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Many shades of “green”: An exploration of sustainability storytelling across and within university organizations

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Abstract

Researchers apply theories by Boje and the storytelling community to further understand how organizations, specifically universities, portray themselves on different fronts through storytelling in regard to sustainability. The current study expands the existing knowledge regarding stories (i.e. narrative, living story, antenarrative, and microstoria) by the synergies and lack thereof between them and demonstrates how organizations need to portray a unified image since stories can, and do, shape the physical, objective world. Two complementary studies are conducted to explore the sustainability story of university campuses. In Study One, three southwestern university campuses are explored through campus tour narratives. Study Two looks in-depth at one university to help understand how the story is told from inside the organization which leads to what is observed by the final consumer. Several inconsistencies are found on how the story is told to prospective students. The storytelling theories presented in this paper expand knowledge by providing insight into how one individual may change the perspective of sustainability and the lasting effects this may cause. Being present on several campuses paints a picture of how vastly different the stories told to potential students are. Applying the theories of narrative, living story, and antenarrative may help explain how synergic a university presents its sustainability objective to prospective students.

The ‘greening’ of organizations has become a buzzword in the past few years (Nodoushani & Nodoushani 2010). Many organizations, large and small, public and private, have done this for a variety of reasons such as investor interest in green companies, customers who seek earth-friendly products and services, as well as available funding and/or tax

incentives for reducing waste and pollution. However, other companies truly have a green spirit and want to help the natural environment. A number of universities and colleges across the United States have also decided to 'green' themselves. This research examines, across several southwestern campuses, and from different perspectives, if being sustainable is a priority or just a marketing tool. We adopt the idea that sustainability is a way that people and business can attain their full potential while protecting the natural environment. However, in this paper, we focus solely on the environmental element and how that is reflected.

By looking at characteristics of the universities' green marketing messages and the stories told by individuals involved in those institutions, we see not only the organizational narrative, but personal narratives as well. There is usually a reason to tell a story and the story usually says something about the storyteller (Burley, Jenkins, Laska, & Davis 2007). Exploring this idea through campus tours and campus sustainability groups allows the researchers to glean a truer picture of how salient being green is as well as any possible underlying motives for promoting a green campus.

In this paper, the researchers begin with a brief review of pertinent literature. Then we diverge into two unique, yet complementary studies, in which universities are explored at different levels. The first study compares three large southwestern universities, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and University of Texas, El Paso from the perspective of campus tour guides and the stories they tell. The second study looks in-depth at a single southwestern university, New Mexico State University, through the eyes of administrators, web developers, employees, and students. Our study hopes to contribute to the literature by revealing how organizations, specifically universities, portray themselves on different fronts through storytelling in regard to environmental sustainability. This research contributes to existing theory by demonstrating how the narrative, living story, and antenarrative can at times be in synergy, and at other times, not. It not only expands the current knowledge regarding stories, but demonstrates how organizations need to portray a unified image since "stories can and do shape the physical, objective world" (Alkon 2004, p. 151).

Literature Review

The following section will attempt to explore the vast research on storytelling while focusing specifically on the storytelling theories developed by Boje. The section will begin with an introduction of Boje's theories on emergent stories and storytelling in organizations. The authors will give a brief overview of additional storytelling theories compared to those selected for examination in the current study. Next, the authors will explain the living story and how this may create the narrative and antenarrative found in the stories told between individuals when confronted with issues of sustainability. Finally, the use of the narrative and antenarrative theories will be explained for understanding how these work together in the current study on stories told about 'greenness' of college campuses.

I learned that over the last decades, our organizations have lost important competencies to be able to interpret living stories, redefine narrative expectation, understand many voices, and read between the lines of story (Boje 2010, p. 55).

Emergent story can be defined as absolute novelty, spontaneity, and improvisation, without a past and/or a future (Boje 2010, p. 55). Boje believes that the ways of storytelling are dying, being replaced by information processing, beginning-middle-end (BME) ways of novel writing. In business it is important for the company representative to tell the organizational story as part of their Being, uniting the individual to the company. When values and beliefs correspond between the employee (e.g. campus representative) and the company, the story is often portrayed as part of their lives. In the following section the authors will introduce the theories of storytelling in order to present the theoretical framework found in understanding how organizations tell their story of sustainability. Thus begins our review of literature on storytelling organizations and the importance of unifying the vision between the person in the organization and the institution itself.

