive manipulation of the meaning of time as a way of organizational patronage is considered.

Keywords Narratives, Storytelling, Globalization, Multinational companies

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

From an organizational perspective, chronicles could be considered the discourses of the managerial elite who decides which events are "real" and should be remembered and which ones are "false" and must be erased, which ones have a name and which ones not, when they happened and in which order (not always chronological) and which places and commemorations, sometimes expressed through monuments, plaques or visible artifacts or festivities, have to be built or celebrate.

Explaining the emplotment of chronicles, Czarniawska (2004) shows how chronicles are used for the construction of stories. In organizations I have done my fieldwork there are official chronicles where organizational events were stipulated and used to construct particular stories. If everybody finally tells the story based on these chronicles, following Czarniawska, and these events are named with the same name, the events become "real."

An extended corpus of seminal works on subaltern and post-colonial literature shows how any grouping that does not conform to a dominant societal Western representation may be ignored despite their significant contribution to the constitution of modern organizations, in particular the nation state. They include variously: women (Marre, 2003), minority groups (Calas and Smircich, 1993), aboriginal peoples (Parsons, 2007), immigrant and slave labour (Hall, 1997), those with disabilities (Meekosha and Dowse, 2007), the poor and the dispossessed.

As Sennett pointed out, the special features of time in neo-capitalism have created a conflict between individual character and experience, the experience of a disjointed time that threatens people's ability to consolidate their stories into durable narrations

(Sennett, 1998, p. 30). By analyzing contradictions, similarities and differences between official corporate chronicles and individual stories of international managers of a multinational corporation (Tenaris), this paper seeks to describe how oscillating between agreement and disagreement, organizational members seem not only to resist patronage and manipulation of meanings, but also to define and alternative reality (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]) inside the "real" and official organization that is defined by the managerial elite.

The research

The research was based on the qualitative analysis of the situations that take place during personal talks, long-distance conversations and meetings with international managers during my last five years fieldwork – intermittent – in Tenaris companies (Brazil, Italy, and Argentina). The analysis was made following different methodological and technical approaches of critical analysis of narratives and organizational discourse (Czarniawska, 2004). Data collection were not based only on interviews, but on ethnographic observation of the factories, offices, cafeterias, and places where managers used to work.

Tenaris belongs to the Techint Group. Tenaris is the result of the expansion of an initial nucleus of companies producing steel pipes from different countries (Argentina, Italy, and Mexico). The formation of Tenaris meant representing, in a single brand, eight known companies producing steel pipes, located around the world, with an annual production capacity of more than four millions tons of seamless pipes and 850,000 tons of welded pipes, with business offices in 25 countries, with 13,000 employees.

Constructing memories by deleting and implanting

Chronicles are constructed not only by words but also by images, and as we will see later, images are present in the construction of memories in Tenaris. Being implanted is possible. Details can be added – so people can be placed in photographs where they were never present. In the following example, Jane Fonda was added to a picture of John Kerry in order to suggest his lack of patriotism (Plate 1).

Membership, events, truth is created by implanting and deleting images. Many times, they are images with no body that always have "the promise of exchange for the original" (Anagnost, 2000, p. 406) allowing any kind of tie. It seems that there is a fear that memories and by extension the whole organization could be lost in case memories are loosen (Gaggiotti and Grisoni, 2009). The fear to loose memories suggests the importance of them. At organizations, battles to impose a meaning of the past and what constitutes "official" or "unofficial" chronicles and events are taking place at any moment (Gaggiotti, 2006).

The technology of constructing memories is based on the economy of images and words. Foucault describes this as a materialization of the words through a particular narrative history:

> In our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument (Foucault, 1972, p. 7).

Manipulating images and words of the past is a way to create monuments, following Foucault, but also stories "for" the future. The academic tradition usually recognizes

Fonda Speaks To Vietnam Veterans At Anti-War Rally

Actress And Anti-War Activist Jane Fonda Speaks to a crowd of Vietnam Veterans as Activist and former Vietnam Vet John Kerry (LEFT) listens and prepares to speak next concerning the war in Vietnam (AP Photo)

Source: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/object/article?f=/c/a/2004/02/20/MNG4S54RGO1.DTL&o=2

Plate 1.

that the analysis of the technology of words as narratives of the past is rooted in the formalists (Propp, 1968 [1928]), the theories of literary criticism (Richard, 1928), the works of Barthes (1985 [1964]) and later in Ricouers's seminal work about memory, history and forgetting (2004).

The academic tradition of pictorial constructing also recognizes its roots in Barthes (1985 [1964]). But was Pierce, who was interested not only in the process but also in the uses (and abuses) and consequences of constructing, who argued that image manipulation provides opportunities to interrogate about the cultural potency of the image, because the image acquires the status of an icon of potential future (Peirce, 1965).

Memories at Tenaris

In Tenaris I used to see a picture of the founder of the company in the offices of the engineers. In Plate 2, XX was writing, suggesting an iconic image of a manager. The picture has a footnote, handwritten by XX, dedicated to the employer. In the case of GC, an engineer I interview in the Tenaris Bergamo factory, the dedicatory was in recognition of the long career of GC in the company. GC told me the picture was given by XX in hand to him in a formal act. Iconic images are important to create roles

Source: Fieldwork at Tenaris Dalmine (pipes factory) (Bergamo, Italy). The office of GC

and identification and the construction through images is a technology capable of completing a subjective identification with a future or a past that exists in an "image-native" world. In the case of GC, the image, publicly exposed back of his desk to everyone who entered his office, also help to present himself to other employees as someone who have received the recognition from the founder himself.

Later I noticed that the same picture (Plate 3) has been used "officially" by the corporation to illustrate the "History and Expansion of The Techint Group" (The group which Tenaris belong to). The picture is published under the subtitle "Founding" together with other pictures of workers in with the background of an "old" factory.

Source: www.techintgroup.com/group/en/history/default.aspx

In the official chronicle, the picture is part of a narrative of the past. All the pictures inserted in the "History" are in black and white in order to suggest to us that we are in front of some kind of vestiges of the origins.

But in fact, the picture is at least contemporary of that one, in color, I saw in GC office in Bergamo (it was not a colored picture). I have not the opportunity to see the original picture in Tenaris archives, but both pictures have been manipulated in different ways. The picture at GC office is in a wooden frame and a handwritten dedicatory and signature has been added at the bottom. The surface of the desk where XX is working is visible, and also the documents with which he is working. The picture inserted in the official "History" is smaller, in black and white and the table is not visible.

Visible memories

Organizational practice of implanting and deleting is evidenced in the visibility or invisibility of who is remembered. As Kundera (1979, p. 3) refers, "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." In the example below those workers of the company where I did my fieldwork in Italy, who were killed during the First World War and by the German bombards of one of the factories on 6 July 1944, are remembered and honored in plaques. Their names are in chronological and also alphabetical order not only to commemorate them but also to find their names (Plates 4 and 5).

In the same factory, the workers who have died through accidents were selected and displayed in a chronologically ordered list (Plate 6). No other lists of workers are displayed. Those who left the company in other ways (left or retired) are not remembered.

In the same room, the face and the name of Leonardo da Vinci, together with his drawing of his design of a drill machine is displayed (Plate 7).

Source: Gaggiotti fieldwork ZZ factory (Bergamo, Italy)

Plate 4.

Source: Gaggiotti fieldwork ZZ factory (Bergamo, Italy)

Source: Gaggiotti fieldwork ZZ factory (Bergamo, Italy)

I am not suggesting that Leonardo has not to be there because he was not a worker who died working for Tenaris. What I am trying to illustrate is how the selection works, helping particular names and events emerged and others not in connection with a discourse of the present. In a particular moment, someone decided that workers who died during the wars and Leonardo were important to be "chronicled."

Plate 7.

Adapting and resisting chronicles

Expatriates also select events. Instead of creating a sense of heritage, they use it to link their stories with the official story of the organization. ABB was an Argentine engineer expatriated twice by Techint:

ABB: I participated in two expatriations. One was in Venezuela, when the Sidor takeover was carried out, from 1998 to 2000 and the other one, in Houston this time, for almost two years; from 2003 until May 2005 I was in Houston.

In this case, ABB story is chronologically similar to the official chronicle. Officially, Sidor started to be part of Techint in 1998. But according to the official chronicle, Sidor was acquired by a consortium and not as a result of a take over. ABB story has the same dates but the events are named different:

1998 Sidor became private. Amazonia Consortium, integrated by Techint, Hylsamex and Usiminas, won the public bid.

In other interview, referring to the same event, ACC (an Argentine engineer from Siderca, expatriated to Venezuela) told me his story in a different way. He linked his expatriation "with" and not "when" Sidor was purchased: "my expatriation began with the purchase of Sidor:"

HG: How did your expatriation come about?

ACC: My expatriation began with the purchase of Sidor. So around December '97 a bid was submitted for Sidor. [. . .] I remember, when I joined Siderca they were expanding the (Sidor) plant and they sent people to Siderca in '77/'78 [. . .]

ACC used the same words of the chronicle to explain what happen: the submission of the bid to purchase Sidor. For many of those expatriated, what the official chronicle gives

a brief technical name and a date, is described in detail, and it tends to be an event that lasts longer. The official record "compresses" time and events trying to show them in a similar way: in one column what happen (the name of the event) and in the other column, the date; who made the chronicle has to show that the event is comparable with the rest of the events of the chronicle. The expatriates' stories did not follow this pattern. They expand or contract the events depending on what they want to tell. Despite the fact they used to tell their stories as chronicles, they know that their stories are not "official" and will not be used as official chronicle. There is no need to make it consistent with the rest of a text.

Conclusions

Constructing by deleting and at the same time implanting is a powerful way of constructing human entities, and in particular, organizational members. This is the reason of why the right to decide about the past is a strong fight in organizations. Who finally has the right to decide about the past, has not just only the power to define the mainstream of the discourse of the organizational continuity or the organizational change, but also to give life, "membership" to members, humanity to "organizational" robots, but not like Frankenstein or Pinocchio. The difference is that there are many objects of humanization and freedom. Pinocchio became human because he "receives" a heart; he became able to "feel" freely like Frankestein.

Czarniawska (2004), in her explanation of the concept of emplotment, shows how chronicles are used for the construction of stories but in a previous work (Czarniawska, 1997), she explained how the understanding of human action is possible by placing it into an individual narrative which in turn is placed in a social narrative. Tenaris' example shows that making sense is completed by deleting or keeping memories, but also by implanting them, in an attempt to decide what has to be remembered and what not. The chronicles have the purpose not only to "officialize" events, but also to implant them at individual level.

But at the same time, people at organizations tell stories of their experiences including or excluding references to official organizational events. There are ways to express identification (Czarniawska, 1997) but also ways to create "true" stories in order to justify frustrations, success, wishes, dreams and anxiety about work, families and organizational present and future.

The dialectical and discursive fight towards the naming and meaning of the events is not towards the officialiation, but towards of the creation of the meaning of time. In words of Calvino (1974 [1972], p. 29), "Futures not realised are only branches of the past, dead branches". The official organizational chronicle constructs, together with the individual stories, the branches that die and that ones that survive. Depending on the imposition of a particular event, an official organizational history is built, repeated, reinterpreted, promoted, and the time is finally constructed, as in the official chronicle of Tenaris.

