

structure

process

Is the desire of the leader
the leadership of desire?

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This paper considers the relationship between structure and process. It approaches this by considering the different ways in which "process" is used, approaching this question through an understanding of language and languaging. What is at issue here is the power to effect change, the way particular processes come to define the nature of an Institution, and the question of that Institution's relation to desire. The role of leadership becomes crucial to the ways in which desire can be mobilised to motor change, in particular through the effects of 'vision' on the current form of the Institution.

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The science of "Muddling Through"ⁱ

Charles Lindblom might have been writing for another age when, in 1959, he took on the totalisers of the RAND Corporation, playing their games with the global pursuit of Mutually Assured Destruction. In this paper he contrasted their 'rational-comprehensive' approach with one of "muddling through" - an approach based on 'successive limited comparisons'. At that time his concern was to challenge the very possibility of analysing 'whole problems' 'as a whole'. It was not until science began to address itself to the very medium in which it workedⁱⁱ - that of language and languaging - that it began to be possible to speak of a 'science' of muddling through; and the irony of science's own self-delusions over the nature of its own processes became apparentⁱⁱⁱ.

More recently, Ikujiro Nonaka, writing about the "Knowledge-Creating Company"^{iv}, took up Polanyi's notion of *tacit knowledge*^v as knowledge deeply rooted in action and in an individual's commitment to a specific context - "know-how". In it he argued the importance of working between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge in the form of a 'spiral of knowledge' which moved through (i) socialisation, as tacit knowledge is acquired through apprenticeship; (ii) articulation, in which tacit knowledge is codified and communicated to others; (iii) combination, as this knowledge is then standardised and embodied in other forms of activity; and finally (iv) internalisation, in which that knowledge again becomes re-integrated into new forms of tacit knowing. Crucial to this knowledge-creating process is the role of metaphor. The functioning of metaphor constitutes the medium in which this transmutation takes place.

When we look more closely at this medium, we find ourselves looking at the question of 'culture'. Gerry Johnson, in looking at "Managing Strategic Change"^{vi}, formulates this in terms of a cultural web made up of a number of influences: stories and myths, power structures, organisational structures, control systems, rituals and routines, symbols. Collectively these constitute a *paradigm* that governs 'the-way-things-are-done-around-here'.

This paradigm, and its influence, provides us with a way of approaching this question of different levels of process. Defining a paradigm as a cognitive structure or mechanism, however, would be to give primacy of the cognitive over the cultural, and thus give us no way of doing this. In this paper I want to argue, therefore, that it goes the other way around; the cultural exercises primacy over the cognitive^{vii}. This inversion anticipates another inversion - that between process and structure - which is the subject of this paper.

What is 'process'?

What does this word "process" mean? I am going to end up arguing that "process" goes on *under* 'structure'. This 'structure' is structured as a language is structured, and is ultimately unconscious. As a language, it is structured on the basis of *difference*, and 'shows' itself in process. Thus by looking for repetition in process, we divine the presence of structure.

This is a very broad sense of "process", the importance of which lies in its calling into question the presence of structure. It is a different emphasis to that usually used, in which there seem to be two quite different types of meaning. Managers speak of "a lack

of adherence to a 'process'" in describing how a business operates; and consultants speak of 'process' issues needing to be addressed in the design of a workshop.... What are these other senses, and are they speaking of the same thing?

The notion of 'process' in how a business operates appears to be quite administrative and programmatic - 'process' here refers to a set of activities that have been *codified*. Included in this definition of process is the environment insofar as that too is codified. In contrast, the consultant's use seems to refer more to the-way-things-are-being-done-around-here, so that "process issues" means more of an emphasis on the *tacit* dimensions of process.

If we consider codified processes to be the tips of icebergs of tacit processes, then it makes sense to work on bringing some of these tacit dimensions to the surface by trying to codify what-is-going-on. Thus agreeing what are 'process issues' can become a major objective of consulting process.

