

■ *Research Paper*

Metaphor in Action in an Academic Battlefield

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How to explain an academic community that theorises about knowledge intensive organizations whilst creating practical knowledge about living in this community that negates these theories? I constructed a learning history of an academic business school and found some answers. Confronting the collective narrative of the organization about itself with analyses and recommendations written for others, I found little correspondence between the two. To find out why, I deconstructed the organizational narrative and searched for dominant metaphors that guided everyday practice. I found that a battlefield metaphor was used to make sense of what happened since the start of the organization, which as a sense-making device evolved from collective to individual survival. I will present the metaphor, demonstrate its evolution and outline what it meant for staff to be writing about ideal organizations while not being able to produce one themselves. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

Fascinated as I was with the workings of language in general and metaphors in particular, I undertook a case study to investigate just how, if authors such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Schön (1993) were right about the ontological effects of metaphor, metaphors affected daily routines in organizations. Having read *Images of organization* (Morgan, 1986), I wondered what metaphors meant for the organization that produced them. I chose an organization as my

case study that was as explicit about organizations as possible and that was expected to produce knowledge about organizations as well. My eye fell on an academic business school which I here will call the Institute. My research question was: what, if any, are the differences and similarities between the organizational theories academics write about to others and the way they express themselves about their own organization? As the Institute was a knowledge intensive organization, I expected to find Morgan-like metaphors such as his organism, brains and flux and transformation or a combination thereof. I analysed academic output, strategy documents, and interviews I conducted with staff about their ideas of organizing and the

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Institute itself. And indeed, I found a combination of these metaphors in references to chaotic environments, turbulent and competitive markets, high-tech and knowledge intensive organizations, the importance of investing in people (HRM and HRD) and of improvement of working conditions (autonomy, responsibility and rewards) to facilitate growth and development, the interconnectedness and interdependence between organization and environment as well as between interorganizational units, complexity, the correction of mistakes with single and double loop learning, self-organization, teamwork, cybernetics and self-regulation with minimum rules, autopoiesis, enactment, etc. Interestingly enough, these metaphors were only manifest when discussed in papers or in the interviews as ideal ways of organizing. When asked about their own organization, academics described the Institute in completely different terms. I found more differences than similarities between the ideal organization on the one hand and the Institute on the other. I wondered why people were so explicitly negative about their business school while having the knowledge about their ideal organization so close at hand. I was not satisfied with just describing the differences but sought a way to explain them. Literature on narrative and metaphor was particularly helpful.

In this paper I will start with a brief discussion on metaphor and how it is helpful to understand the construction of social reality. I then outline the research method I chose for analysing my case, which I subsequently present as the Institute and its battlefield metaphor. I finish my case with some concluding remarks about the merits of identifying metaphors for understanding social behaviour and I finish my paper with the merits of understanding the workings of narrative and metaphor. My research ended in 1999, so over a decade has passed. I will describe the findings of my case study as I then wrote them down, but my reflections on the findings are a mixture of what I thought then and the outcome of the development of my thinking as it is today.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON METAPHORS IN ACTION

Since the rise of the constructivist paradigm, we understand that to explain learning and knowledge production the idea of accumulation and reproduction of knowledge alone is insufficient. On the contrary, more and more emphasis is placed on both the reflexive (e.g. Giddens, 1990) and the social character of knowledge creation (e.g. Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). In this paper, I focus on incidental learning and the development of a habitus in discursive practices (Bourdieu, 1980). I am particularly interested in the role that metaphors play in the construction process of this habitus.