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Narratives: a powerful device for values transmission in family businesses

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to shed light on how core values are successfully transmitted in family businesses via narratives.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative-interpretive approach is used. Data were collected through in-depth interviews made to 17 family members from three family businesses of different ages, sizes, industries, and generations in control. The richness of these interviews, besides its depth and length, emerges from the complete picture formed by the comparison of the stories told by different generations.

Findings – Results suggest that narratives are a powerful device for transmitting values through generations. By telling stories, family businesses are able to build identity and shared meanings which led to successful performance in terms of revenues, reputation, shared identity, and continuity of the family business history.

Research limitations/implications – This paper is exploratory. Further studies focusing on failure in transmitting values could enhance and expand emerging results. Deepening on values transmission may be a key research opportunity for general conceptualization.

Originality/value – The paper raises interesting issues for the family business literature within the context of values, an important yet understudied topic in the field. It also contributes to narrative theory by highlighting the usefulness of narratives as a vehicle for values transmission.

Keywords Family firms, Narratives, Social values, Spain

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Research on performance, success, and failure of family businesses, along their development and especially in their generational changes, emphasizes the importance of values. Aronoff and Ward (2001), Ward (2004), and Pratt (2000) focus on topics such as the influence of commitment, legacy transmission, hard-work, long-term profit, personal development, and even myths of creation and identity of both the family members and the business. Narva (2001) identifies narratives, among other vehicles, for transmitting values, and Hamilton (2006) highlights their roles for understanding the behaviour of individuals in the family business.

Despite the importance of the topic, there is not much field research on how these values are created and successfully transmitted. The aim of this paper, which is part of a larger research project, is to present some empirical findings on it. It is based on an intensive study of three Spanish family businesses, in which 17 members of five generations have been interviewed.

2. Theoretical framework
The theoretical framework of this research is constituted by two main subjects. The first subject is based on theories of values that relate them to the identity of people and organizations and to their patterns of behaviour. The second subject is based on the functions of narratives for creating and transmitting meanings, values, and identities.

Values, identities, and family business
Research in family business emphasizes that values are the core characteristics of identities, that identities have an important influence on the patterns of behaviour of individuals, families, and business, and that they are relevant factors for the success or failure of the companies. A value is defined as an enduring belief, a specific mode of conduct, which is preferable to other modes (Rokeach, 1968), and as a relative durable perceptual frame, which shapes and influences the individual's behaviour (England, 1967). Values are related to questions such as "Who am I?" and "How do I interact" (Ayerbe, 1995). Aronoff and Ward (2001, p. 1) sustain that "the most successful families have strong values, rooted in member's emotional bonds, blood ties and shared history", and Koiranen (2002) state that values shape the way family behaves and they are a source of competitive advantage in family businesses.

Narratives, sense making, and the transmission of values
Research on management and family business emphasize the functions of narratives in the creation and transmission of meanings and focus on the following topics: how stories and storytelling create meanings plotting events and actions (Czarniawska, 2004); the importance of narratives in organizational studies (Boje, 1995); the role of narratives for understanding our world (Hopkinson, 2001), for creating myths (Gabriel, 1991), and for understanding and constructing the reality (Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott, 2001). Feldman (1990, p. 812) sustains that a narrative can be defined as "any explanation of past events that can be found to be shared." Wortmann (2008) and Thrift (2001) claim that narratives may influence present and future behaviour, as they represent actors as epic and dramatic heroes, and O'Connor (2002, 2004) emphasizes that stories create organizational and social identities.

3. Research question and methodology
In that conceptual framework, the research paper focuses on the following main research question:

   RQ. How do family businesses transmit successfully their core values over generations by means of narratives?

The empirical method of the research is qualitative-interpretative based on 17 interviews of family members of three companies (Table I). The companies were chosen using conceptual sampling, based on similarities and differences. The main similarities between companies are in the process of their creation, in the role of family members and in their successful sustainability over time. The main differences are on their industries and especially in the generations that now are running them. In that way, we got in the set of the three companies stories about five generations told by members who belong to different generations. Three researchers conducted, recorded

Company	A	B	C
Industry	Chemicals	Tourism	Construction
Size (employees)	500-1,000	>10,000	1,500-2,000
Age of company	More than 100 years	More than 50 years	More than 40 years
Name used	Robinson family	Rivers family	Green family
Family members interviewed	Fourth generation: Mr Robinson IV Fifth generation: Jules, Elm, James, Peter, Liberty	Second generation: Mrs Rivers Third generation: Corinne, Lyon Fourth generation: Barney	First generation: Mr Green, Mrs Green Second generation: Laure, Henry, Ricard, Leo, Andy, John

Table I.
Sample profile

Source: Authors

and transcribed the interviews, and two of them made independent interpretations and compared them in order to produce the final findings. Interviews were compared with company reports, web pages, and direct observation to achieve triangulation.

4. The narratives
Stories of Company A
Family members of the fifth generation, who nowadays run the company, and the fourth generation told the researchers long narratives of the family business, which started more than 100 years ago. The different versions of the stories are very coherent and can be presented in the following way.

Mr Robinson I was the youngest son of his family and, in accordance with the Catalan laws and traditions of inheritance, he had to make his life outside it. He left the country side and went to the main city where he got a job as employee in a pharmaceutical company. He worked very hard and had a conspicuous view of its challenges and opportunities. The boss of the business was aware of his qualities and over time Mr Robinson I became his right hand. When the owner planned his retirement, without family successors, he offered him the possibility to acquire the company. In this way, Mr Robinson I became the owner of a fruitful business.

Mr Robinson and his wife worked together for developing the company and this activity was a central issue in their family life. They had three children, who were trained in different professions and joined the business, collaborating, and complementing themselves very well. The third generation had to cope with the Spanish Civil War and with the post-war poverty and crises. All family members stood together in the strategy of survival. In the fourth generation, the realities and activities of Mr Robinson IV were a stimulating model for the fifth generation. Along its history, the business extended its activities from selling to distribution and production. The last generations created laboratories and factories.

Stories of Company B
Family members of the second, third, and fourth generations were interviewed. All of them remember the origins of the business. Their narratives can be presented in the following form.

Mr Rivers was the youngest of six siblings. At the age of 12 he left home and moved to a neighbor village to work as a blacksmith. One day, he saw a car passing by and he seized a new opportunity, decided to learn about mechanics and became a driver trainer. Afterwards he created a company for transporting and selling fruits. He took advantage that in his travel back, his truck was empty, so he operated a parallel delivery business.

He married and he and his wife worked very hard in the fruit business. During the Spanish Civil War, he was enrolled to deliver medicines to hospitals. After the war, they got to start over again. He introduced an innovation on the preservation and transportation of fruits, which was basic in the development of these kinds of technologies and got the highest market share. Looking for new opportunities, they sold the business and went to Latin-America, where he worked for an important car manufacturer and was promoted very quickly. They decided to have their own business and created a tourism company. Finally, they came back to Spain and created their tourism business, given the rich and successful experience acquired abroad, which has been further developed by the other generations.

Stories of Company C
Members of the first and second generations, who nowadays run the business, were interviewed. They told many stories, which can be presented in the following text.

Mr Green was the youngest of nine siblings. As his father died in the civil war, from a very young age he decided to take care of his family and bear responsibilities. Not being the "hereu" he knew he had to look for opportunities outside, so he took his stake bearing risks. He started cultivating the family fields. With mortgages, he acquired machinery with which he was more productive and worked for other people. He applied his capacities, in a natural catastrophe, working for public institutions. This experience led him to create his construction company. The second generation is little by little taking over and developing further the company.

5. Interpretations and findings
Differences and similarities of the stories
The full stories, in the way that they have been told, with the details of events, activities, and personal characters, emphasize that each of them is unique and that there are important differences between them. But the short versions introduced in the research paper uncover that they have many similarities:

Company A: Mr Robinson IV, 4th Gen – "The story starts with my grand-grandfather who was the youngest son. He started working for a business as a simple employee."

Company B: Corinne, 3rd Gen – "My father was the youngest of six siblings. He knew he had to look for his future somewhere else than at the family land house."

Company C: Ricard, 2nd Gen – "My father was the youngest brother of a numerous family. He had to help his mother from a very young age. He knew he had to look for opportunities outside."

In line with Propp's (1928) *Morphology of the Folktale*, using more abstract terms, for example, could lead to a single text presenting the three founders of the companies.

Values, identities, heroes, and performance
These aspects are similar in the three stories and all interviewees take for granted that values and identities of the family are the main factors of the performance and success of the business (many of the research programs adopt that point of view). In that line, the stories establish explicit or implicit causal relations: in Company A, for instance, because Mr Robinson I was a hard worker, responsible and displayed and entrepreneurial mentality, he got the ownership of the small company:

> Company A: Peter, 5th Gen – "This relative had to be very smart, as all entrepreneurs he had a huge desire and will to work hard, very enthusiastic. This is how he ended up running his own business."

In Company B, because Mr Rivers respected and cared for people, he made decisions and looked for ways to create jobs in a region all year round and not only in high season:

> Company B: Corinne, 3rd Gen – "My father found a solution to develop the region and be give job to the population all year round."

In Company C, because Mr Green had a will to progress, he bought machinery, mortgaging his house, which was the beginning of his managerial activities:

> Company C: Ricard, 2nd Gen – "My father has been through a lot. At a very young age he decided to put his family on his shoulders, and look for ways to sustain it" [...] "He now has created this empire and we are afraid of failing [...] we are looking for ways to make the business grow. But how can we be as risky as he is? It's his legacy!"

Because the stories present these characters as heroes and create meanings to the business that transcends the economic world, they constitute the model of values, and behaviour of the next generations. Because, the members of the family share the same meanings and stand together, the business can progress and survive in difficult times.

Where and why stories were told
The stories were told in a large number of occasions. On one hand, they were told in family celebrations, with the explicit purpose to honor the ancestors and enjoy the occasions. This celebrative or *epideictic* rhetoric was very efficient in creating meanings, especially for the newcomers to the family who eventually could join the business. On the other hand, the stories were told with a socializing and training purpose when family members joined the company:

> Company B: Corinne, 3rd Gen – "Mi grandpa was a great narrator. When I got married with John, John was impressed by and happy with the stories my grandpa told him about the family business."

How stories were told
Family members told stories that they had lived or heard, with the idea that they were transmitting objective facts and praising objective characters. That facts speak for themselves is a very common idea. They were not aware that they were creating heroes, myths, and meanings of the business plotting facts in stories. Historians, who reject storytelling in their research works, insist on the distinction between actual facts and created meanings.

6. Conclusions and further research

This research sheds light on the way values are transmitted over generations by means of narratives. The following conclusions can be emphasized. Narratives play a key role in transmitting values as they serve as vehicles for identity creation and sense making in family businesses. For the founders of the companies and the family members of the cases examined in the paper, the business is much more than a business; it is a manifestation of their individual and collective identity, and a source of pride and recognition. McKloskey (2010), in the forthcoming book *The Bourgeois Diginity*, claims that the main cause of the industrial revolution was the dignity of the bourgeoisie. The present research shows how this dignity continues to be important in the contemporary economic development led by family firms.

This exploratory study shows interesting insights about how narratives could become a key tool for successfully transmitting values over generations. The topic could be further expanded with research focusing on the transmission of meanings, comparing oral and written stories. Moreover, these preliminary findings could benefit from further exploration and extended by studying family businesses that do not show the transmission of values through narratives.

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Engaging with the unknowable through narratives of personal experience

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the potential function of narratives of personal experience in engaging with unknowable reality.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper draws on research on managers working with the unknown using narrative methods together with ancient and modern theories of knowing.