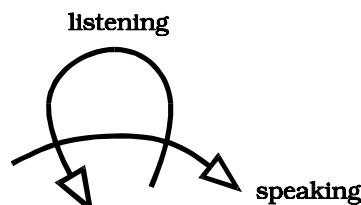
The thing about codified processes is that they can be defined independently of particular individuals, whereas tacit processes always involve *people*. Tacit processes involve questions of *practice*. Thus there is process defined independently of who 'operates' it (codified), and processes which involve person + process (practice in which there is tacit knowledge).

That which is tacit is subconscious, and by making the subconscious conscious, we are making the tacit codified. Thus a way of understanding what is different about the two uses of the work 'process' is in terms of the subconscious, and whether or not it is 'included' in understanding what-is-going-on.

But a 'process' (for example) for manufacturing carpets, even though it rests upon the tacit skills of a craftsman, is not operating at the same level as the CEO's 'process' for working through whether or not to acquire another business. These processes are operating at very different levels. So we are faced with a second difference - that of 'level'. What makes it a different level?

Languaging and paradigms

It is easy to forget that when we speak, we are engaging in a behaviour - languaging. "Language" then is that which is repeated in our languaging. We can write it as $\frac{\text{language}}{\text{languaging}}$. It is also easy to forget that, in listening, we are having to go back over what we are hearing, and make a meaning from it. The meaning we read into what is said (or written) is therefore an *après coup* - an afterthought. Languaging, then, consists of listening-and-speaking, which we can represent as follows:



The forwards movement of speaking is punctuated by the act of listening through a reverse action on what-has-been-heard. This listening operates *metaphorically* insofar as

in making sense, there has been a substitution of the listener's speaking in the place of what has been said by the speaker. But most of the time we would not call this *après coup* metaphoric. It would appear to us to be a meaning 'exactly' as the speaker intended it, or exactly as a result of the 'obvious' content of what was being said. Returning to the $\frac{\textit{language}}{\textit{languageing}}$, we can also begin to see how 'levels' might operate, by writing 'languageing' as

follows: $\frac{\textit{language}}{\textit{listening} \mid \textit{speaking}}$, since there is a sense in which the 'listening' is operating at a higher 'level' to the speaking insofar as it subsumes the speaking... we will return to this later.

We can begin to understand how a paradigm might function, however, by considering this 'exactness' and 'obviousness' as characteristic of different relationships to speaking and listening. As soon as there is a sense of choice about what is to be said, and how it is to be heard, this metaphoric functioning of languageing becomes more apparent:

listening	<i>free</i>	case-based	conjectural
	<i>fixed</i>	Instructional	skills-based
		<i>fixed</i>	<i>free</i>
		speaking	

Now we are contrasting the 'instructional', in which what is said and what is meant can be obvious and exact; with 'conjectural', in which both are constructions brought about by the effects of languageing. In between are two variations, in which either the way of listening is fixed (what is on offer is a particular skill which can be applied to different realities); or the way of speaking is fixed (what has to be made sense of is a situation which is given).

This view of the subject's relation to a paradigm allows us to formulate the extent to which the individual is or is not *obedient* to particular ways of speaking-and-listening (the way we do things around here). The *power* of the paradigm over the subject is therefore measured by the extent to which it commands this obedience.

The conjectural, then, becomes a way of formulating Lindblom's muddling through in terms of languageing. A word of caution at this point however.

We can speak of non-verbal languageing as well as verbal languageing, so that 'languageing' can be used to refer to all behaviour which can be 'read' *as if* something is being said *by* someone *to* another. This widening of the scope of languageing allows us to read 'meaning' everywhere in human behaviour.

What then is the relation between explicitly 'verbal' behaviour and behaviour in a wider sense. This is the distinction which Argyris developed in his distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use - say-how and know-how. 'Theory-in-use' was a way

of referring to behaviour in which it was *as if* there was a 'theory' implicit in the way the manager was acting. This 'theory' was what could be 'read' into the manager's behaviour. The point Argyris was making was that there was no necessary correspondence between these two forms of behaviour. In his paper on "Teaching smart people how to learn"^{viii} he argues that the fact that individuals learn to be very sophisticated in their verbal behaviour doesn't mean that they can therefore *act* effectively, or learn more effective forms of action....

