# Eclectism Facilitates the Analysis of Organizational Evolution

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**ABSTRACT**
Organizational evolution is presented in lieu of the concept of change, revolution, revitalization, etc. in that one can assert that organizations can only evolve, they cannot develop a new structure and paradigm from nonexistent precursors, elements, structures, etc. One year is action science based with the executives diving off of logs into the arms of their vice presidents, the next is playing games and doing puzzles to determine the company's cognitive centre, more recently its not been about expressing feelings and defenses, or understanding perception, but about being appreciated. In short, all of these evangelically based approaches which view an organization through a single lens fail

The term organizational evolution is presented in lieu of the concept of change, revolution, revitalization, etc. in that one can assert that organizations can only evolve, they cannot develop a new structure and paradigm from nonexistent precursors, elements, structures, etc. Such metamorphosis can appear to be revolutionary, extreme, etc. nonetheless it can be asserted that such conclusions are a matter of vantage point, or wishful thinking, and not the result of something new from nothing in the old. In essence, organizational transformation can be viewed as the emergence of motifs and milieus that were latent and not expressed. Such transformation can be facilitated evangelically. In fact such facilitations are common as the facilitation fad changes from one technique to another. One year is action science based with the executives diving off of logs into the arms of their vice presidents, the next is playing games and doing puzzles to determine the company's cognitive centre, more recently its not been about expressing feelings and defenses, or understanding perception, but about being appreciated. In short, all of these evangelically based approaches which view an organization through a single lens fail.

They fail not so much for reasons known, or their own short-comings or flawed application, although all of the above does happen, but because organizations are essentially narrowly defined and well bounded communities nested within a larger communal environment. In short, they are the privy of multiple disciplines within the social sciences., They are not suitable for analysis through a single lens. As such only an eclectic analysis can provide enough information for the development of a successful change. An analysis that not only involves various approaches to knowledge, but also one that connects the various layers of analysis from the top layer of espoused action to the macro environment which forms the foundation the organization rests upon. Eclectically harvested via a multidiscipline approach yields layered information that can be woven into a coherent image of the organization.

Utilizing an eclectic approach lessens the importance of where one starts an analysis of an organization. It is important to follow a systematic rubric that lends itself to incorporating an iterative process of multiple analysises which will eventually be connected and layered to form not only a rich and accurate understanding of the organization, but a clear evolutionary path down which the organization can travel to

increase its positive fit within its niche. One also has to keep in mind that with such research conditions a history develops as the iterative process take place over time and thus takes on a history and an interaction with the subject entity all of which has to accounted for, and incorporated into the final analytical framework. The tapestry that is developed is not a snap shot of the organization from which a path for positive change is determined, but a multidimensional thick image with strands and threads tight and loose, coherent and divergent, strong and weak all running in many directions.

Successful organizational study and change requires an entry point from which positive results can be obtained. The organization's sense of threat, the researcher's sense of risk, and all issues associated with field work need to be considered prior to engaging the organization and the work itself. Positive Psychology coupled with Appreciative Inquiry are excellent places to start and proposed here as a means of entry with the organization. These results are subsequently woven together with more rigorous forms of linguistic, structural, and economic analysis which follow the initial effort and analysis.

Starting with Positive Psychology as the first layer of analysis is a good launch point and means of entry. Few organizations will strongly resist exposure to positive psychology. The aim of Positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change by building on preexisting positive qualities. Traits that contribute to positive psychology tend to tend to fall into four categories: subjective well-being, optimism, happiness, and self-determination; subjective well being refers to what we think and how we feel about our lives; optimism mediates between external events and a person's interpretation of them; self-determination focuses on competence, sense of belonging, and autonomy. Positive psychology concedes that no man is an island and that such positive experiences are embedded in a social structure, thus community and institutions, etc. must be taken

into account as shall be shown later. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

Positive psychology's methodology, in an organizational context, consists of interviews and non-therapeutic focus groups. The need to develop an interview regimen delivers the discussion to Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI's methodology lends itself well to narrowly defined interviews which reflect the sentiments of positive psychology as well as both paired interview settings and group settings. It is simultaneously a method of action research and an agent of change.