Storytelling Organizations

According to Boje et al. (2004b), "there is a storytelling organization system where narratives, antenarratives, and terse performances all work together in a 'story space'" (p. 4). In organizations, such storytelling is used among stakeholders, both internal and external for sense-making (Boje 1991a). He says,

What is interesting about storytelling in organizations is that stakeholders also posit alternative stories with alternative motives and implications to the very same underlying historical

incident. The story takes on more importance than mere objective facts. In complex organizations, part of the reason for storytelling is the working out of those differences in the interface of individual and collective memory (Boje 1991b, p. 2).

Storytelling organizations are complex, and the roles played by the actors of the stories that develop are as well. To behave properly in a storytelling organization, it is imperative to know who can be told a certain story, and by whom that story can be shared (Boje 1991b). This can be seen in most, if not all, organizations. There are stories that take place in boardrooms that would never be shared with the general public. There are stories that are told between co-workers that will never be shared with management. And, even when stories are told between different strata, filters are in place and only certain information may be exchanged. The story is "highly variable and sometimes political, in that part of the collective processing involves telling different versions of stories to different audiences" (Boje 1991b, p. 1). Often, entire stories are not told. They come out fragmented and incomplete as they are shared with various audiences (Boje 2001).

There is a difference between stories and narratives. Narratives need to have coherence with a plot as well as a beginning, middle, and an end (Boje 2001). When stories are told without these elements, they are antenarrative (Boje 2001). They are too disorderly and disjointed to make sense looking backwards (Boje 2001). Stories are more likely "to be dispersive (unravelling coherence, asserting differences)" (Boje 2008, p.7) than narratives.

Storytelling organizations are, by nature, antenarrative. They exist to share and put into practice their stories while struggling to make sure those stories are viewed in the right way from within and without the organization (Boje 2001). "It is a sensemaking that is coming into Being, but not finished or concluded, in narrative retrospection" (Boje 2001, p. 4). The stories told by these organizations are formed in such a way as to promote certain images or ideas, whether those images or ideas are of the past or the future (Boje 2001). He also says that storytelling, as antenarrative, occurs in complex organizations in the following manner.

It is before narrative closure, it is speculative, and it is in the flow of experience. The meaning of events depends upon the locality, the prior sequence of stories and the transformation of characters in the wandering discourses (Boje 2001, p. 4).

Many other storytelling researchers explain how stories can influence an organization's decisions, communication, and direction. Gabriel and Connel (2010) discuss the collaborative experiences found in storytelling. The collaborative experiences are often part of a co-creation between the experimenter and the other individuals in the situation. In other words, the experimenter can influence the story just by being a part of the situation. It is often found that when stories are told in the right time and context it can help others understand the situations that may have been too complex to breakdown. Stories are important for communicating this message to others in leaders in and outside of education (Bennis 1996, Gabriel 1997, Gargiulo 2002, Shamir & Eilam 2005). Additionally, Czarniawska (2004) discusses how modern organizing takes place in a net of fragmented, multiple contexts through what she calls a kaleidoscopic movement. This can be explained by the organization of many parts of the story that are developed in many places and often very quickly. These theories, including co-creation and observant participation, introduce similar ideas to the theories explored in the current study. However, the researchers follow Boje's narrative, living story, and antenarrative as an attempt to define the differences found between three universities and in the in-depth administration investigation at one of those universities.

In the same field of storytelling research, Brunsson (2003) discusses how the understanding of organized hypocrisy can help individuals understand that the talk and decisions are part of an organized action to help others understand a situation. Organized hypocrisy can be described as a model which implies that talk, decisions, and actions are coupled by a means other than what would usually be assumed (Brunsson 2003). For example, an organization may attempt to improve sustainability by increasing the amount of emails regarding recycling that are sent to students, faculty, and staff. Therefore, this decision to increase sustainability email campaigns moves the organization in one direction. A decision has been made to change the actions of students, faculty, and staff. The likelihood of a corresponding decision to increase sustainability is far more likely than not improving sustainability. The organization has moved in one direction.