Metaphor and Meaning

As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, metaphor pervades everyday life. It is not just a linguistic embellishment, but ties thought and action together on a deeper, ontological level in our ordinary conceptual systems. Our conceptual system determines on a mostly subliminal level what we see and how we interact with our physical and social surroundings. In other words, it determines our ontologies and the way we make sense of our world. It directs our actions and our judgements of our actions. We build images that are largely cultural constructs and, like metaphor, are not for us to choose as a pair of glasses we can put on. On the contrary, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) put it, culture is already present in the very experience itself. Bourdieu (1980) elaborated a theory of practice that links the experience in practice with learning through socialization. Entering a practice, he says, is learning its habitus by way of incorporating handed down values and dispositions: 'The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the habitus, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions. [...] one has to situate oneself within "real activity

as such", that is, in the practical relation to the world, the preoccupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as a spectacle. [...] one has to return to practice, the site of the dialectic of the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi*; of the objectified products and the incorporated products of historical practice; of structures and habitus' (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 52). Bourdieu defines habitus as the systems of sustainable, transferable dispositions, structured structures that are predestined to function as such, that is, as principles that generate and organize practices and their representations. These principles are, however, not pre-designed and neither is there a central intelligence behind them. On the contrary, practices are the historic outcome of interactions that limit contingency by presenting some actions as logic and others as illogic. Or, as Holstein and Gubrium (2000) put it, the discursive practices in which interactions take place set the conditions for possible linguistic choices and actions, but do not determine them. Analysis of discursive practices thus reveals how people construct their lives around and in the midst of events.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose that the concepts that occur in metaphorical definitions are the concepts that correspond to natural kinds of experience. Metaphors, defined as such, are at the core of this practical logic and the habitus it produces. They give meaning to our experiences because they offer a coherent structure. With metaphors we create meaning and establish norms, as we use them to direct our actions, goals, and expectations. We are apt to choose those actions, goals, and expectations that will fit previous structures and reinforce the coherence, making metaphors self-referential. In a constructivist paradigm (e.g. Gergen, 1999) and from the point of view of discourse analysis (e.g. Lakoff, 2001), we construct our social realities using language to shape, evaluate and change them. Objects and events do not have inherent characteristics or cause and effect relationships. They only have the characteristics or causal

attributes we ascribe to them. We categorize the experiences and the events that we encounter in ways that are meaningful to us. Categorizing necessarily means that we cannot see the whole picture. We ignore some of the characteristics of objects and events while focusing on others. Metaphors are therefore inherently political. As part of the experienced reality, they pervade both private and public life and are active on both conscious and subliminal levels (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Metaphor and Narrative

Metaphor is conceptual in nature. To understand how it structures practice, narrative is a useful concept. We are narrative beings (Sarbin, 1998) and as such we structure our meaning making along the lines of event-crisis-event to make sense of the world around us. A narrative is the representation of an event or a chain of events. We can analyse narrative from two mutually exclusive perspectives (Culler, 1981). From a naturalist perspective, the event precedes the narrative and we can check if the narrative represents the event adequately. This is our search for a historic truth. From a constructivist perspective, however, the narrative precedes the event, that is, from the stream of inputs to our senses we select those impressions that fit the story we developed so far and call them events. These events procreate and establish chains of naturally occurring logics. For instance, if we observe event A being followed by event B, we assume that A generates B and attribute A causal qualities. If it fits our story we are tempted to do so, even if, from a historic point of view, it would make no sense. Therefore we speak of the establishment of a narrative truth, which can contain sophisms that seem common sense to us. The seduction of narrative structures is so powerful, that we create the truth that fits best and disregard alternative truths. Since we are not just narrative but also social beings, we communicate our truths, aligning them interactively until we have a collective version of the truth that is at least acceptable to the majority. As Holstein and Gubrium (2000) point out, the social self interacts in and with discursive practices. In

a discursive practice, a constant flux of interactions leads to complexity and an infinite and fluid corpus of stories. Boje (2001) calls these ante-narratives since they have not been fixed in a final narrative representation yet. For the sake of analysis, we can distinguish between the story and the narrative discourse. The former contains the events that are the building blocks of the narrative, the latter is the way we tell the story, chronicle and perform it. Narrative discourse is subject to semiotics, rhetoric, plot and span, demanding some form of closure (Abbott, 2008) to prevent us from feeling dissatisfied. The relationship between narrative and metaphor is that the former structures the story for which the latter provides the concepts.