If these verbal and non-verbal behaviours are understood to be going on in different contexts, then we can see how there is no necessary reason for obedience to particular forms of languaging in one context (eg planning processes) to be congruent with other processes. Thus whereas one form of 'meaning' is 'read' into behaviour in a domain of conversations (espoused theory or say-how), the other is 'read' into behaviour in a domain of experience (know-how); and when this 'reading of 'know-how' becomes explicit, it becomes theory-in-use.

The danger then of not addressing the tacit|codified relation is that 'what-is-really-going-on' can become completely split off from 'what-is-said-to-be-going-on'.

Understanding these theories-in-use becomes essential to understanding the paradigms at work. This, in its turn, is a way of approaching the question of *power*, and the ways in which it is exercised in the organisation.

The structuring effects of the signifier

Gareth Morgan's book on "Images of Organisation"^{ix} is a very important book in the way it shows how different metaphors have come to govern organisations. After considering a number of different metaphors - machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, instruments of domination - it ends up as follows:

"In recognising the close links between thought and action in organisational life, we recognise that the way we 'read' organisations influences how we produce them. Images and metaphors are not just interpretive constructs used in the task of analysis. They are central to the process of imaginisation through which people enact or 'write' the character of organisational life."

How are we to understand this way of approaching organisation. How is it possible for metaphors to govern us in this way? If we consider this process of imaginisation as *process*, then in what sense does process operate *under* such a structure? This is now the other sense of "process" which I started with.

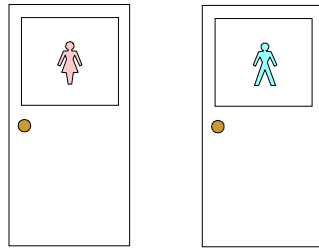
Most of us will have encountered the following in books teaching us to read:

tree



Take the icon below the bar to represent what we take to be our experience of a 'tree'. What this formulation is indicating is that the encounter with the tree is mediated by the word above the bar. What is *signified* below the bar is governed by the *signifier* above the bar: all experience is mediated by language. Nothing very remarkable about that,

because it would be just as easy to say that the experience of the tree was somehow 'shown' in the use of the word "tree". In this next example, however, this is not so easy:



What we have here (let us agree) is two identical rooms with identical fittings and identical doors. The only difference is the icons (they could be words) on the doors - "Men" and "Women". We begin to see more clearly here the way in which the experience is mediated by language, not only in the sense of some 'intrinsic' meaning associated with the word; but in the social sense that we agree to operate 'under' what the signifiers make different. It is written in the following form: $\frac{\text{signifier}}{\text{signified}}$, or $\frac{S}{s}$.^{x,xi}

Process, then, as languaging, procedures, practice, etc is going on *under* 'structure'. This 'structure' is structured like a language is structured, and is unconscious. It is structured on the basis of *difference*, and 'shows' itself in process - the structure of language 'shows' itself in our languaging. Thus by looking for repetition in process/languaging, we divine the presence of structure.

If we look at the question of 'process' now, and the different emphasis on the relation between tacit|codified processes, we can consider not only whether this correspondence exists, but also what kind of structure is generating that process... ($\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{process}}$). Agreeing what this structure is now becomes key in any process of change.

Argyris and Schon approached this whole question of $\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{process}}$ in terms of single loop and double loop learning^{xii,xiii}. Single loop (Model I) behaviour was behaviour *governed* by a structure which was not questioned, whereas double-loop (Model II) behaviour did question that structure. In the terms of this paper, single loop behaviour does not question the structure under which it is taking place, whereas double loop behaviour does^{xiv}.