The authors recognize the importance of several researchers and their ability to define and change the way we look at the use of stories found around us in organizations. For purposes of our exploration focus, the current paper will utilize the ideas presented by Boje. Further research would be encouraged to bring co-creation, observant participation and organized

hypocrisy into sustainability storytelling. However, for purposes of clarification, the researchers decided to explore how the narrative, living story, and antenarrative literature work together to orchestrate the organizational campus sustainability story. The following section explores the differences and similarities found when organizations formulate storytelling.

Narrative

The triadic model of storytelling has three genres that intra-play: narrative, living story, and antenarrative (Boje 2010). The narrative form plays a strong role in the use of storytelling about environmental sustainability on college campuses. Boje (2010) defines narrative as the dominant force in the storytelling domain, focused on the past, on form and structure, but not looking much at the future or at agency. Brand marketing, and selling the idea behind your product, often falls into this genre. In business, especially in marketing, stories are often used to sell the product brand. Stories bring customers closer to a product while this story of the product (brand) becomes part of the customer's Being. For example, Starbucks presents the environment of an upscale bistro where individuals can work outside their regular office space and feel at home in the coffee shop as a place of business. Customers purchase products with the Starbucks logo to carry the image of Starbucks into the rest of their daily activities. Starbucks coffee and drink cups become part of the customer's Being which transcends the Starbucks story into others' lives. Many organizations are able to create the sense of belonging for individuals just way that Starbucks has done in creating the story of the organization. It is often hard for individuals and organizations to see past the narrative. The ingrained understanding of a company's story could benefit from moving further into the future.

Living Story

The living story is all about 'movement, the tour, a founding of story spaces, a networking in the unfolding present, where each story is dialogically relational to another one, and must be told to tell of another social relationship, another context' (Boje 2010, pg. 3). Living stories are different from narratives because they are never-ending. There is no beginning or end.

Living stories change depending on the time, the people involved, and the emotions surrounding the situation at hand. In marketing, these can be the stories of organizations that have a long history, yet the organizational tale is ever-evolving in the present.

Using Starbucks as an example again, these can be the stories that unfold in and around the coffee shops daily, relating to customer experiences in the often ongoing relationships they have with Starbucks. These living stories show not only how one experience relates to the next as well as the prior, but how it affects the participants while sense-making, how the story is told to another, and how it shapes what Starbucks becomes. University stories can also be viewed as living stories where each story is related to the next, and because of the present, past, and future students and stakeholders, the stories never end and shape the future of the institution.

Antenarrative

In organizations, marketers attempt to create a unified narrative through their products as well as their promotions. It is believed important that the same story be understood and shared by all employees, whether they are frontline or administrative personnel to create a specific, cohesive image. It is also essential that this story is shared with other stakeholders in a unified way. However, in business things are not always so clear. Each person experiences and perceives things a little differently therefore, at times, those individual experiences and perceptions may not align with the narrative set forth by the company. While "narrative theory is an experience of the after-effects of storytelling once coherence is rendered, ante-narrative is an experience of the storytelling life with abbreviated and interrupted story performances that yield plurivocality" (Boje 2001, p. 3). In business, antenarratives are plentiful, but overlooked (Boje 2008).

"Antenarrative gives attention to the speculative, the ambiguity of sensemaking and guessing as to what is happening in the flow of experience. It answers the question 'what is going on here?'" (Boje 2001, p. 3) which "can transform organizational relationships" (Boje 2008, p. 13). In antenarratives, there are many different thoughts and arguments which are still trying to be deciphered (Boje 2001). Antenarrative is constituted out of the flow of lived experience, while narrative method is more meta; it is about the storytelling that came before (Boje 2001).