METHOD: ANALYSING NARRATIVE AND METAPHOR

To analyse the metaphors that guided practice in the Institute, I chose the so-called learning history (Kleiner and Roth, 1997) as research instrument, because this instrument starts with the construction of organizational narratives based on interviews and documents. Originally, the starting point is a successful event in an organization. A learning history reconstructs the events that resulted in this success, presenting perspectives of a diversity of stakeholders in both the process and the result. To construct the learning history of the Institute I collected some sixty academic publications in which the academic staff presented their advocated theories about organization and organizing. I considered these theories as espoused theories, the theories of action that people claim to give allegiance to and that they communicate to others (Argyris and Schön, 1978). Further, I collected some 20 strategy documents that outlined the vision and mission regarding both the academic profile and positioning within the world of business studies and the educational curriculum for students. I considered these also as espoused theories. Finally, I conducted 17 in-depth interviews with members of the academic staff and management, about a third of the academic and management population of the Institute. The

selection of respondents was a representative sample of the population and consisted of both senior and junior staff as well as top management. I started with management as they morally supported my research and then used a snowball method to select other candidates, asking both who they thought would share their point of view and who would oppose to it (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In these interviews, I asked questions about ideal organizations in general and of business education in particular as well as questions about the organization of the Institute and its educational programme. The former I positioned under the header of espoused theories, the latter under the header of theories-in-use. Espoused theories parallel narrative truth, whereas theories-in-use are the theories of action that actually govern actions and produce observable behaviour (Argyris and Schön, 1978), establishing historic truth. I therefore had two sets of data. First, I had the collection of academic papers, strategy documents and interview material about ideal academic organizations and education. This collection contained the espoused theories. I rewrote the espoused theories into one collective narrative and named this the argumentation, referring to the discursive practice an organization likes to present itself with as it is aimed to persuade with a nicely, rounded off plot and rationality. The argumentation was a comprehensive synopsis of what the academics and managers thought to be an ideal organization. Second, I had interview material about the practice of the Institute and its education. I called this the saga, referring to how people co-create stories of historic or legendary figures and events as a side-effect or by-product of their work, while discursively trying to make sense of events, their own and others' positions, emotions, and involvements during these events (Basten, 2000; Basten, in press). The saga was a comprehensive story about the Institute, covering its 10 years of existence. In the next section, I will present the case study of the Institute to illustrate the analysis of both texts as well as my findings. As I developed my method iteratively, moving to and fro data and theory building, the case study will be presented in its chronological order.

THE CASE OF THE INSTITUTE

In this section, I present the case of the Institute. The choice for this particular case was inspired by the reputation this Institute had in educational innovations. Being involved in a large-scale but treacherous educational innovation myself, I was interested in how they managed to perform so well. Their success was the starting point of the learning history I was going to write. Did their expertise in organizing turn out to be helpful in this success? As mentioned earlier, my research question was: what, if any, are the differences and similarities between the organizational theories academics write about to others and the way they express themselves about their own organization? This question can be reformulated as: is there congruity between the argumentation and the saga? To answer this question, I started with a content analysis, identifying key themes that were important enough to academic staff and management for them to mention them in papers or interviews. I used the coding strategies of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), following the steps of open coding (identifying categories or themes), axial coding (connecting the identified categories) and selective coding (forming a theory that explains the phenomenon being studied). I started with an analysis of the argumentation. The results are summarized below.