Appreciative Inquiry begins with the idea that conversations are socially constructed, or in other words the question defines the situation and by asking different and positive questions one can change the reality of the organization. AI is a question and answer a process. The answers are then thematically data mined by the participants to build a new social reality for an organization. The process builds upon the strengths expressed thematically in the data that emerged from the answers. The implementation of the themes then becomes the basis of the change process. In some sense it is applied positive psychology with faith in the ability to intentionally socially construct a new organizational reality.

AI's strength is its ability to create a buy-in for the participants, its an iterative process so that the data becomes both strengthened, bought into, nuanced as it emerges through the AI process. It also has the added advantage of facilitating quick implementation as the buy-in does not have to transmitted being, ideally, everyone in the organization is a participant. In some sense the implementation initiates before the AI process comes to a closure. AI leads to a reorganization as the organization's reality is reconstructed, its past, present, and future are reframed, the organization not only emerges with new initiatives, processes, policies, procedures, and structure, but with a new definition of itself and its environment. It is a transformational process, perhaps

revolutionary, but it can be clearly argued that its evolutionary in that all of the elements of the new organization and its new reality emerged from the answers to the questions and where in essence latent characteristics within the organization. The organization in a sense changes to adapt to what it perceives as its new niche in its new environment. All of the abilities and pieces where there but not expressed.

AI takes the social construction of the company and through the interview and thematic selection and discussion process isolates aspects of the company's reality and then focuses on expanding those aspects of the company through a discussion process. Through this public vetting the selected positive elements of the entity are emphasized and expanded, and become the foundation of new social reality of the company.

In short a new story is constructed and because it is a new story and because it is public there is an auto-buy-in process which, according to AI and Positive Psychology this new construction with its positive base, renders the company's previous internal issues, defensive routines, miscalculations, and structurally dysfunctional routines moot. As a new socially constructed reality emerges from the AI process, and now positive psychology based understanding of the company's new reality all previous issues have simply become latent qualities and part of the company's past history. Nice transformation: all of the company's dysfunctional routines changed, all of its defensive mechanisms short circuited, and the wind only at their backs as they move out to claim their new destiny. Their new socially constructed reality is so positive and the buy-in so complete and their new tasks and attitudes and the now positive values which are emphasized so embedded that only a positive future and organization lay ahead. All of this accomplished without any change in the personnel at the top of the organization, as for changes in the rest of the organization well they are result of the positive AI

process, have been bought into, and so the chips fell where they had too. So with such beauty one can stop their iterative investigation of the organization, and simply presume that all is well and what one sees is what one gets, after all everything was positive, public, the participants have been appreciated and those now emphasized appreciated elements are the new core of the entity.

Everything is solved-- except for one little detail which requires further investigation. Earlier it was noted that organizational transformation can be viewed as the emergence of motifs and milieus that were latent and not expressed. It was also noted that organizations were presented as narrowly defined and well bounded communities nested within a larger communal environment. Furthermore it was suggested that they are the privy of multiple disciplines primarily Anthropology and Economics, but what they are not is an entity suitable for analysis through a single lens. It was asserted earlier that only an eclectic analysis can provide enough information for the development of a successful change. So the inherent problems which were not addressed, because they could not be addressed via the single lens of positive psychology and its application via appreciative inquiry, did not go away. They will latently fester until the newly socially constructed entity becomes dysfunctional once again-- which it will. This is especially true if it views itself once again as a single entity with a single story and a single narrative as its self-defining mechanism.