Findings – It is suggested that the unknowable is of importance to the leader of change and that narrative is a productive form of engagement with unknowable reality. Implications for leadership practice are identified.

Originality/value – The role of narrative alongside a largely forgotten form of understanding, intellectus, is considered.

Keywords Leadership, Narratives, Uncertainty management, Research methods

Paper type Conceptual paper

Bertrand Russell (2001/1912, p. 11) asks:

> Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt it? This question, which at first sight might not seem difficult, is really one of the most difficult that can be asked.

This is the basis of the agnostic position (Greek: "a" indicating "without" and "*gnōsis*," knowledge), which is of considerable importance in the leadership of change processes. The experience of uncertainty in the change process can be disabling for the manager if a sense of agency is only linked with a sense of knowing. Finding ways to engage constructively with not knowing is thus important.

This paper considers the role that narratives of personal experience might play in engaging with the unknowable. Not knowing can take two forms. The first is a lack of knowledge about something that will at some point be knowable, such as whether staff members will react positively or negatively when a change is introduced. If only at the level of observed behaviour, it is possible to develop knowledge about this sort of phenomenon that is of use to the manager. The second is a lack of knowledge concerning aspects of reality that will always be unknowable, such as the underlying motivations of staff members. It is the latter form of the agnostic position that will be considered here.

It will be argued that narratives of personal experience can make a contribution to a constructive form of engagement with the experience of the unknowable. For example, I once coached a leader who described a shocking experience in which one of his staff reacted negatively to a change process culminating in an outburst in a public meeting accompanied by personal threats. The narrative included reference to his surprise at the

strength and nature of this reaction. It was a surprise because this was a manifestation of an unknowable unconscious process of this member of staff. The telling of this narrative in the coaching context was constructive because it helped the leader to retain a sense of agency in the face of uncertainty. It contributed to the process of sense making and the social construction of knowledge, which was then used in the next meeting with this group. This is the sense in which narratives of personal experience can generally make a constructive contribution to an engagement with the unknowable.

However, there is a caveat that must be clearly understood both about this illustration and, more generally, about the argument of this paper. Such socially constructed knowledge cannot be said to be "true" in any sense other than that the leader believes it to have value. The argument here is determinedly agnostic in relation to the unknowable. We can through narratives of personal experience generate knowledge arising from encounters with unknowable reality. However, this knowledge may not be an accurate reflection of the reality experienced. It is argued that unknowable reality can be experienced – we sometimes "touch" it or it "touches" us – but it cannot be known.

The agnostic position

Kupperman (1978, p. 99) suggests that the agnostic position can be understood through the consideration of two questions. The first concerns the use of words in the generation of knowledge, for example:

Q1. What collection of words is most appropriate in describing the table?

At this level, meaningful knowledge might be "a table is a piece of furniture with legs and a flat upper surface," which most people know is suitable, say, for safely and conveniently resting a cup of coffee. A similar example in an organizational context might be, "what is the structure of this organization?" Knowledge of a hierarchical structure has known implications for practice that have been tested in the experience of most managers. Organizational theory and practice has developed sophisticated discourses to explore such questions in a manner that may generate a range of implications for action.

However, there are potential problems in organizational practice when this is the only question that is asked about whether we truly know the reality of a situation. Organizational discourses can generate self-referential arguments. For example, working with a senior management team of a UK civil service organization who were involved in leading the culture change of an institution of 30,000 employees, one manager commented strongly, "The problem is at the fourth tier of management." I asked how he knew this to be the case. On further questioning, it became clear that a discourse had developed within the senior management group that made the fourth tier a scapegoat but without any attempt to determine ways in which this perceived reality might be tested. Language, particularly when expressed as propositional knowing, can obscure rather than illuminate.

Kupperman suggests that many people, when considering our capacity to know reality, fail to differentiate questions at the level of Q1 from the second level:

Q2. What extra-linguistic properties does the table, in fact, have?

This level of question is concerned with an engagement with reality that is not mediated through language. In the civil service organization, my question might be reasonably rephrased as, "what are the extra-linguistic properties of fourth tier management that might constitute a problem for culture change?" At first sight, this

might sound relatively straightforward. However, when taken seriously, following Bertrand Russell's observation, this question is "really one of the most difficult that can be asked." What we "know" about the reality of "fourth-tier management" is questionable and requires an active agnostic process that is prepared to rigorously investigate it.

This paper is interested in questions at the level of Q2 and to use this as a spur to more intense exploration. The error of the senior manager described above was his certainty in "knowing" the source of "the problem." This had two negative consequences: closing down any meaningful exploration of the challenges of leading culture change and, to the extent that the statement was challenged, defending rather than inquiring into the status of this knowledge.

The practical benefit of a consideration of the unknowable is that it can facilitate a freer engagement with the challenges of complex organizational situations. It is, however, no guarantee of better decision making, which would presume the generation of provable knowledge.

The touch of reality

The argument here is broadly constructionist or interpretivist: "according to these paradigms, reality remains unknowable because it is impossible to reach it directly" (Thietart and Wauchope, 2001, p. 16). However, the position taken is one of moderate social construction in that it is assumed that reality exists, albeit unknowable, and knowledge pertaining to that reality is socially constructed through interactions and conversations within and between individuals and groups. Knowledge is constructed in the act of sense making that draws upon a combination of the experience of the present moment (Hadot, 1998; Simpson and French, 2006) and the constructs, narratives and discourses that exist as building blocks for the construction process (Tsoukas, 1997; Weick, 1995).

More significantly, however, the approach taken here is only "broadly" social constructionist because of a belief in the ability to engage directly, that is extra-linguistically, with the unknowable and, in Bion's (1984/1970) terminology, for there to be a "transformation" from the realm of unknowable reality into the realm of knowledge (Eigen, 1998).

There is a tradition, largely forgotten within academia, of another way of understanding reality that utilizes "nous" or "intellectus," which refers to a capacity to "see" reality without the filters of language. There is a directness in this vision or "touch" of reality that is separate from thought. Russell (1946, p. 314) summarizes the views of Plotinus on the "touch" of experience appreciated through the capacity of "nous" or "intellectus" when he says:

> At the moment of touch there is no power whatever to make any affirmation; there is no leisure; reasoning upon the vision is for afterwards. We may know we have had the vision when the Soul has suddenly taken light.

This is what Eckhart has called "a kind of unknowing knowing" (Smith, 1987, p. 41) and is a direct engagement with experience that provides extra-linguistic answers to questions at the level of Kupperman's Q2. Such an engagement with experience can be a powerful impetus for personal narrative. The surprise of the "touch" energizes the soul to try to explain and explore why and how it "has suddenly taken light."

Modernity is characterized by a lack of attention to unknowable reality and to things of the soul. The dual influences of the age of enlightenment and utilitarianism led to a focus on knowledge that was amenable to reason, not dependent upon faith traditions and authority figures, and of a form that could be seen to relate to tangible, useful consequences. In his study of leisure and contemplation, Pieper (1999/1952) contrasts work, the laborious construction of reality, with leisure, which is understood as a receptive attitude of mind, an acceptance that embraces creation and one's place within it. Such "leisure" – different to our modern conception of the term – is associated with intellectus whilst "work" is associated with ratio, the form of understanding, based upon reason, with which modernity is more comfortable. The tone of such leisure is celebratory, concerned not with what one has done or could achieve but in who and that one is. He suggests that the modern world has lost the capacity to engage in life in this way and argues that the practice of leisure requires this largely forgotten form of understanding:

> The Middle Ages drew a distinction between the understanding as *ratio* and the understanding as *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the power of discursive, logical thought, of searching and of examination, of abstraction, of definition and drawing conclusions. *Intellectus*, on the other hand, is the name for the understanding in so far as it is the capacity of *simplex intuitus*, of that simple vision to which truth offers itself like a landscape to the eye. The faculty of mind, man's knowledge, is both these things in one, according to antiquity and the Middle Ages, simultaneously *ratio* and *intellectus*; and the process of knowing is the action of the two together. The mode of discursive thought is accompanied and impregnated by an effortless awareness, the contemplative vision of the *intellectus*, which is not active but passive, or rather receptive, the activity of the soul in which it conceives that which it sees (p. 9).

Narratives of personal experience

Personal experience methods (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, 2004) focus upon narratives and stories through the analysis of transcripts (Cortazzi, 1993; Czarniawska, 1998; Riessman, 1993). The agnostic position has led some to argue that the difficulty in the analysis of experience suggests that texts are the only source of meaning. From this position, the study of texts and the means by which they are constructed becomes the primary focus of analysis. However, Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p. 415) suggest that narratives of personal experience provide a "middle ground:"

> [The] case is made that when persons note something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, they do so not by the mere recording of experience over time, but in storied form. Story is, therefore, neither raw sensation nor cultural form; it is both and neither. In effect, stories are the closest we come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history.

Narratives of personal experience are thus interpreted as a product of the creative interplay between raw experience and cultural discourse. "Raw experience" is the experience of unknowable reality. However, engaging with this experience of unknowable reality, through narrative processes, will engender the social construction of knowledge.

In Figure 1, the social construction of reality is represented in the interplay of personal narratives and cultural discourse. Through ratio, narratives of personal experience are socially constructed in relation with others. This is a complex and emergent process that draws not only upon the personal history of the individual but also on available cultural discourses that provide a range of narrative material,

including popular themes, understandable concepts and acceptable plotlines. Our stories are largely recognizable to others in both form and content. We follow accepted rules of storytelling, we use narrative devices, and we construct accounts with meanings that resonate with what is meaningful to others.

Within western culture, those who adopt a social constructionist position are predominantly socialized into this view of knowledge generation. However, this omits any consideration of the possibility of experiencing reality directly. If we accept that this is possible – which must be an act of faith, for it falls outside the realm of reason, ratio – then there will be a separate but linked process. Figure 2 shows a representation of such a process by which intellectus engages directly with the "raw experience" of unknowable reality in the present moment.

Figure 3 combines these two forms of knowing and demonstrates how the "direct apprehension of unknowable reality" may then undergo a transformation from the realm of the unknowable into the realm of knowledge, adding to the material that may be used in the construction of narratives of personal experience.

Cultural discourse

Social construction of
knowledge ratio

Narratives of personal experience
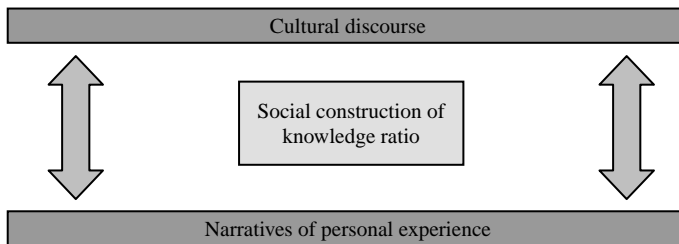
Figure 1.
Narratives of personal
experience socially
constructed from personal
history and cultural
disclosure

Direct apprehension of
unknowable reality
intellectus
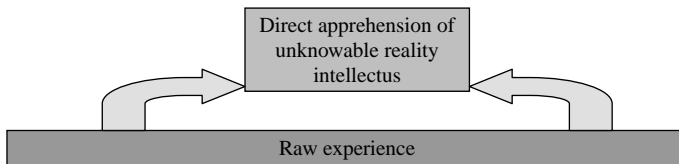
Raw experience

Figure 2.
Intellectus: the direct
apprehension or reality

Cultural discourse

Social construction of
knowledge ratio

Narratives of personal experience

Direct apprehension of
unknowable reality
intellectus

"The activity of the
soul in which it
conceives that
which it sees"

Raw experience

Figure 3.
Narratives of personal
experience linking the
unknowable and
knowledge

This link between the apprehension of unknowable reality via intellectus and the social construction of meaning through ratio is articulated in Pieper's (1999/1952, p. 9) notion of "the activity of the soul in which it conceives that which it sees." The contemplative vision or "touch" of intellectus will be a stimulus for the construction of narrative of this encounter with "raw experience." Narratives of personal experience may thus make a particular contribution to the process of engaging with unknowable reality. Such an apprehension of reality will, on occasion, have a significant impact upon the narrator; the "touch" of reality perhaps surprising or enlightening. This will find its way into the narrative, at times even with "transformational" consequences (Bion, 1984/1970).