Thus, for example, in approaching a particular 'production problem' in a business, a double-loop approach would consider the ways in which what-is-going-on is symptomatic of the structures under which those processes are taking place:

$$\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{what - is - going - on}}$$

But this structure cannot be described solely in terms of the physical arrangement of things - the 'what' of the business $\frac{\text{what}}{\text{what - is - going - on}}$. What-is-going-on will also be affected by *how* this 'what' is organised. This approach treats the 'what' as a symptom itself of the structure of how that 'what' is organised: $\frac{\text{how - things - are - organised}}{\text{what}}$.^{xv}

This notion that a process is embedded in layers of structure doesn't end here however, because how-things-are-organised can itself be 'read' as a symptom of who-is-trying-to-do-what-for-whom: $\frac{\text{who - is - doing - what - for - whom}}{\text{how - things - are - organised}}$, which can itself be seen as

symptomatic of the why's-and-wherefore's of the matrix of vested interests under which this supply-demand relation of who-in-relation-to-whom emerges.

The only limit to the number of levels of these relations of embeddedness lies with the observer, and the particular forms of Ideal he or she is working in relation to in the ways in which s/he defines contexts. In this case I have used one particular series of levels which I find useful in addressing questions of strategy for the business as a whole in

$$\frac{\text{why}}{\frac{\text{who / m}}{\text{how}}}$$

relation to its context. They can be written as follows: $\frac{\text{what}}{\text{what - is - going - on}}$, but they do

not escape the general principle of $\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{process}}$. However many levels are articulated in this way, they still come under the structure of the signifier, and therefore the 'levels' become more complex arrangements under this principle:

$\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{why | who / m | how | what | what - is - going - on}}$. This arrangement on the bottom line is a way of indicating how process comes under a whole series of structures at different 'levels', all of which come under the structure of signifiers^{xvi}.

The key connection Argyris and Schon were trying to make was between the different forms of learning behaviour and *power*. Within the instructional relation to the paradigm, Model II behaviour was impossible. Developing the other forms of relation were therefore crucial to the emergence of organisational learning.

So now we have *tacit* and *explicit processes* in complex arrangements of *level* operating under the *structure of signifiers*; and the question of *power* in the ways in which it becomes possible to work with these processes.

But this notion of 'level' can lead to an indefinite escalation of contexts. What stops this? The answer seems to be in the way *leadership* operates within the organisation to set a ceiling^{xvii}; and the ways in which individuals position themselves in relation to that leadership/ceiling.

Leadership and the subject of change

So 'culture' becomes in general a way of referring to the presence of structure - the effects of languaging on the subject, and particular cultures show the effects of particular forms of structure. These effects operate at different 'levels' depending on the ways in which individuals *subject* themselves under this structure. This subjection operates not only in relation to the particular forms of leadership operating under that structure, but in relation to the structure itself.

In inserting himself under this structure, the individual takes up a 'role'. This 'role' is constituted as a social relation to others through the particular forms of discourse which

'show' not only the operation of the structure; but also its particular form under the structure.

In this $\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{listening} \mid \text{speaking}}$ something is always left out - something is left to be desired.

This what-is-left-out can be understood in terms of that which remains perpetually beyond structure - an impossibility.

A key consequence of this approach is to make a distinction between the *obedience* of the subject to certain kinds of signifying practice at different levels - the question of leadership; and the *alienation* of the subject under the structure itself. Just as there is something always left out about the tree when placed under the signifier 'tree', so too there is something always left out about the subject's sense of him- or herself when s/he places him/herself under the structure of signifiers. It is crucial, however, to take on this notion of alienation as the notion that '*something is left to be desired*'. The effect of language in mediating *needs* as *demands* is to leave this something to be *desired*.

'Vision' is the way we usually speak about mobilising this desire associated with there being something 'more' to be desired. 'Vision' is therefore a way of articulating the leadership of desire. 'Vision' fails when it loses touch with this 'more', and becomes simply another demand under an existing structure - just a 'motherhood' statement. It takes the form of a demand, when the desire of the leader is to *have* a vision with which to lead.... the difficulty here is that the desire of the leader is no substitute for the desire of the organisation. In a sense, the desire of the leader has to be the desire of the desire of the organisation. Insofar as the leader touches on this question of the desire of the organisation, change becomes possible.