The Argumentation: Socio-Technical Systems Design

The leading principle for the Institute was the organizational paradigm of Socio-Technical Systems Design (STSD). This was its argumentation. I analysed the content of over 60 academic papers and some 20 strategy documents about research and education in the Institute to find out what this theoretical paradigm entailed and what its practical implications were. The STSD paradigm was abundantly described in both types of documents in terms of redundancy of functions, internal coordination and control, democracy and joint optimization of the socio-technical system. Furthermore, man was understood as complementary to machine and

as a resource to be developed. The organization design was based on minimum critical specification and optimum task grouping with multiple broad skills. The building blocks were self-managing social systems. This design was thought to lead to involvement and commitment. In order to establish its underlying paradigm, so it was repeatedly stated, one has to give up the feeling of having learned it all, the virtue of being certain, and the belief in stability. It is essential to abandon reductionist thinking and dependency on procedures. Furthermore, one has to reconsider that it is 'they' who are to blame. People are personally accountable for their actions and results. One has to accept complexity, doubt and continuous change, and realize that learning never stops. One needs to embrace systems thinking and focus on results.

STSD can be understood as a practical paradigm. Its guiding philosophy was participatory democracy, the improvement of the human condition in the workplace without losing sight of production goals. Its interventions were aimed at substantial reduction of the division of labour in all sorts of work settings. As the paradigm was participatory in character, the tools were directly borrowed from action research and endorsed collective self-work design and group decision-making. Its theoretical commodity was open-systems thinking, with self-regulation as its characteristic feature. In the strategy documents of the Institute, a clear effort was made to translate the STSD principles into the proper organization and the organization of the educational programmes.

The themes in the argumentation were built on Morgan-like metaphors such as the organism, brains and flux and transformation (Morgan, 1986). These metaphors were rather easy to identify, as they were explicitly elaborated in the themes. In fact, they were used so self-evidently, that at first glance the concepts used to describe organizations went unnoticed as metaphors. I had to remind myself that the concepts, even when used in conventionalized form, were still metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). So, even though they did not refer to Morgan or his metaphors for knowledge intensive organizations, academics theorized in their publications

about complexity, chaos, cybernetics, learning organizations, self-regulating teams, etc. Management translated these concepts into vision and mission of the Institute. So far so good, there appeared to be congruity on paper as I identified the metaphors in the argumentation. However, analytical challenges arose when I analysed the saga and compared its thematic analysis with that of the argumentation. Below I will outline some of the discrepancies I found.

Mutually Exclusive Discursive Practices

I found that the saga that narrated the practice in the Institute presented a reality that was completely different from the one which appeared as the ideal organization on paper. In fact, problems mentioned in the saga, for which the argumentation offered ample solutions, remained persistent in the practice of the Institute. For instance, STSD strived for meaningfulness of jobs, involvement, and job satisfaction. As I took a closer look at the job satisfaction of staff members, however, I saw resistance and discontentment. The reasons mentioned in the interviews were among others the top-down management approach combined with the team-based carrying out of orders, the work load, passive students with a consumer attitude, the monotonous job content, and the everlasting, never stopping, continuous change. It seemed that the tools STSD offered did not lead to the same job satisfaction within the Institute it was supposed to accomplish according to its staff. This indicates a discrepancy between the argumentation and the saga. I concluded that the academic wisdom and the practical wisdom or habitus in the Institute were not one and the same. The differences between them were manifest at first glance. For instance, a researcher concerned with gender connotations in the so-called neutral disembodied worker, reported in his research findings that this worker shows characteristics usually attributed to males: career orientation, full-time availability and high qualifications. When asked what in his opinion an ideal student was, he replied: 'That would be the interested student who is motivated to shape his own study. I mean, who knows why he has