Implications

It has been argued that it can be fruitful to engage with the experience of not knowing. If there is merit in learning to attend to the unknowable reality of the present moment, then there are some significant implications for leadership practice that require further exploration. Three aspects of the leadership of change have been highlighted in the discussion.
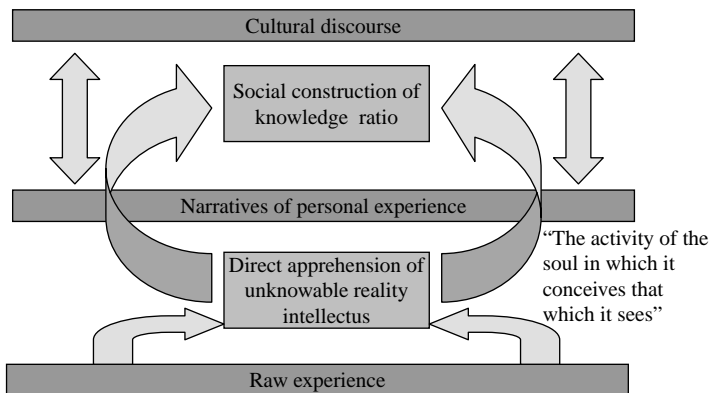
First, change processes will inevitably have greater levels of uncertainty than the status quo. Uncertainty can be disabling, resulting in a diminished sense of agency. Conversely, it may provoke the unjustified application of "knowledge" that is embodied within habitual managerial discourses. Narratives of personal experience engage with uncertainty in a manner that can be emotionally settling and support a reasoned consideration of possible courses of action.

Second, leaders tend to be seen as, or expected to be, the one's who know. Embracing the agnostic position, not passively but receptively through intellectus, may free the leader from pretence to engage with the realities of the situation.

Finally, leaders may benefit from an appreciation of the largely forgotten source of understanding in intellectus. An awareness of the potential of this "unknowing knowing" might encourage the leader to explore alternative sources of insight in their deliberations, perhaps through sharing with others their narratives of personal experience.

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Socialization into modernity: on organizational enculturation in infantocracies

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to understand the persistent ambiguity of socialization practices in US and Swedish organizations, which promote a mature work identity while infantilizing their employees.

Design/methodology/approach – Application of the insights from modernist authors' analysis of modernity as experienced by a human subject within professional organizations (Gombrowicz and Musil) and as responsible for proliferation of layers of reality (Eco), to contemporary practices of socialization.

Findings – The conflict between the need to conform to the corporate culture and the temptation to subvert them for creative or destructive purposes results in production of a "person without qualities," and in the rise of the contemporary form of hyperreal infantocracy, which requires sophisticated irony in order to deal with organizational practices.

Research limitations/implications – Paying more attention to literary analysts of contemporary condition such as Gombrowicz, Musil, Eco, and Kundera will allow to understand paradoxes of contemporary organizing beyond the limits of traditional social sciences.

Practical implications – Combating apathy and disillusion among both employees and human resource management practitioners requires a reconceptualization of the programs of organizational socialization in terms of a sustainable and responsible corporate citizenship.

Originality/value – Few authors have managed to mine the humanist heritage in order to salvage insights, which might have practical implications for a more balanced, sustainable, and humane organizational reality.

Keywords Socialization, Organizational culture, Employee behaviour, United States of America, Sweden

Paper type Research paper

Infantocracy: the ideal of childhood imposed on all of humanity (Kundera, 1986).

Organizational socialization

Whatever else they might be, organizations are also, it is commonly asserted, cultural entities. In this view, coordinated and concerted action requires a culture – some measure of shared meaning attributed to organized action and the qualities of those

who are to undertake it (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992). Although the precise definition of culture in organizational settings is a matter of endless (and somewhat futile) debate, most students of organizational life would agree that, most broadly speaking, culture consists of a learned body of rules that govern what one needs to know, think, and feel in order to meet the standards of membership (Kunda, 2006).

A cultural perspective on organizations immediately raises the question of enculturation: how, and to what effect, do members acquire the implicit rules that make up the culture. Most broadly viewed, enculturation into a given culture or subculture is an ever present feature of ongoing organizational life. In the course of routine work-related interaction, organizational actors continuously create and recreate their culture by holding each other in place, by rewarding conformity, by pointing out and punishing deviance, by openly stating the invisible rules, or, finally, by not doing any of these and therefore reaffirming reality as "taken for granted."

Enculturation, however, frequently takes form of explicit, concrete, specific, self-conscious activities. Agents for the organizational interest and the theorists who support them have long advocated the desirability of creating a "shared spirit," inculcating employees with values and motives, helping them enter new jobs, and "learn the ropes." Generally referred to as "organizational socialization," numerous types of organized activities explicitly aimed at shaping members in the organizational image have been proposed, sold, implemented, studied, and reported (Van Maanen, 1976). Organizational socialization, in short, has become a discrete "organizational function" and therefore something of a subspecialty between both theorists and practitioners of management.

Evaluative and critical views of socialization have typically taken the aims and goals of would-be socializers at face value and examined the degree to which they accomplish them, the "variables" mediating this process, and the "organizational outcomes" – effectiveness, innovation – supposedly associated with them (Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). In this paper, we propose to reevaluate and reconceptualize the meaning and impact of organizational socialization. To accomplish this, we suggest that explicit socialization efforts be viewed first and foremost as symbolic events of a ritual nature which dramatize and bring to life both what is being "inculcated" and the ways in which it is being done (Turner, 1982). From this point of view, their significance goes well beyond the linear model of successful-unsuccessful socialization practices typically encountered in the organizational and managerial literature. Socialization processes, we argue, contain within them complex and paradoxical systems of meaning that tend to undermine their own assumptions about the nature of reality and of those who participate in it. This requires us to rethink our understanding of the various forms of experience produced within socialization attempts. In what follows, we illustrate our argument by offering and reinterpreting brief examples of dramas of socialization quoted from two studies: an ethnography of a successful US high-tech company known for its "strong corporate culture" (Kunda, 2006), and a quasi-anthropological[1] study of municipalities and social insurance offices in Sweden (Czarniawska, 1997). Our interpretation and analysis make use of literary attempts to depict and understand the same phenomenon on a broader scale – namely the great enculturation project known as Modernity.

Learning the culture

Tech is a pseudonym for a well-known high-tech company. The company's management has developed an elaborate and explicit view of its "corporate culture" complete with

very clear specifications of the appropriate member role – how members in good standing are to behave, think and feel (Kunda, 2006). The following is a description of the "Intro to Tech Orientation Workshop," also known as "Bootcamp," a two-day event designed to introduce new employees to the company.

The module on Tech culture comes first. Ellen Cohen is the invited speaker. Introductions are made. The 25 participants give brief descriptions of their organizational location and technology. Most are "new hires" three to six months out of school; some have transferred from other companies. One or two have vaguely defined jobs in corporate, there is an older engineer from manufacturing, a fairly senior finance manager from engineering, and a technician from field service.

"Culture" is not a notion that engineers take to easily, and newcomers are often unfamiliar with the appropriate behavior in Tech, training seminars; consequently, the module – designed as a series of interactive exercises – requires some goading. After passing out handouts summarizing the talk, Ellen writes the word "culture" on a large flipchart and says:

> The topic today is culture. We have a spectrum of people here from all over the company. Feel free to chime in. "Culture" has become something of a fad. First, what is "culture?" What do you think?

A young engineer slouching in the corner answers: "Fungus. I had a culture for my senior science project. But my dog ate it."

Some laugh. Ellen smiles too, but continues undaunted. "We're looking at behavior, at people. What is the characteristic of people at Tech?" She waits, marker in hand, with a warm, inviting-looking smile, nodding in anticipation, perhaps indicating the signs of affirmation she is looking for. Her question hangs. No answers. Some coffee sipping. "You feel like you've all been chosen, right?" she says, nodding her head more vigorously and still smiling. Still no replies. The stony silence highlights the incongruity of her demeanor, but she persists. "What else? What are people like at Tech?" Some volunteers speak up, drawn in by discomfort, if nothing else:

> "Friendly." "Amicable." She writes it all on the flip chart.
> The tempo picks up: "Individual- and teamwork." "I'm expected to be a good corporate citizen." "Strong customer orientation." "People tend to like Tech no matter how confused," she says, and adds: "How do you feel?"

Some of the participants raise their hands. She calls on each in turn:

> I like it here. I hope for profit. I respect Sam Miller[2] a lot. Where I worked before you'd hope they fail! Here the executives aren't as ruthless as in other companies; they are more humane. I haven't met anyone here I don't respect.
> I flash off on the Technet and get to people without them wondering why; they are open and willing to share information.
> People understand. There is tolerance for new people.
> There's a supportive atmosphere [. . .]

As they speak, Ellen makes encouraging sounds and lists key phrases on the chart: "profit; not ruthless; humane; respect; open; share info; tolerance; supportive."

When the sheet is full, she pulls it off the flipchart, pastes it to the wall, and says: "This is what makes Tech a different kind of place. People are relaxed and informal. What else?" Someone says: "There is little difference between engineers and managers;

it's hard to tell them apart." "Authority Not a Big Deal," she writes in bold letters on the flip chart. Then she adds: "In other places you're incompetent till proved otherwise; here it's the other way around, right?"

Not waiting for an answer, she writes "Confidence in Competence," and says: "They know what they are doing, or believe it." "A little too much," the guy sitting next to me whispers to his neighbor [. . .].

Ellen turns to the flip chart, writes "We Are A Family," and says:

This is the most important one. We have a no-layoff policy. It's the ultimate backup plan. It would break some people's hearts if we had to do it. We face it as a family: cutting costs, hiring freezes. Every member is asked to contribute.

A young woman from corporate who has been silent so far bursts out in a concerned, almost angry tone:

I work in corporate. A lot of the stuff is only a myth there. I see the very high up people fighting to the death. There is no clear person with the last word. They bounce responsibility around.

She starts to give an example from a well-known failed project, but Ellen interrupts her rather brusquely:

Tech isn't wonderful or glowing. It's not. It's human. But it's the best I've seen! I was a nomad before I came here. I'm sorry you haven't seen the rest of the companies so you can appreciate Tech. (Pause). That is another thing about Tech. People are quick to point out faults, as if they didn't have any. Where I worked before there was rampant empire building. Tech is much better. We are a state-of-the-art pioneer. There is great love and great criticism of the company (Kunda, 2006, pp. 109-12).

The instructor wins more and more ground with every minute of the meeting. As the following excerpt suggests, the session ends with a total success:

The emotional intensity of the module's conclusion [. . .] seems to captivate all the participants. Ellen flips off the viewgraph, puts down the marker, and gives a short talk that sounds off-the-record, very personal, almost motherly.