But in what sense 'change'? The question of the subject's relation to his or her desire is a question concerning his or her own ethics. But when the individual constitutes his or herself in relation to an organisation through obedience to its authority, this question of the ethic of the subject becomes a question of the way in which that ethic 'shows' itself in the *extension* of the subject, and thus as an 'ethic' of the organisation. The way in which 'change' is possible in the organisation is a way of 'reading' this ethic at work.

Three forms can usefully be distinguished: (i) 'Sovereign' authority, in which the ruler knows best; (ii) Juridical authority, in which rules and procedures are adopted *as if* they were real; and (iii) Performative authority^{xviii,xix}, in which the organisation operates through the adoption of its insignia, but this adoption is done *in relation to* what is left out. In this sense, whereas juridical authority is cynical, performative authority is sceptical.

In the first form of 'sovereign' authority, it is *as if* those in authority really do know best, so that things are taken literally. This gives rise to what Argyris described as single loop behaviour. There is nothing but 'what-is-there'.... but we would say that it is *structure-determined*, or *over-determined* by structure, except that there can be no questioning of that structure.

In the second form of 'juridical' authority, $\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{process}}$ is elaborated in the form of

$\frac{\text{structure}}{\text{process} \mid \text{process}}$. There are different levels of process in a relation of embeddedness to

each other, and although there are still levels at which process cannot be questioned (the process ceiling), below this level 'double loop' behaviour and learning is possible, and theory-in-use can be formulated *at some levels* of the organisation.

The third form of performative authority only becomes possible insofar as the structure itself is experienced as lacking. Thus this third form of authority recognises the insistence of what-is-left-out, and 'uses' it both to limit the scope of its own authority, and as a basis for calling itself into question. It is this third form of authority which gives rise to *critical process* - process in which structure itself is brought into question.

Leadership works with desire. In the first form however, this desire is split off from the workings of the organisation wholly (and possibly from the ruler as well); whereas in the second form, it only shows itself in the organisation in the form of a demand. If the organisation works in relation to demand only, however, then it reinforces the split between desire and demand which can 'motor' change in the organisation. Only the third form of authority works with the problematic of desire explicitly - through critical process.

So, insofar as desire arises, where does it arise, and whose is it? If desire is what-is-left-out, then desire will arise in the interstices of structure as symptoms - things not working 'as they should'... too much crisis management may be understood as a failure to 'work through' what-is-going-on in order to bring it under structure; but it is also an opportunity for change.

Making change

How then does 'change' happen? The 'sovereign' approach is based on the "just tell them to do it... or else" approach. The basic difference between the juridical and performative approaches, however, rests on whether desire or demand is seen as the motor of change. The juridical approach is based on demand, and begins by changing knowledge and attitudes, on the assumption that if they are changed, behaviour follows. This means teaching individuals to make new demands on themselves and their organisation. In contrast, the performative approach is based on desire, and changes behaviour through changing structure, from which new forms of knowledge and attitudes follow.

This performative approach is described in "Why change programs don't produce change"^{xx}. In this paper, the authors argue that change comes through co-ordination, commitment and competencies being brought together. This is their list:

- mobilise commitment to change through joint diagnosis of business problems.
- develop a shared vision (desire) of how to organise and manage for competitiveness.
- foster consensus for the new vision (desire), competence to enact it, and cohesion to move it along.
- spread revitalisation to all departments without pushing it from the top.
- institutionalise revitalisation through formal policies, systems and structures.
- monitor and adjust strategies in response to problems in the revitalisation process.

The point here is that structure is being changed first, instead of a top-down cascade of change programmes teaching the new attitudes. In another paper on "How networks

reshape organisations"^{xxi}, this structural change is described in terms of changing the social architecture of a business through changing networks. This becomes the key responsibility of senior managers:

- define with the clarity and specificity the business outputs managers expect of the network and the timeframe in which the network is expected to deliver.
- guarantee the visibility and free flow of information to all members of the network and promote simultaneous communication and dialogue among them.
- develop new criteria and processes for performance evaluation and promotion that emphasise horizontal collaboration through networks. Openly share these performance measurements with all members of the network and adjust them in response to changing circumstances.