chosen this study, who is prepared not only to make the content of education his own, but also to qualify himself for the various work forms. Because one must learn to have good discussions, writing essays one must learn. You can't just do that. So that student, he must so to speak fit in, fit into that pattern. So he should make time and energy, more than now is the case, I think, to have contact with teachers and fellow students, so to speak'. In his answer we find the characteristics he believed were male: career orientation (self-confidence in choice of study, motivation, prepared to qualify himself), full-time availability (make time and find energy for a high degree of interaction with teachers and fellow students), and high qualification (learn to have discussions and to write essays). He warned in his research findings for gender connotations and at the same time expressed an image of an ideal student that was male according to his own standards. Another researcher proposed as an alternative for the information processing paradigm the situated learning approach, replacing a positivist view with an interactionist one. When asked what his ideal educational setting looked like, he stated his preference for mass hearings and adherence to unilateral transfer of knowledge. He said he realised that this was in contradiction with his research findings, but attributed this difference to his one-sided interest in research. With this explanation he undermined 'redundancy of functions' of STSD, a paradigm he promoted very strongly in his papers. Although the discrepancies were manifest, I became curious about their origins and wondered why these academics were unable to create the ideal organization they seemed to know so much about. I needed a theory to explain this discrepancy and therefore submitted the saga to a second, more thorough analysis, looking for metaphors that would shed light on the more deeply grounded habitus of the Institute. This I will describe in the next section.

The Saga: A Battlefield Metaphor

So far I had only made a point Argyris and Schön (1978) had already made and that can even be seen as a folk wisdom: we do not always walk the talk. Interesting as that may be, I was curious

about the role metaphors played in this distinction and set out to examine them more systematically. I used the method Lakoff and Johnson (1980) put forward to find discursive patterns, categorizing the utterances not only under headers of their content, but also along the lines of their specific vocabulary. As mentioned above, a naturalistic analysis of narrative assumes that events precede representations. A constructivist analysis, contrarily, assumes that representations precede events. Although these types of analysis are mutually exclusive, a good analysis comprises both (Culler, 1981). I therefore considered utterances both as referential (event precedes representation) and as productive (representation precedes event). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) exemplify, we use a specific vocabulary when we talk about argument (I find this defensible, he attacked my position, etc.), with which we not only refer to discussions in terms of war, but also structure our discussions as war. I looked for constellations of utterances which could serve as indications for similar referring-structuring concepts.

The Institute was founded in 1988 and the learning history covered its first 10 years. I noticed that, when interviewed about the history of the Institute, respondents used utterances such as bury the hatchet, women and children first, put onto the map, have STSD as spear-head or flag, find other models more defensible, strategically a weak-offer, object to, etc. I started with a simple frequency list to establish which words were used when and how often. Then I clustered the individual words into conceptual classes, following the same steps of grounded theory. I thus started with open coding, putting utterances such as 'women and children first' in a class and 'bury the hatchet' in another. In the axial coding, I named the classes, for instance 'crisis' and 'war and peace'. I then looked at the different classes and discovered a pattern I called 'battlefield', as it explained the logic and interdependence of all classes. The battlefield metaphor helped explain the events in the Institute and the way they were interpreted and reproduced. It summarized the habitus in the Institute and made the saga, even though it seemed illogic given the argumentation, logic in its own right. Below I will sketch

how the battlefield metaphor came about and became part of the habitus.

The Development of a Habitus

While deconstructing (e.g. Boje, 2001) the saga and confronting it with the argumentation, I found that when respondents spoke to others in their publications (be it academic papers or policy documents), they used a significantly different type of discourse compared to the discourse in the saga. The discourse of the argumentation was polite, academic, rational, focused on co-operation, sharing knowledge and teamwork, as described above. The discourse of the saga was cynic, rude, focused on pigeonholing and sabotage. I did my research 10 years after the founding of the Institute. The saga about the early beginnings was not very different from the saga at the time of the research, both stressing chaos and crisis, be it that the reporting of the start also contained feelings of pride (establishing a lot with little means) and adventure (pioneering). What had changed in 10 years? The discursive learning history traced critical moments, such as the tumultuous start, the transfer of parts of the curriculum from the department to a newly formed school, the definite transformation of the departmental structure into a school, and the introduction of a law that prescribed a director of education, which sealed the formal split between research and education with their respective career opportunities and accountability criteria. This metaphor emerged during the founding of the Institute and evolved in the course of time, be it at different levels. What started as a collective battle with the outside world (either other business schools or the faculty) turned into internal battles between management and staff, and later even within teams. The spirit of pride and adventure disappeared as conditions within the Institute grew grim. The battlefield metaphor was embraced as it helped to explain a turbulent situation and to develop actions and coping strategies to be successful therein. The narrative in which the battlefield metaphor was common sense reconfirmed what made up successful behaviour. It served as a curriculum for