There is a down side to all of this! There can be a lot of pain in the system! Be careful; keep a balance; don't overdo it, don't live off vending machines for a year. (Laughter.) You'll burn out. I've been there; I lived underground for a year, doing code. Balance your life. Don't say: "I'll work like crazy for four years, then I'll get married." I heard this from a kid. But who will he marry? Don't let the company suck you dry; after nine or ten hours your work isn't worth much anyway.

The sudden switch to a subversive-sounding message creates an air of rapt attention. All eyes are on her as she walks slowly from the flipchart to the center of the room. After a brief pause, she adds the finishing touch: "What kind of company do you think allows me to be saying these things to you?" Nobody stirs for a few moments, and then a break is called (Kunda, 2006, pp. 112-13).

The event, on the face of it, is a familiar scene to those aware of recent advances in corporate socialization efforts: a corporate trainer uses the tried and true method of group interaction, coupled with the trendy language of corporate culture to convey to members the requirements of life at Tech, the rules supposedly understood and incorporated by most of their fellow workers (or at least the more successful among them). In this sense, such activities should be evaluated by the extent to which

participants ultimately accept the rules and use them as the basis for constructing and enacting a stable, managerially approved identity in the context of work.

There is more to this brief drama, however, than such a straightforward interpretation suggests. A close examination reveals a fundamental paradox built into the event. On the one hand, the event itself indicates to participants that the company offers them an opportunity to accomplish a mature, adult identity – becoming "good corporate citizens" in an environment where "competence is assumed" and "authority is not a big deal." Moreover, the event itself is framed as an instance of such "mature" interaction: a group of peers openly exchanging their views on the company. However, when the opinions expressed differ from the corporate perspective, participants are immediately cast in the role of infants. Participants are treated as an undifferentiated group who are not only to be educated, but shaped in the manner of children: taught values, motives, and appropriate attitudes, rebuked when necessary and encouraged where appropriate. Thus, the company through its spokespersons is presented as an adult entity; yet, the way of joining this supposedly adult world of serious work is by submitting to a form of interaction that is in essence its opposite.

One way in which this paradox is acknowledged and seemingly tolerated, if not resolved, is through irony. Although participants were asked – in no uncertain terms – to express a wholehearted identification with what supposedly constitutes a paradigm of mature membership, at the same time they were also taught legitimate ways in which to distance themselves from it. Thus, the humorous or quiet reference by participants to the way things "really are" is acceptable, even appreciated behavior. More significantly, the trainer herself steps out of role temporarily and assumes an ironic stance *vis-à-vis* her own words – culture is a "fad," the company might "suck its employees dry." Thus, trainers and trainees construct and break frames in a manner that at once defines and undermines the authenticity of the reality being negotiated and the experiences it engenders. What is learned, then, is a different order of experience than that assumed by straightforward socialization theory: it is a world of "unstable ironies" (Booth, 1974) – a world of mirrors and shifting realities where a stable boundary between reality and irony is no longer tenable, and implications of infantilization seemingly lose their punch. Yet, even within this ironic world, the process of infantilization may be detected: ironic references by trainees are framed as childish, those of the trainer as adult. Moreover, irony itself is structured: ironical references are co-opted in the name of the corporate interest and used to illustrate the benignity of its parental authority; and, most significantly, overstepping the boundaries of legitimate irony is publicly and forcefully reprimanded.

Thus, the theme of infantilization proves resilient: it not only withstands the relentless attack of irony but also leashes it in its own cause. The salience of this theme could be attributed to the entry stage of organizational life shared by participants in the workshop; metaphorically, at least, they are indeed neophytes in terms of organizational standards. However, as the following examples, drawn from our second case, suggest, infantilization is an inherent attribute of socialization at later stages of membership as well[3].

Partying with the company
Although courses with similar contents are organized also in Swedish organizations (often by direct imitation of US models), this is not the main way "culture" is shaped.

The more typical seem to be various "company parties" – social events organized and paid for by the employer, especially frequent in the period before summer holidays and before Christmas. Three such events will be discussed. The first is described in fieldnotes from an observation of a company party in Northern Town's Social Insurance Office:

We are in the attic of a building done in national romantic style. The place is full of voices, laughter and warm lights. Most present are women. We are sitting eight people at a table. At the table behind my back sit the members of the Board of Directors. The Office Manager sits at my table. It is difficult to talk because there is so much noise but I seem to be the only one who has this problem. After all, the noise is the result of the fact that everyone talks. I try to shout across the table: "How is it to work with so many women?" "Splendid," says the Manager. "It is so easy to talk! Men use to sit stiffly and toast now and then." To demonstrate what he means he raises his glass and addresses a man sitting at a neighboring table. The man raises his glass and bows, somewhat stiffly.

One of the Directors gets up and proposes that we all sing a song. She sends the Chair of the Board to the car to get a songbook and after a while we all sing *Väl mött här igen* and *På vår balkong* (two popular Swedish children songs). My neighbor at the table explains to me that the Director used to teach in elementary school. Now it is time for the Chair of the Board to give a speech. The speech begins with an assurance that all in the present company share so much together and care for each other and ends with a wish that this sharing and caring could be extended to the clients (with a clear implication that it is not). This insinuation causes a sudden silence, then a growing hum of resentment. A woman at my table says, to nobody in particular but high enough to be heard by almost everybody: "And what do you think we are doing all day long at our insurance office?"

The embarrassment ends by the announcement of the entertainment to come. A talented and sarcastically minded group of young musicians presents parodies, which well fit the atmosphere. They get enthusiastic applauses, which thin somewhat at the board table. The Directors applaud some, bow gracefully and go home. Now it is time to dance (Fieldnotes, BC).

A different kind of entertainment was provided when all the employees of Big City Municipality celebrated "Personnel Days." Here, is the description (in an interview) by one object of this entertaining effort:

We were to be there [in Big City's most representative public hall] at 17.00 and after food and presentations we expected a performance at 19.00. Most people were there on time, in party moods. It was 17.00 but the doors were closed. They opened somewhat later, which meant that around 13,500 people tried to get in at the same time. There was, of course, a jam. I came around 18.00 and saw the incredibly long food lines. It was impossible to move in the corridors, so there we stood, almost immobile, for almost an hour, to get finally a dried-up sandwich and a glass of Coke. At the same time, we were given a cake and a cup of coffee, and we were expected to balance all this while standing. I forgot to mention that at the entrance we got a present – umbrellas with the emblem of the City[4]. It does not make it easier to have to hold this blasted umbrella in one hand while trying to eat standing. Naturally, people looked for solution and the most obvious was to put some of the load on some kind of a counter. It so happens that the only accessible counters were those where all the departments presented their achievements. I don't think anybody could – or wanted to – see anything of it. At the very best, only the one where you put your coffee, because it was impossible to circulate in the corridors, as it was planned [. . .]

Finally, we got into the hall to watch the entertainment. It was everything possible in heavens and on earth, and very pretentious at that. I saw it from the outside on a screen,

as I was eating this blasted sandwich and could not get in on time. But there were many artists and performers of all possible kinds. Naturally, it was rather long. The event was supposed to end at 20.30 and this was when the people started to go out as they had their families waiting in the car or had a train to catch. I remained until the end, which was around 21.40, an hour and 10 minutes longer than planned. Not that it was of any importance for the spectacle, but most of the public left when planned [...] (Fieldnotes, BC)

In these public sector organizations, infantilization is the main theme of the events as well. The employer, through the events arranged ostensibly to entertain and reward the employees, shows nonchalance and lack of respect by treating them as children: in the first case, through silly children songs sung on command but mostly through a teacher-like moralistic attitude; in the second, by ruining the organizational side of the big event as if showing "you will take all this because we do it for you." It is not so much clever indoctrination through symbolic events of the sort described by Rosen (2002), as a general attitude of paternalism and ostensible lack of confidence in adult people's possibilities of making choices (especially negative choices) and in their requirements as to the level of entertainment.

Infantilization, in short, is central to managerial conception and execution of the parties, and participants seem helplessly, if resentfully swept along. However, the following example – of an event arranged by employees themselves for themselves, suggests that infantilization is not unilaterally imposed:

> A girl[5] requested to be moved from the central (social insurance) office to one of the local offices. We remembered then that we have those so-called "personnel care" money, around SEK 100 per head. Somebody had the idea to surprise the girl on her last day here and transport her to the new place. We got in touch with the local office and it turned out that there was another girl there who was going to quit and so we decided to join the two events.
>
> When the day has come we collected the girl who did not know a thing. She should be going home and thought she was offered a usual ride but she got a hint when she noticed that we were driving towards the village where she was supposed to work. When we came there, the whole staff welcomed her with balloons and god knows what. It was lovely, it was very funny and very touching, and then they took the other girl, the one who was to quit, and put on her this incredible hat [...] It turned out they also hired one of those veteran cars, you know, like the one that Donald Duck has, where his nephews, Huey, Luey and Duey are sometimes allowed to seat in this little backseat. They drove the two girls around the village, and then to a restaurant where we all had a meal together. This is what I call a good use of personnel money. (Fieldnotes, BC).

Here, we see the employees getting with gusto into a childish play, making themselves into children (although women are in general infantilized much more often) and, at least as related here, enjoying it. We encounter here a paradoxical phenomenon: infantilization, yes, but is it not demanded and accepted? There are at least two ways of dealing with the paradox. One is "resolving" it by introducing a reconciliatory assumption (Hofstadter, 1980), for instance, that this is simply a case of failed personal performances (on the part of the two directors) or, from the opposite ideological perspective, that the last report was provided unreflectively and does not have to be representative for anybody else in the group in question.

Such interpretations are certainly possible. We prefer, however, to preserve the paradox and consider it a typical phenomenon. Even if single instances which we quoted might be interpreted in many ways, we claim that the process of socialization is

marked by infantilization which is both opposed and helped and enjoyed by the targeted actors; both ironized and taken in the earnest. In short, ingrained in the ideology and practice of socialization in modern organizations are two opposing categories – maturity and immaturity – between which members construct their experience of organizational life. In order to further explore the interplay of these categories, we turn to the work of two novelists whose work, we feel, lays bare the dynamics of socialization in modern settings: Witold Gombrowicz and Robert Musil.

The daemon of immaturity

The interplay between the individual and social and the conflict between the dream of maturity and the daemon of immaturity are at the center of works of Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969), a Polish writer retrieved from obscurity by the recent reflection on Modernity. Our attention was directed to him by Pierre Guillet de Monthoux (1992), who called Gombrowicz "a practical philosopher of organizational existentialism."

The hero of *Ferdydurke*, 30-years old Józio, is a writer, who at the outset of the book deliberates on the battle between maturity and immaturity, as it is played outside and inside him. It is hard to imagine somebody more a social constructionist than Józio. There is, practically speaking, no "outside" and "inside" of Józio – he lives through all the epoch provides, and he himself is but a site, albeit a very energetic one. In one of many fragments of social theorizing that abound in the book, Gombrowicz said that:

> We think that we are constructing – it is an illusion, equally well the construction constructs us. What you have written dictates what you write, the work does not come from you, you wanted to write this, and you wrote something very different (p. 77[6]).

Józio (a diminutive for Joseph; a child's name but, in the Polish culture, preserved among friends all one's life) perceives Maturity as both attractive and politically opportune; the adults, he claims, can accept any rebellion if it is on their terms:

> No fright for them, a revolutionary who fights one mature ideal with another, equally mature and, for instance, demolishes a Monarchy with a Republic in sight or, the other way around, gnaws at a Republic with a Monarchy and finally devours it. To the contrary, they watch with a great pleasure how this sublime, mature business develops (p. 16).