This is a fundamental truth because the organization exists in a multifactited and multimotifed environment. It does not exist as a single unified environment. The entity is part of a dynamic where competing motifs, cultural milieus (especially in heterogeneous societies such as the United States, Europe, China, Latin America) and multiple social structures constantly interact with the organization and from time to time render its single lens story dysfunctional. Over time its ability to function

is debilitated as its new singled lens positive framework, even a dynamic one, is founded on a new single narrative and therefore has a limited range of adaptive responses and a relatively narrow range of dynamic solutions to the problems that arise as its new construction interacts with the world. So to be succinct, if the transformative process and analysis stop where AI concludes what has been accomplished is one set of problems has been traded for a new and yet unknown set of future problems because one story alone cannot encompass the entire environment.

Thus one is left with no option other than to continue with another layer of analysis of the organization, which now includes a touch of history as well, but stories can accommodate history as stories can have a beginning a middle and an end. The immediate issue for the analyst that is left is how to balance the single-lens focused view of the new social reality that has emerged within the target organization with the view that its environment is multifaceted, and by extension the organization is as well regardless of its current self-image.

Two immediate solutions come to mind, and being studying organizations is inherently interesting and a multilayered activity one should proceed with both solutions. The first is to continue the study of the target entity from the perspective of antenarrative. The second, which shall be discussed in more detail later, is to proceed with a multi-structural analysis. The answer is to do both.

Antenarrative is way to look at an entity where the emerged narrative is explaining the past by adding Goffmanian frame, plot and coherence to what was a reality that may or may not have had either. It renders a story that is told to be a constructed representation of a reality, a coherent history with its coherence imposed. It shows the story of the company to be an imposed reality (which then requires one to study the process of that imposition). The concept captures well the same concept that is the reality of a classical music composer just prior to notating his music. The music is in his head, its emerging as its being formed at the same time its exists, its correcting itself, it lacks coherence and structure, but its there formed and being formed-- existing yet not yet written down for others to interpret. It mirrors society as motifs rise and fall, change and reemerge with strength and consistency, and are interwoven to create a fabric which forms a multifaceted milieu which is instinctively referred to as society, culture, etc.

Organizations within such a universe are microcosms mirroring while contributing, complementing while interacting and changing the environment which both sustains them and to which they contribute and form structure. Antenarrative reveals the stark reality that a single narrative with coherent themes and support in does not exist, but in fact an organization is a constructed tapestry with multiple motifs, themes, which both reflect and create multiple realities within the single organization.

Antenarrative is apperceptive as it pays attention to the speculative, the ambiguity of sense making and is willing to approximate a description of what is happening within the flow of experience. One should note that while sense making is often connected to Weick, Dervin, and Klein in order to approach the concept with appropriate depth it should be dealt with from the more complex and motivational perspective of Murry, Morgan, and Shneidman. (Shneidman, E. 1987). Weick, et. al. look at sense making in the more narrow understanding of discourse and social construction. Murry, et. al see apperception as the formation of understanding as an interplay between an individual's inner psychology and the ambiguous external environment which, by definition, cannot communicate a complete and coherent picture of the environment to any given individual hence one has to "make sense" of his world and does so through his own psychological mechanisms. Thus when individuals are presented with a sufficiently ambiguous situation their explanation, what

Boje would refer to as their narrative story, reveals more about the actor than the reality of the environment.

Antenarrative theory mitigates this distortion by acknowledging that stories, narrative, explanations, etc. all emerge from something that is undefined, but exists prior to their being formed. Boje tells us that antenarrative "directs our attention to the flow of the storytelling . . . antenarrative is an experience of storytelling life with abbreviated and interrupted story performances that yield plurivocality." (Boje, 2001). Antenarrative captures the flow of experience, as does apperception which acknowledges and strives to gain understanding and insight into the process of narrative formation within the individual. Antenarrative operates at the level of the collective prior to explanation being reified. It celebrates the diversity, complexity, and ambiguity of the dynamic process of the creation of a story which then forms the socially constructed reality of an entity by in essence drowning out the other voices. Much in the same way that a great symphony ends with a single unified melody, structure, harmony, etc. When well done the now unified orchestra produces music which appears to have been the inevitable result of the early motifs woven into the fabric of the music and expressed and interpreted by the orchestra . In short there appears to have been no emergent process of social construction, only a single preordained emergent inevitable truth. Antenarrative theory unravels the process destroying the myth of unity and inevitability.