incidental learning and reproduced itself as an inner logic or habitus. It turned out that it mattered who was the beneficiary of battlefield behaviour. At first, this was the Institute as a whole, in the end it was the individual academic. What was productive for the latter turned out to be counterproductive for the former.

The discursive learning history chronicled how the battlefield metaphor and its assumptions and actions, which were absent in the argumentation, became part and parcel of the habitus or saga of the Institute. The reverse was also true: what the argumentation described as good for organizations in general lacked in the saga of the proper organization. Academics who had an expert understanding of organizing deliberately flung their advices to others to the wind. In both publications and curricula a double message was heard, but ignored by the ones who proclaimed it: you must organize in teams – *but we do not*; you must share knowledge – *but we do not*; you must openly negotiate – *but we do not*. The ‘but we do not’ caused frustrations: ‘we know what the ideal world looks like, but we do not live there, and we deny ourselves access to that world by our own behaviour’. This led to a sense of crisis in the Institute. Although some of the theoretical concepts the researchers adhered to were incorporated into the organization of education and into the curriculum, most efforts of management to incorporate STSD-like elements met with subtle, but persistent resistance. Although STSD was promoted to others as a useful and practical paradigm, it did not seem to work for its advocates. In fact, they denounced the translation of STSD into educational settings. For daily practice, this unspoken double-mindedness lead to feelings of being torn and the imperative to chose sides, resulting in lack of collaboration, sabotage of innovation by quasi participation, saying one thing while doing the opposite, non-transparency about one’s objectives and actions, passive aggressive response to managerial intervention, and other strategies that advanced individual profit at the expense of organizational flourishing. Identifying the battlefield metaphor was helpful in making sense of a story that would otherwise seem incoherent. Why, for instance, with all that knowledge

about ideal organizations and how to construct them, would one so consciously undermine the context within one could prosper and grow? Why soil one’s own nest? Why stick to a narrative that is so self-destructive? The discursive learning history reconstructed what happened and used the battlefield metaphor to order the story into logical patterns that helped to answer these questions.

Merits of the Learning History for the Institute

Both management and professors recognized themselves in the analysis of their Institute. Did this result in fundamental changes? It did not. Management acknowledged that something needed to be done, but recognized in the analysis that their actions were (deliberately or not) interpreted diametrically different as they intended. Therefore, they considered it a risk if they were to initiate a change process. Furthermore, the professors agreed with the analysis but had other things on their mind, such as the management of their chairs. In sum, the analysis had no clear owner and went as a hot potato from hand to hand. Moreover, at the time of the presentation of the analysis, new problems with faculty arose. As a consequence, the Institute closed its doors for outsiders (including me) to figure out how to respond best strategically. It was characteristic for the Institute that it withdrew to plan a new battle. The analysis showed that what was perceived as a multitude of private stories was in fact one collective story or saga that imposed itself on thinking and speaking about working at the Institute, as well as choosing strategies to operate. To solve the feeling of crisis that originated from the discrepancy between argumentation and sage would mean revising either one or both. The choice to do neither, in spite of the consequences of continuing down the same path, was an outcome of the narrative structure in which the Institute was caught up and which did not help it become a more pleasant or even intelligent place to work.