They hate the immature, which reminds them of the choice already made, of an alternative already rejected. Therefore, they reach for cunning tricks to control it, of which the most cunning is infantilization – keeping immaturity intact. Józio is visited by Prof. Pimko, a philology teacher, who represents "the Form, so frighteningly conventionalized and totally trivialized," whose aim is to drag Józio from his thorny road to maturity, which goes through his writing, to the world of eternal immaturity. He puts Józio into the sixth grade of the elementary school where the process of diminution will continue. And the methods are daemonic indeed. Pimko scolds a teacher who complains that his pupils are not innocent and naive enough:

> I will show you how to stimulate naïveté. I bet you I will double the dose of naïveté in half an hour! This is my plan: I will start observing the pupils and, in most naive ways, I will let them know that I see them as innocent and naive. This will naturally enrage them, they will do all to prove that they aren't naive, and this is when they will truly end up in this innocence and naïveté so sweet to us, the educators! (p. 27).

Pimko completely succeeds in his plan: the pupils naively accept his challenge and divide into a group that defends innocence and a group that attacks it – the dialectics of diminution, as it is called. The fight continues, bringing fatalities (which prove how deadly serious all children's play is). The efforts to quit the game, change its rules, or withdraw are put to end by the teachers, in whose hands convention is a deadly weapon. The ideal school puts together infantile youth with infantile senility and cuts them out of the world, which is then open for the adults to act upon. And the world is slowly conquered by the Modern, who are always younger than anybody else, not infants, but teenagers, or eternally young, a completely new invention. Here, is modernity, as represented by the schoolgirl:

> Youth was for her not an interim age – youth to her, the modern, constituted the only proper period in human life – *she detested immaturity or, rather, immaturity was for a her a maturity* – she rejected the beards, the moustaches, nursing women and mothers with children – thus her magic power. Her youth needed no ideals because it was an ideal to itself (p. 140).

And so it goes. At one level, probably lost on a foreigner, *Ferdydurke* is a *roman a cléf*, describing Poland between the wars – its traditional political, educational, and cultural system in convulsions of modernization; all this, however, reverberating the same problems elsewhere, the same solutions in other countries. At another level, however, the book documents dilemmas that are more visible now than at the time when the book was written: the fight between immaturity and maturity. Infantilization is cast as a safety measure against paradigm changes and atemporal youth is seen as the modern solution.

In the crevices and cracks of his totalizing irony, Gombrowicz permits us a glimpse of what he sees as a preferable alternative. The revolution he recommends is a great retreat: humanity stepping aside to have a look at what is happening to it. This will lead to the demise of the form: a personality, an adult, a writer, a manager, and, of course, an employee will all appear as temporary clothes. The "soft human hand" must beat into the "steel armory of the Form" for:

> [...] the humans to flee their rigidity and to be able to reconcile the form with the lack of it, the law and the anarchy, the maturity and the eternal, holy immaturity (p. 91).

This serious manifesto immediately demonstrates its own point by degenerating into a question concerning the best ways of eating ripe pears; Gombrowicz the clown ridicules Gombrowicz the preacher. But even this has a justification, since "a conscious ridicule, a ridicule that becomes the central problem of life, is not as shameful as a ridicule that unwittingly shows from behind the collar" (p. 285). In Gombrowicz's cosmology, socialization as formation – making people the victims of form – leads only to tragedy or to ridicule. An alternative is a preemptive espousal of paradoxes in place of the attempts to "solve" them.

Kundera (1986, p. 141) called *Ferdydurke* "the most dazzling demythification of the archetype of the modern" and Gombrowicz one of the major representatives of "antimodern modernism," "the modernism that is *antilyrical*, antiromantic, skeptical, critical" (Kundera, 1986, p. 141). Giddens (1990) would have called it a self-reflective modernism. The mainstream organizational literature of both ideological orientations is, on the other hand, an offshoot of lyrical modernism. However, the people whom we have observed in the ethnographic passages-innocent, most probably, of decadent

literary influences – seem to have nevertheless adopted the ironist prescription when confronted with the tyranny of the form. But to what effect? To learn this, we turn to the work of Robert Musil.

The product of our times

The ironic alternative to infantilization prescribed by Gombrowicz found an embodiment in Ulrich – Musil's *Man without Qualities*. Called sometimes "Ullo" by his friends, a faint trace of his Józio-like past, Ulrich:

> [. . .] is the human type that our time has produced [. . .] Just look at him! What would you take him for? [. . .] You can't guess at any profession from what he looks like, and yet he does not look like a man who has no profession, either [. . .] let him have all these qualities! For in the end he hasn't got them at all! They have made him what he is, they set his course for him, and yet they don't belong to him. When he is angry, something in him laughs – when he is sad, he is up to something [. . .] Every bad action will seem good to him in some connection or other. And it will always be only a possible context that will decide what he thinks of a thing (Musil, Vol. 1, 1930, pp. 70-1).

Ulrich is the ultimate product of modernity: a man who can step back and observe, and who, by taking irony to its logical conclusion, has acquired an incurable relativism which makes him also a mortal enemy of Modernity. While Józio still remained imprisoned in the world he observed, in a fashion of somebody who in spirit watches his body from above, Ulrich travels lightly between realities. Ulrich represents all these non-qualities that constitute a modern identity: self-esteem, effectiveness, autonomy and lack of long-term commitment (Meyer, 1986).

This is both an ideal of a corporate employee and its nightmare version: a Frankenstein of modernity. As the example of Tech amply suggests, it is just such "corporate citizens" that are produced by organizational socialization, seeking to inculcate the traditional qualities of authority, dependence, loyalty, and commitment:

> The engineers of culture see the ideal member as driven by strong beliefs and intense emotions, authentic experiences of loyalty, commitment, and the pleasure of work. Yet they seem to produce members who have internalized ambiguity, who have made the metaphor of drama a centerpiece of their sense of self, who question the authenticity of all beliefs and emotions, and who find irony in its various forms the dominant mode of everyday existence (Kunda, 2006, p. 216).

If these are the citizens, how then are we to view their culture? We may find Musil's answer in his depiction of the collateral campaign which, appropriately updated, could be called a project, a taskforce, a network or all of the above. Within this project, it was Diotima, the epitome of "exalted bureaucracy" who was in charge of socialization, and, indeed, her "at-homes" resemble culture courses at Tech[7]:

> [. . .] all such enforced sociability [. . .] does spring from a need to create the illusion of a human unity embracing humanity's extremely varied activities, a unity that in fact never exists. This illusion Diotima called "culture," and usually, with a special amplification, "our old Austrian culture" (p. 115).

Like Musil's Austria, corporate culture is also a unity that in fact never exists. The core of the modern corporation is not, as it has been postulated for a long time, its integrated bureaucratic rationality, but a fragmented mix of rational and traditional values, mores, and actions (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992). Complex organizations are characterized by a

modern design and a postmodern implementation, a flickering patchwork of tradition, charisma, and rationality. They are secular and religious, cynical and moralistic, orderly and chaotic, tyrannical and democratic – above all, paradoxical. Paradoxicality is this non-quality that, earlier on, when modernity was young and aggressive, was called "uncertainty" and was to be made extinct by information (Shenhav, 1994). Now, when modernity is ageing and becoming humbler, paradoxicality has been renamed "ambiguity" and begins to enjoy a half-legitimate status.

In such a fragmented world, unity is desired and sought after. Culture might not be a consistent thought world but it is presented as such. This takes place in the realm of ideas, and the mass media acquire a crucial role in this representational unification. Plato himself, claimed Musil:

> [...] would take a newspaper office to be that *topos uranios*, that heavenly realm of ideas, of whose existence he wrote in such detail and so impressively that even nowadays all the better sort of people are idealists when talking to their children or employees (Musil, Vol. 2, 1932, p. 25).

This ironic phrase puts together the world of ideas, the way they are propagated, and their usual recipients: "children or employees." By diacritical reversal[8], we can see it as contrasted to the world of things, the ways they are transported and the reality-bound "adults and employers" who possess them. The two worlds actually permeate each other in the reality of everyday life: ideas are produced, bought, and sold in "storehouses and stock exchanges" of mass media, said Musil, whereas things acquire symbolic meaning. Socialization, however, as a specific organizational function, separates ideas and things, meaning and action, in order to be able to remain in the safe realm of ideas. We come then to another paradox: the introduction to the "real world" (of things, practices and adults) takes place only by staying in a world of ideas, theories and children. In the self-conscious world of engineered cultures, however, these ideas assume the concrete form of socializing practices and the living texts they enact; consequently the distinction between the real and the ideal begins to collapse. Another term has been coined to denote a world that physically expresses ideas – hyperreality (Eco, 1986).

There are two main reasons why we use Eco's essay in the final section of our paper. One is that the concept of "hyperreality" helps to understand the paradoxicality of socialization situations. The other is an analogy between the interpretative processes constituting our paper and his essay. Eco undertook a travel to another culture with an implicit purpose to judge; during the trip, this purpose become explicit at the same time as it became challenged. The purpose has become: to learn. This learning, interestingly enough, concerned his own culture as much (or maybe more) as the other culture that he set out to explore. What happen to us was very much the same, so let us have a closer look at possible analogies.

Excursions into hyperreality

> To speak of things that one wants to connote as real, these things must seem real. The "completely real" becomes identified with the "completely false." Absolute unreality is offered as a real presence [...] The sign aims to be the thing, to abolish the distinction of the reference, the mechanism of replacement (Eco, 1986, p. 7).

Eco's (1986, p. 8) "journey into hyperreality" was described as a "search of instances where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must

fabricate the absolute fake". But is there an analogy between such a journey and organizational socialization events? In what ways can they be seen as "excursions into hyperreality"?

The most obvious similarity is their educational goal: Eco visited, among others, the Museum of the City of New York, Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, Hearst Castle and, of course, various lands of Disney. What struck him was that while traditional pedagogy uses models and imitations, it also insists on holding a strict limit between "reality" and "imitation." In hyperreality, like in a modern organization, blurring the edge is one of the main educational methods: you are not learning about reality, you are learning reality. The instructor in Tech's "culture session" encourages the participants to perform this equation: the course is not "about Tech culture," it is Tech culture, "the real thing."

Maybe, then, it should be seen as a case of applied synecdoche: socialization, after all, is a part of organizational reality, a part through which one is supposed to learn the whole. But the point is that, like in the Ripley's Wax Museum, "reproductions" exist on *a par* with "creations" ("the thing is real even if, like Alice in Wonderland, it never existed"; Eco, 1986, p. 16). At Tech, indeed, everyday life was saturated with reflexive interpretations; engaging with them – both straightforwardly and ironically-is a sign of successful membership. Similarly, although it is doubtful whether the employees of social insurance offices spend their working days singing children songs together, by actually performing the act, they create a reality that is supposed to represent another, which might have existed only as a wish or an idea. And, like the seven versions of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* that Eco saw on his trip, the pedagogical versions of reality are in a much better shape than the original. Or else, they unwittingly imitate the original even in its faultiness, like in the case of "Personnel Days in Big City"; from intended metaphors they turn into unintended similes – "the real thing."