Antenarrative theory, while Boje is not a linguist, rests on modern linguistic theory, specifically discourse analysis. Social Construction theory while developed within the field of Sociology by Burger and Luckman also rests on linguistics. So, this leads one to another layer of analysis that is necessary within the study of an organization, discourse analysis. At this point it also allows one to increase the reliability and validity of any explanations, data, etc. that one has as AI,

Positive Psychology, and antenarrative are all laid over a foundation of discourse theory.

Discourse analysis begins with a systematic collection of conversations among the participants within a given community-- in this case an organization. These are then analyzed, and followed up with interviews which focus on the general question of "what were you thinking when you said." The goal is to do develop a discourse model of the shared understanding of meaning within the community of speakers-- the organization. This shared meaning forms the basis of the socially constructed reality as meaning and definition are emergent phenomena which result from discourse among the community of speakers. In other words meaning, what one said, is a result of a social process. Meaning is created by the framing of the conversations as Goffman suggests and does not depend on place and time, but depends on definition and community boundary. It is also created by what Mead and Cooley refer to as the I-Self, or Buber termed the I thou. For the purpose of organization or community studies the self/thou does not have to be an single individual. It fact it can and is often presented as a separate and non-human entity as in "the company's response is, or the company's policy is." In such cases the company has been reified and elevated to the level of an agent. The real reason for this, of course, is so that the individuals involved can hide behind the social construction known as the organization to avoid individual responsibility for individual acts. For a better understand of the phenomena of rules and their lives one can turn to Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology.

The primary advantage for the researcher to, at this point, turn to discourse analysis is that all of the necessary data has been, or should have been, collected. In the course of conducting the AI, and subsequent follow-up the researcher should have sufficient transcripts of conversations to conduct a discourse analysis on the material already gathered. While eliminating work: the work of gathering more data, utilizing pre-

existing data from earlier transcripts. One negative aspect of this is that it also eliminates a methodological check on the validity and reliability of the early collected conversations. So in some sense, at this point without going back to the organization and collecting another set of original data whatever methodological problems exist within the available data set with be magnified.

Discourse analysis concerns itself with how language is involved in social practice, meaning, the interaction between and within text (in this case transcripts of verbal conversations), and the representations (and thus the creation of meaning) of social events. I am making a distinction between Titscher's conversational analysis and general discourse analysis which is more in line and more accessible to Social Theory and its analytical tools. General conversational analysis will not significantly advance our portrait of an organization while discourse analysis will deepen and act as confirming tool of the layered work already accomplished above. Social discourse does not necessarily change the reality or even reconstruct it with every conversation and text produced, sometimes it is merely a reflection and/or an acknowledgement of an earlier reified social construction, in short an affirmation of what exists.

As such discourse analysis will assist the researcher in the identification of those aspects of interaction which cause an organization to evolve, to be dysfunctional, to resist evolution, etc. Such analysis highlights the effect of ideology. As textual information (verbal and written) propagate it can inculcate, sustain, or change dominate ideology (Norm, 2003). In short what words we use matter as to how what we are discussing is envisioned within the community. Thus, as an organization engages in a discussion of itself latent themes can emerge which are then defined as being better able to have a positive influence on the organization's future than the current, now fading discourse which has defined and

sustained the organization in the past. By adding a discourse analysis to the above one can clarify and temper aspects of the analysis formed up to this point. It still does not place the organization within its larger Macro environmental context, in order to add that to the analysis of an organization one has to turn to a structural approach within Anthropology.