One might wonder what the merits of this analysis were for the Institute, as it did not persuade it to change its habitus. For one thing, it

made manifest a double bind in which management was damned if it did initiate change and damned if it didn't. This double bind was not solved, but attention was diverted by external problems. From an academic point of view, it is interesting to see how a knowledge intensive organization seems only knowledge intensive on paper. However, the practical wisdom about how to survive in this organization is also a form of knowledge, be it not one most academics and managers of the Institute would put forward in their writings. The analysis showed that other metaphors Morgan (1986) proposed were useful, such as political system, culture, and psychic prison. These metaphors were absent in the argumentation, but they help understand why the saga was so persistent and even prompted the response to the analysis that was least helpful for the Institute. The Institute preferred to remain in its political system and culture, thus accepting the saga as its psychic prison. This also is a rational, knowledgeable choice. As Morgan (1986) writes, when confronted with problems, organizations tend to retreat into the perspective that is familiar to them. This was the case of the Institute. He also assumes that choosing a metaphor can help solve organizational problems. Choosing the metaphors that align with organism, brains, and flux and transformation worked for problem solving on paper, but did not change practice. However, the choice for the battlefield metaphor would not help solve the internal problems the Institute faced, but did look promising in the face of the new external problems that presented themselves.

CONCLUSION

Learning histories are based on the idea that a jointly told tale about a success sparks future learning (Kleiner and Roth, 1997). The learning history of the Institute shows, however, that the divergence of the argumentation and the saga, the discursive practice that emerged from the complexity of the organization and that was a source for incidental learning and the development of a specific habitus, can result in unsuccessful innovations and organizational paralysis, even

in knowledge intensive organizations. I demonstrated that it is possible to identify patterns of logic in this discursive complexity by identifying dominant metaphors. The metaphor analysis showed that argumentation and saga were in fact of different paradigmatic orders, the first presenting an ideal organization as a co-operation and mutual inspiration, the latter narrating the proper organization as if it were a battlefield. Indeed, while staff narrated their organization as a battlefield, they enacted subsequent behaviours and turned the Institute into a real academic battlefield.

The case of the Institute was my first case study using the discursive learning history to analyse the workings of metaphors in communities. Later cases show that sometimes argumentation and saga are similar or somehow connected and sometimes, as was the case in the Institute, they are separate or mutually exclusive. Therefore, I prefer to see discursive practices on a continuum, with similarity and difference between argumentation and saga as its poles. On the one extreme they correspond, on the other they diverge. In between, they show different degrees of overlap. For analysing knowledge intensive organizations, this continuum might be useful to typify the practical knowledge about being successful within the proper organization and the habitus to develop. It reminds us that knowledge is also cultural and political, and that it can have its dark, unproductive or counterproductive side. The case of the Institute shows that we should not have romantic ideas about a saga. A saga is not necessarily good and it does not necessarily provide a better option for a new argumentation. It works as a narrative structure and is in that sense coercive and hegemonic. It also shows that a situation of conflicting argumentation and saga is harmful for (organizational) communities. The choice is not *a priori* to embrace the saga while searching for harmony.

Discursive practices are appreciated differently. The argumentation appears in one right, unassailable and unambiguous form. This suggests truthfulness and logic (e.g. Lakoff, 2001). The first one to produce it is original and owns it. Contrarily, the saga does not have just one form, but appears in a myriad of

representations of the same event. Often its constitutive stories mingle, resulting in a volatile flux and coalescence without a clear owner. Everybody adds and leaves out elements at will according to their own perspectives. From the outside, for example from the point of view of the argumentation, the saga may seem illogic or ridiculous, even though its particular stories are perfectly logic and sensible from the perspective of their producers. However, to dismiss the saga when it ill-fits the argumentation is to throw out the baby with the bath water. After all, the saga challenges our habitual ways of making sense. Therefore, its interpretation requires us to make explicit the conventions and the interpretive procedures on which the argumentation lies (e.g. Culler, 1981), so it would be wiser not to measure the logic of the saga with the yardstick of the argumentation, but in its own right.

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