Disneyland is for Eco "America's Sistine Chapel": it boldly creates hyperreality and admits it, creates a literal (commercial) reality and admits this, too, blending everything in a breathtaking merry-go-round. In doing all this, it also accentuates the specific role of its customers/actors. While in all the previous cases it was clear that hyperreality is for children or child-like adults (tourists), the complexity of Disneyland demands a "total passivity" – "its visitors must agree to behave like its robots" (Eco, 1986, p. 48).

Although Eco insists on the all-American character of Disneyland, we know from recent studies that Disneyland has become an export product (Van Maanen and Laurent, 1993). What significance, then, has the "American imagination" for Eco's definition? He contrasts "American" with "European," but this is no sweeping generalization or "cross-cultural comparison"-stuff. To begin with, much of the hyperreality construction concerns the "European past" reproduced for those US citizens who will never be able to make a pilgrimage to their roots. Second, although the adjective "American" should be qualified down to "North American" and preferably "USA" (Eco imitates a common European use of the word), this is by no means the summary of "US culture." It is "this America" as contrasted to many other Americas – to the America of snobs and connoisseurs and the museum of modern art, to the America of rebels and ironists, of Tom Lehrer and Tom Wolfe – in other words, this is only and specifically the "hyperreal America." After such a specification has been made, it is actually easy to see its close parallel in the old European "fabrication of genuinity," that gave us the marble

white Greek statues to admire, even though it is well known that originally they were polychromic and most likely "kitschy" according to the modern taste. And so, says Eco (1986, p. 35), "our journey into the Absolute Fake, begun in the spirit of irony and sophisticated repulsion, is now exposing us to some dramatic questions".

Like Eco's, our journey into hyperreality also leads to self-reflection and to some dramatic questions concerning our subject matter: organizational socialization and its experiential consequences. Our observations of socialization practices were made in cultures (initially) alien to us (USA and Sweden); our reactions, therefore, say as much about the cultural forms we observed as about those we left behind (Israel and Poland). Groping for names, we used the categories of "innocence" and "irony" to contrast what we found and where we came from; we soon noticed that the labels could be easily reversed. No longer aliens or natives – "in the field" or "at home" – we now find it more appropriate to ask: ironic in what? Innocent in what? We realize that, like Eco who spoke of "the America of hyperreality," we are also speaking only of "the USA and Sweden of organizational socialization." Both irony and innocence are abundantly present in US and Swedish organizations. We must therefore ask ourselves what we mean by "ironic cultures." Rorty defines "an ironist" as follows:

- She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies.

- She realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts.

- Insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself (Rorty, 1989, p. 73).

So defined, irony is found in multiple layers in not only intellectual but also everyday speech typical of our cultures: relativizing what is said by facial expression or by metacommentaries leads to loops where not even the speaker can distinguish direct speech anymore. If we choose to see the habit of irony as a historical sediment, in analogy to the "European past" as the source of the American hyperreality, this habit appears as a reaction to a proliferation of ideologies in the past, ideologies that not only did not try to imitate or fake reality, but proudly rejected it. Musil's Collateral Campaign, spiritual to the point of being void of any concrete ideas, is its ultimate, absurd realization. But the adoption of irony and the renunciation of qualities does not lead to immunity from ideology: every ironic culture has a potential for innocence upon which old or new ideologies may thrive; and every innocent culture is a breeding ground for various forms of irony. In this sense, there are no cultures; there are only labels that we coin for pragmatic uses and in which we, and others, invest our real and symbolic resources.

We have come full circle. The hyperreal infantocracy is the embodiment of modern socialization, inseparably tied yet fundamentally opposed to the idealistic vision of Ferdydurkian maturity, which it espouses. The literary insights of Gombrowicz and Musil suggest or warn that the ultimate realization of a dream leads to its opposite: the idealistic dream of the modern produced a person without qualities and a world of hyperreality. Some call this world "postmodern." This label, in turn, is challenged by others who use expressions like amodern, premodern, or antimodern. We have never been modern, assured us Latour (1993). And self-assured claims to the contrary need a

measure of irony – to prevent their collapse into just one more instance of intellectual hyperreality.

Notes

1. The traditional participant observation was replaced by "observant participation,", i.e. organizational actors describing their activities in repeated contact with the researcher who collected their stories. The purpose was to be able to grasp the functioning of whole constellation of organization, a task which is impossible for a single observer (Czarniawska, 2007).

2. A fictitious name of the company's president.

3. As demonstrated in the Tech case, infantilization is not restricted to the formal socialization of new employees; similar types of group interactions are a ubiquitous part of daily life for most employees.

4. Umbrellas had a straight handle, so it was impossible to hang them on one's arm.

5. This is a story from lower levels in the organizational hierarchy, where all women are "girls" (they say it even of themselves). "Women" begin at executive levels, and sometimes figure in more formal utterances (where, however, they might also turn into "ladies").

6. The quotes are from Gombrowicz (1982), translated by BC. The English edition omits many parts of the original, some of which are quoted here.

7. We see it as coincidence that both of the "culture instructors" were women. Not so Musil, whose male chauvinist froth drips over 1,200 pages of the book.

8. Which assumes, after Sausurre, that what is said acquires a meaning also from what remains unsaid (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

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Post scriptum: managerial rhetoric and narrative legitimacies

The present post scriptum has been added by the undersigned upon receiving the last text, which differs from the previous ones in origins if not in theme and theoretical thrust. When I had approached Deirdre McCloskey and Barbara Czarniawska asking for their papers from Barcelona conference, it turned out that Barbara has already offered her paper to the *Scandinavian Journal of Management* and thus could not oblige. I did not call it a day but persisted, which got me nowhere with Deirdre[1], but somewhere with Barbara. She has namely suggested a paper which she had written with Gideon Kunda on organizational enculturation in infantocracies. I became quickly drawn by their argument, which is fascinating for someone who has always been interested in cynicism and the critique of cynical reason, in the dialectic of the corporate propaganda clashing with the slow discovery and gradual internalization of real ropes and hints lurking beneath the surface of managerial rituals.

As usual, the reconstructions of the "real life" case of a US "boot camp" or of a Swedish "company party" offer a guide to surprising willingness of mature adult individuals to accept their "infantilization" as liberation from pre-organized anxieties and fears. After all, Orwell's *Animal Farm* might be prompted by Stalin's thugs, but "1984" had more to do with his work for the British war propaganda. Victims of the Stalinist show trials in Moscow of the 1930s might have been infantilized into public acknowledgment of their non-existent crimes and sinister links with the most exotic spy networks. But victims of contemporary HRM indoctrination are not less infantile and absurd in their declarations of self-fulfillment and personal growth through harder work and more efficient exploitation of potential competitive advantages. Czarniawska and Kunda try to see these infantile disorders of mature employees through the mirror of three literary documents. The first is fairly obvious: entire oeuvre of Witold Gombrowicz, who died in the Summer of 1969, incidentally losing his chance of being awarded a Nobel Prize in literature (he was very close, second in line around 1969 I believe), is devoted to the "daemon of immaturity." Czarniawska and Kunda select Gombrowicz's first novel, *Ferdydurke*, published in 1937, but they could have equally well relied on later novels (especially *Trans-Atlantic* or *Pornography*), theatre plays (*The Wedding* or *Operette*) or even essays tout court (*Diaries 1953-1969* are all disguised ongoing essay-streamings).

As Czarniawska and Kunda sum it up:

> In Gombrowicz's cosmology, socialization as formation – making people victims of Form – leads only to tragedy or to ridicule. An alternative is a preemptive espousal of paradoxes in place of attempts to solve them.

Awesome and true. This is what you get when humanist upbringing demands ethical table manners from social scientists. More Gombrowicz, less F.B. Skinner. More Nabokov, less E.O. Wilson. More Pynchon, less ... oh, well, let us leave something to the imagination of our readers. The only objection I would have, could be directed at the introductory remark that Gombrowicz had to be retrieved from obscurity by recent reflection on "Modernity." Well, he had been not so obscure since his return from

Argentina to Europe and certainly not during his self-imposed "exile" in Vence (close to St Paul de Vence, Grasse, cote d'Azure and the rest of the mythological paradise for the European high arts). Thus, the modernist retrieval found him rather before "recently." For instance, late Susan Sontag thought it necessary to include him in the portable Pantheon for a committed public intellectual, admiring him as a zealous administrator of his own legend, a skill she was no stranger to herself ("The head commands, or wishes to. The buttocks reign," in: *Where the Stress Falls*. The essay on Gombrowicz dates back to 2000). Dominique Roux allowed him to engineer his greatness in post-existentialist cultural climates by conducting a supreme interview, quite reprintable in many languages. Last not least, the extraordinary Polish cultural center of the emigre literary monthly *Kultura* in Paris, which meant he had been speaking to his native audiences and to their emergent future elites above the fences of the communist cenzorship. Relative marginalization, perhaps. Obscurity, no.

The choice of Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*[2] follows in the footsteps of *Ferdydurke* – because Ulrich is a result of an all too successful socialization into corporate citizenship (and thus neither can oppose the authority even if illegitimate, which makes him lukewarm as a potential rebel, nor can embrace it, if just and desirable, which makes him unstable as a fan and supporter). It is astonishing how little do we look into the most serious diagnoses of the "spiritual situation of our times" in order to understand what we agree to in our infantile organizational communications, with branding, logos, totems, primitive worship, scandalous sacrifices and other forms of la "pensee sauvage" in our formally educated brains. This is the world in which Plato would look for the CNN or Fox as the realms of true ideas, whose faint echo on millions of individual screens in dark and DJ sound-filled spaces somehow re-enact the idea that the dark Platonian caves will never allow hungry masses to emancipate themselves and to drink from the very eternal source of *Truth, Goodness and Beauty*.

Umberto Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality* complete the Polish-Austrian-Italian trio, leading Czarniawska and Kunda to the conclusion that:

> [. . .] there are no cultures, there are only labels that we coin for pragmatic uses and in which we, and others, invest our real and symbolic resources.

A strong statement, and one well worth discussing. Let us.

Slawomir Magala
Rotterdam, December 2009

Notes

1. Not quite. We had traded books – she's got my *Management of Meaning in Organizations*, while I walked away with her *Bourgeois Values* (hers was a thicker volume, but mine was a more expensive book, so fair trade label is probably sustainable). However, no paper. Tough.

2. Incidentally, I owe my early contact with Musil's wonderful four volumes about the Austro-Hungarian Kakania to the Cold War. All students of state socialist countries were supposed to spend half a day a week in a rather boring civilian defense class, where retired army officers told us what to do if a nuclear bomb explodes nearby. I managed to get through Musil, Proust, Tolstoy, Thomas Mann and the autobiography of Bertrand Russel until we went to the shooting alley to practice shooting skills. Perhaps, we should reintroduce boring civilian defense to the contemporary curriculum? After all, David Foster Wallace suggested boredom as the ultimate remedy against addiction to ads and substances (in *The Pale King* about IRS office, which – as of the present writing – still has to be published).

Book review

The Cost of Bad Behavior: How Incivility is Damaging Your Business and What to Do about It
Christine Pearson and Christine Porath
The Penguin Group
New York, NY
2009
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The incivility phenomenon

We live in uncivil times. Evidence of growing incivility is all around us, from road rage to presidential hecklers. Business in the USA also has an incivility problem. According to authors, Christine Pearson and Christine Porath, workplace incivility is at the top of the list of economic drains on American business. Unfortunately, the problem is getting worse. Their research shows, for example, that in 1998, 25 percent of the workforce they polled had been treated rudely at least once per week. By 2005, that number had risen to almost 50 percent (p. 3).