Structural analysis has a long tradition in the Social Sciences. At one time it was considered the way to conduct proper Sociology, and Anthropology. Hence some clarification is in order. A Parsonian analysis is absolutely not what is being referred to within this discussion. While the concept of latent structures is one of the key features of Talcott Parson's work and the term is being used here, its use is more in line with Biological Adaptive Theory in the sense that an entity has unexpressed qualities that might not only become expressed or become essential within a different environmental context. Structural analysis is being used here more in line with Claude Lévi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz, and Gregory Batson. Structural in the sense that there are created social structures that form the underlying lattice work of the organization. That understanding these is an interpretive act, and that multiple and in fact contradicting structures can exist simultaneously and can be seen from multiple points of view. These structures can be explicit as in formal, as well as informal, and the degree of the awareness of them by the participants themselves varies within a given community. Strauss demonstrates that within a given community multiple structures, explanations, and meanings, exist commingled within the same community. The elite of the community may share one view while the common members of the exact same community share a completely different understanding and set of explanations, both are equally valid and can be utilized for both their explanatory strength and their predictive power. Batson explains how the same behavior can have multiple meanings, be seen from multiple points of view and all them are neither mutually

exclusive, contradictory, exclusionary of each other, nor are they invalid from each of the other points of view (Lévi-Strauss,1963, Clifford Geertz, 2000,

Gregory Batson, 1958)

When analyzing an organization, especially from a linguistic or related or language based point of view it is important to create a cradle for the analysis so that it can be contextualized. Structural theory within Anthropology provides such a lattice cradle onto which all of the above can be attached and connected to more macro based phenomena. While it can be debated that the result of the analysis at this stage will be a connection to grand theory, once a structural sense of the organization has been developed-- and it can emerge out of the discourse analysis or from a fresh foray into the organization, the entire study can be set within one of the grand approaches. For the above approaches the greatest internal consistency will be achieved by tempering the above layers of understanding with a Neo-Marxist approach.

By doing so one will arrive at a holistic representation of the dynamics of the changing motifs and the interplay of their competing and changing intensity as a means of describing the dynamics of an organization's evolution into a new form. A Neo-Marxist approach lends itself to integration with language and social construction based analysis more easily than other grand theories. Furthermore, Neo-Marxist theory provides the actors a motivational explanation for their sense of agency and for the details of their discourse and view of the organization. It gives the analysis a predictive ability which can be tested, is there evidence of exploitation among various subcommunities, are there consistent differences in points of view, in-group/out-group language barriers, where to look for Batsonian predictions of multiple structures, lines of connection, etc. Are gender issues, economic self-interest issues played out within the organization and expressed in various stories and discourse

patterns or AI themes. None of the other approaches above address either the question of motivation or provide one with predictive ability. One could argue that positive psychology/appreciative inquiry give a researcher some predictive ability, but to say that participants do something because its rewarded and makes them feel good is shallow at best and more useless than useful. The more rigorous linguistic analysis may indeed have greater scientific strength from a methodological point of view and allow for less pontification based on a philosophical starting point (such as Neo-Marxism), but such analysis does not rise above the micro level of theory even when stretched to be applied to groups of speakers and communities. Discourse approaches, even when done well, and accurately cannot explain motivation or agency among the participants, they only deal with their expression and the emergence of expression. It can only provide proof and evidence for further analysis with a different framework. Structural theory clarifies the macro dynamics, context, and flow thus approaching Neo-Marxism in its provisioning of motivation and agency, but does not provide an explanation of why people are involved in a specific dynamic and why there are attached to the structural lattice where they are, only that they are in fact part of the community. Non-Marxist structural approaches may document the political life of an organization, but they cannot explain it. Neo-Marxist based structural approaches fill the final gap in the study of the organization, and provide not only the participants of the community motivation and place, but the organization motivation and place with its community as well.

When one wants to delve into organizational studies no single lens is wide enough, rich enough, or detailed enough to provide a complete picture of the organization only a collage of images taken from different points view can sustain an accurate understanding of an organization.

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