These are interventions which remain sensitive to the structure under which the intervention is taking place, and the necessity to work in relation to it - through processes which are critical.

Consequences

Where does this leave the role of the CEO? Clearly, in articulating vision - vision in the sense of articulating what is to be desired, in contrast to a leadership based in the creation of demands through the invocation of Ideals. The role of leadership is *at least* to create the conditions in which desire becomes formulated as demand, not once, but as an ongoing process..... but more than that, using this vision to motor structural (architectural) change in support of that vision. In the paper on using networks to create change, this is the role of CEO:

- To develop career paths that encourage leadership development.
- To create a market for change through intervening on both supply and demand. Supply, in the sense of creating those processes that can support change; and Demand in the sense of bringing desire under structure and formulating it as demand.

The very process of successfully revitalising parts of the business becomes the process of doing this, so that those business units operate as organisational models for the entire company. This involves an approach to leadership which is 'performative'.

Endnotes

- ⁱCharles E. Lindblom (1959) *Public Administration Review* pp 79-88
- ⁱⁱThomas Kuhn (1962) "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" Chicago
- ⁱⁱⁱPaul de Man 1982 "The Resistance to Theory" *Yale French Studies* 63.
- ^{iv}HBR Novemer-December 1991 pp96-104
- ^vMichael Polanyi (1958) "Personal Knowledge: towards a Post-Critical Philosophy". Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- ^{vi}"Managing Strategic Change - Strategy, Culture and Action" (1992) *Long Range Planning*, Vol 25 No 1 pp28-36
- ^{vii}This stays much closer to Kuhn's conception of a paradigm, which had a much greater social dimension to it. For Kuhn, a paradigm was more the consequences of the conservation of identity - one of the 'laws' of human nature.
- ^{viii}HBR May-June 1991
- ^{ix}Sage 1986
- ^xThe general form of this relation to language comes from Saussure's work - Ferdinand de Saussure. (1915) *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris. Payot.
- ^{xi}The way it is being developed here is based on Lacan's reading of Saussure in the context of his own work. - eg. Jacques Lacan (1956) *Speech and language in psychoanalysis*. translated by Anthony Wilden 1968 John Hopkins University Press.
- ^{xii}"Double loop learning in organizations." HBR Sept-Oct 1977
- ^{xiii}Argyris and Schon, "Theory in practice" San Francisco Jossey Bass 1974.
- ^{xiv}We refer to the existence of 'double-loop' behaviour in terms of *critical process*.
- ^{xv}This analysis of what-is-going-on as being symptomatic of both the physical structures and the social processes whereby that structure is organised is the characteristic of 'soft systems analysis' (Checkland), as well as the 'systems dynamics' approaches developed at MIT.
- ^{xvi}We have developed a number of ways of working with this . CritikTM is a means of supporting a critical process which brings into question the context out of which a subject is speaking. DeconTM is a way of formalising a particular linguistic structure under which descriptions of activity and experience are being formulated, levels and all; and PanTM is a way of analysing the relationships between different levels of process under such a structure in terms of the way each level relates to the levels above and below it....
- ^{xvii}"Process ceiling" is a way of referring to an upper limit on the nature of the contexts which can be invoked within the organisation. The particular nature of this process ceiling is an effect of the forms of leadership within the organisation; and different kinds of process ceiling produce different kinds of constraint on the nature of the strategies which can be sustained by the organisation. The process ceiling, when considered along with *personal ceilings* and *job ceilings*, define the strategy ceiling for the organisation as a whole.
- ^{xviii}I am borrowing here from Slavoj Zizek's "For they know not what they do: enjoyment as a political factor" Verso 1991.
- ^{xix}I am also using Foucault's progression (from 'Governmentality' in "The Foucault Effect: studies in governmentality" edited by Burchell, Gordon and Miller. Wheatsheaf 1991.) except that Foucault refers to this third form as a formation of *savoir*.
- ^{xx}Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector. HBR Nov-Dec 1990. pp158-166
- ^{xxi}Charan. HBR Sept-Oct 1991 pp 104-115