The two professors (Thunderbird School of Global Management and Marshall School of Business, respectively) have written an important work; one that stands out in the flood of books providing guidance on how to improve organizational performance through employee trust and engagement. The authors have done three important things: they detail the incivility phenomenon (Chapters 1-4); they describe the costs of incivility and demonstrate how the costs of incivility can be estimated (Chapters 5-11); and they offer a wide range of solutions to the problem (Chapters 12-17).

Their work's primary benefit is the new and extensive research it brings to bear. Their study spans ten years and includes interviews, surveys, observations, and workshops with people from all levels of organizations in the USA. In sum, over 9,000 people contributed perceptions, insights, and recommendations. Their work builds on what Robert Sutton, author of an earlier work on the subject of incivility, calls "a big pile of scholarly research." (Sutton, 2007, p. 27). From bullying studies of students and teachers, to surveys in various work environments such as retail stores, airlines, hospitals, and government offices, the stories and data on incivility leave no doubt that we have a serious problem.

The nature and manifestations of incivility

So what is incivility? Pearson and Porath define incivility as "the exchange of seemingly inconsequential, inconsiderate words and deeds that violate conventional norms of workplace conduct" (p. 12). They note that incivility is a subjective phenomenon that ultimately comes down to how a given action makes a person feel (p. 12). I found Sutton's test for detecting incivility more complete and more useful as a means of determining whether incivility exists than Pearson and Porath's. The first test in Sutton's book comes down to whether or not a person feels worse about himself after interaction with another

person (Sutton, 2007, p. 9). Pearson and Porarth's definition is more limiting in its focus on violation of conventional norms.

The manifestations of incivility that Pearson and Porath cite are wide ranging and include:

- failing to return phone calls or respond to e-mails;
- checking e-mail during meetings;
- not listening;
- withholding information;
- talking down to others;
- taking credit for the efforts of others;
- shutting someone out of a network or team;
- belittling the efforts of others;
- passing blame for their mistakes;
- spreading rumors about colleagues; and
- setting others up for failure (Chapter 1).

Their discussion of the manifestations of incivility did not provide the depth this reviewer was looking for. Not all incivilities are equal. Not returning a phone call is at one end of the spectrum and setting others up for failure at the other end. Given the depth and breadth of their field research, I expected to see some type of analytic framework to help make sense of the many manifestations of incivility. A simple framework might start with dividing incivility into seen vs unseen (i.e. behind my back). Another set of parameters could be words vs actions. And yet another might be acts of commission vs omission.

A simple framework would facilitate the exploration of critical questions such as:

- What are the predominant types of incivility?
- Is there a link between root causes of incivility and the types of incivility?
- Which types of incivility have the greatest negative impact?
- Where should leaders focus their efforts in rebuilding and sustaining a civil culture?

Creating such a framework can help guide further research. For example, one of the most powerful yet subtle forms of incivility might be the ultimate act of omission: pure neglect. How often, as coaches and consultants, do we hear stories about bosses who have little to no contact with their employees? This reviewer recalls a senior coaching client who said that his direct supervisor – a partner in a well-known management consulting firm – had not answered any of his e-mails in over a month.

Pearson and Porath provide us with some valuable insights into the nature of incivility. For example, 60 percent of the offenders have a higher job status than the recipients (p. 15). Men are twice as likely to be an offender (p. 20). Offenders are generally half-a-dozen years older than their targets (p. 21). What I had hoped to see was a macro view of the problem. Specifically, are there any patterns around industry type, size of organization, structure (e.g. hierarchical), or culture (e.g. companies with behavioral norms and espoused values around respect)?

The cost and impact of incivility

The authors argue that the costs of incivility can be estimated. The authors walk us through a detailed calculation method used by CISCO (Chapter 3). The estimate is based on quantifying the scope and impact of the following effects resulting from incivility:

- loss of work time worrying;
- loss of work time avoiding the offender;
- price for weakened sense of commitment;
- price for intentionally reducing their efforts;
- decrease in time spent at work;
- loss of work time thinking about changing jobs;
- replacement costs caused by exit;
- increase in stress-related health-care costs;
- legal costs;
- cost of managing incivility; and
- absenteeism.

Using the CISCO cost-estimation method, they calculated that the cost of incivility to a $1 billion health-care organization was $71 million/year (p. 40).

Exploring the cost of incivility accomplished a very important goal for the authors: it got tremendous media attention which in turn helped increase the awareness of the issue in corporate USA (p. 56). Moreover, if managers take up the challenge of calculating the cost of incivility, it will highlight the need to take immediate corrective actions and to develop a long-term strategy to address incivility.

Care must be taken, however, not to ascribe a high of accuracy to the exercise, lest it lose credibility. The total costs cannot be calculated with accuracy because so many of the impacts of incivility are intangibles; they include declining morale, self confidence, engagement, and motivation. As Sutton (2007) notes, "there are just too many different factors and too much uncertainty" (p. 44) in predicting many relevant variables such as legal costs and the amount of time management might have to spend in damage control.

In order to understand the pervasive nature of performance loss element of the cost of incivility, Pearson and Porath polled a large, diverse sample of employees and managers. The authors were surprised at the level of impact they uncovered. The results – worse than they expected – are captured in Table I (p. 55).

Impact	%
Intentionally decreased work effort	48
Intentionally decreased time at work	47
Intentionally decreased work quality	38
Lost work time worrying about the incident	80
Lost time avoiding the offender	63
Performance declined	66
Commitment to the organization declined	78

Table I.
Pervasiveness of
performance loss from
incivility

The authors have done well in surveying the landscape on the tangible and intangible impacts of incivility. Their survey very capably looks at the impact from several perspectives: on the individual in terms of stress and burnout; on the team in terms of lost productivity and creativity; and on the organization in terms of turnover and negative impact on reputation.

On turnover, they note that over half the employees treated uncivilly contemplate leaving the organization, and one in eight actually does (p. 99). Further, damage to company's reputation can play a significant role on its valuation as shown in the story below:

> During a conference call, Sallie Mae CEO, Albert Lord, brusquely told one analyst that he would not entertain any more multipart questions. At the end of the call, Lord was heard using an expletive to tell another executive that he should leave. Disaster ensued. Shares plunged 20.7 percent, the worst one-day drop in the company's history (p. 107).

How to deal with issue

The Cost of Bad Behavior provides compelling and enlightening stories about companies who proactively addressed the incivility. CISCO, the authors tell us was "the first corporation ever to institute a formal program focused on civility." At the heart of their program is a set of detailed guidelines to help people recognize and respond to increasing levels of incivility (p. 124). Starbucks uses an annual leadership conference to review their values and guiding principles (p. 126). DaVita, Inc., a health services company, takes extra care to hire "with its values firmly in mind" (p. 128). Microsoft revamped its entire learning and development program with a focus on civility and respect (p. 132). O'Melveny & Meyers, a global law firm, uses upward feedback to drive a positive civil culture (p. 134).

Pearson and Porath's case studies focused only on organizations who addressed the incivility issue before it became a significant problem. The research would have been enhanced significantly if they had highlighted organizations who have overcome incivility challenges. The East Alabama Medical Center in East Opelika Alabama, an organization familiar to this reviewer, addressed the issue and went on be the first public organization to receive *Fortune* magazine's prestigious 100 best companies to work for award.

The authors devote the final section of their insightful work to a survey of solutions to the incivility problem. After providing us with a highly useful guide to creating a civil workplace, they discuss solutions from the lens of leadership, the target (i.e. the victim of uncivil behavior), the offender, and society at large. Their "Top ten things a firm should do to create a civil workplace," is one of the most valuable sections of the book and is worth listing here:

(1) set zero tolerance expectations;

(2) look in the mirror;

(3) weed out trouble before it enters your organization;

(4) teach civility;

(5) train employees and mangers how to recognize and respond to incivility;

(6) put your ear to the ground and listen carefully (e.g. 360 feedback);

(7) when incivility occurs, hammer it;

(8) take complaints seriously;

(9) do not make excuses for powerful instigators; and

(10) invest in post-departure interviews.

Where's the offender in all of this?

The books great strength – its focus on the target of incivility – is also the source of its greatest weakness. In the chapters on the roots of incivility (Chapter 4) as well as the chapters on solving the problem (Chapters 12-17), the focus on the offender (i.e. the bully) is not as robust as it could be. In the overview of the roots of incivility (Chapter 4), the focus is almost exclusively on external influences on offenders: indulgent parenting; the growing chasms in politics and the media; growing stress and anxiety levels; negative global economic trends; the pace of life; and the loss of employee/employer compact. The only mention of offenders themselves was the discussion of the cynical and narcissistic nature of Gen Xers. Should not the offender be asked to accept more responsibility for their actions rather than being allowed to attribute it to external sources?

Crawshaw (2007) gives us insights about bullies. Her research, based on coaching over 700 abrasive managers, notes that bullies are not evil people with mal intent and that their aggressive behavior is often based on fear that someone's incompetence will make them look bad. Similarly, Ludeman and Erlandson (2006) describe their learning based on coaching hundreds of alpha males. They focused on alpha males because "a great deal of wreckage is caused by boys behaving badly" (Ludeman and Erlandson, 2006, p. 4). Their research identifies different types of alpha males, each set with their own motivations and attitudes, and each set requiring a different coaching strategy:

· The Alpha Commander: the top dog who can be a pit bull.

· The Alpha Visionary: the dreamer whose dreams can be impossible.

· The Alpha Strategist: the analytic genius who can be a stubborn know it all.

· The Alpha Executor: the driver who can drive you up the wall (Ludeman and Erlandson, 2006, p. 39).

Ludeman and Erlandson show us how the highly valued strengths skills of alpha males can easily become weaknesses that morph into uncivil behavior. For example, decisive, courageous behavior – key to getting results in difficult situations – can create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation if someone questions their path forward (Ludeman and Erlandson, 2006, p. 12). Regrettably, in Pearson and Porath's discussion of solutions (Chapters 12-17), there is virtually no reference to evidence-based coaching strategies for offenders. Crawshaw and Ludeman and Erlandson, on the other hand, provide us with insights on motivating bullies to get help as well as modalities to change their behavior. According to them, the first step in both sets of strategies is to make the offenders aware of the impact of their behavior and expose their blind spots.

Pearson and Porath have written an insightful book on a very timely topic. They have provided the key elements of a plan of action to deal with one of the most disturbing and significant challenges we face in the work place – the cost of bad behavior and the impact it is having on the quest for organizational excellence.

The authors should be commended for their courage and tenacity in addressing a topic that most of us have faced and will face again in the future.

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Journal of

Organizational Change Management

4th International Conference on Rhetoric and Narratives in Management Research, ESADE – Universitat Ramon Llull, Barcelona, Spain, 24-26 March 2011

With special issue of *Journal of Organizational Change Management*

Conference theme

Rhetorical persuasion and story-telling pervade the life of organizations and all their activities. They are also basic instruments in management research. The recognition of the functions of rhetoric and narratives in epistemology, methodology and research is associated with new views on the notion of science, with the debate between modernity and postmodernity, and with the use of interpretive methods.

The linguistic turn in philosophy introduced a conceptual framework in which the rhetorical turn and the narrative turn emerged. The focus of management studies on creating meanings and sense-making opens an important role for rhetoric and narratives as the main instruments for performing these operations.

The main aim of the Conference is to improve our understanding of the role of rhetoric and narratives in management research and practice.

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