Boje (2010) describes that linear antenarratives have a structured plot referred to as BME (beginning, middle, and end). Flatland storytelling is where storytelling is reduced to a line. Linearity is all those myths of inevitability, where the

past is traced as inevitable (Morson 1994, p. 66). The stories told through campus tours are not linear. They are changing in time, between individuals and conversations, to create the need for the guide to react to the situation in that moment of Being. Understanding how to incorporate the antenarrative of an organization can lead to more in-depth analysis of the company story therefore, in the current study, the authors look further into antenarratives as a unique tool to understanding the company processes, individuals, and effects on storytelling.

Narrative and Antenarrative Analysis

Stories exist throughout organizations and can be hard to analyze (Boje 2001). According to Boje et al. (2004b), antenarratives, not moving in a straight line, struggle against narratives that take on a linear trajectory. The authors go on to say that "looking at both models in the same story space" (Boje et al. 2004b, p. 4) is a good way to proceed. Combining narrative analysis and antenarrative analysis is "about multi-voiced ways of telling stories, with even antenarrative and non-linear ones whose linear plot sequence is missing and where no one seems to mind" (Boje 2001, p. 9).

Based on theories by Boje and the storytelling community, the following research will take you through the narrative of promoting 'greenness' to the community and into the living story as well as the antenarrative and how these concepts weave through the web of the organizational story. Specifically in this study, the researchers analyze how organizations often do not communicate through all channels to inform others about the complete story they wish to promote. The example of Starbucks can tell multi-voiced stories along non-linear paths. One story may come from the corporation or textbook version of how Starbucks is helping promote free trade for their coffee and other retail products. On the other hand, a story from employees or 'baristas' display the image of Starbucks as the profit driven corporation, paying little attention to the sustainability of the third world organizations. The sustainability of organizations, including universities, has become a growing concern for consumers, business leaders, and other stakeholders (Aguirre et al. 2012). Helping these organizations transfer their initiatives throughout the organization can increase success as well as provide a solid understanding to all individuals involved.

Study One: Prospective Student View of Campus Sustainability

The story told by one individual within an organization can influence the perspective of others, both positively and negatively, towards the overall organizational goals. In study one, the researchers played the role of prospective students for three universities in the southwestern United States. The universities were chosen for their similarities; they all were in desert climates with comparable enrollments. The tours were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher for storytelling information related to sustainability. In the following section the researcher will relate the storytelling theories of narrative, living story, and antenarrative in order to guide others on the influence this may have on the appearance of an organization to outsiders.

Sustainability is important for the entire university Being. In study one, the living stories of the university tour guides are captured. Understanding the important role the tour guides have on campus becomes apparent to the antenarrative concept in creating change for the entire organization. The campus representative, in this case the tour guides, have direct contact with the customers (i.e., the students of the future) and share the message of the university. In order to be effective, the speech given to a prospective student could benefit from mimicking the brand created for the entire university; molding the stories to get customers, in this case, potential students, to believe in what the university story has to offer. However, this transfer of information takes buy-in of the organizational values and goals by the person selling the image to the customer.

Cycles are part of our lives. According to Bakhtin (1993), this is the taking possession of that moment of Being. The campus representative's life as a tour guide becomes very important for the campus. These frontline employees have physical one-on-one contact with individuals who will become the next generation on campus. Living the story, believing in the sustainability of their university, may be created at that moment on the campus tour. Boje states the

living story is the emergence, trajectory, and morphing of living story from antenarrative-conception to the death of decomposition and forgetting to tell anymore. Living story is neither being nor non-being; it is a form of haunting (Boje, 2008, p. 260).

The tour guide has the power to live in the moment and present the campus in a way that will mesh with the university administration's goals and objectives, if they know the importance of their role.

In this study we attempt to answer the following questions: How does the message of campus sustainability reflect in the guides' speech and actions? What are the guides being told and then passing on to the prospective students? Is the environmental sustainability story told?

Method

In study one, three universities were examined to see if the stories told by the campus tour guides match the sustainability approach the university administration is presenting to the public. The schools chosen were the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV), the University of Texas in El Paso (UTEP), and New Mexico State University in Las Cruces (NMSU) because of their desert locations where sustainability from the 'green' perspective has become important. The campuses are also comparable in geographic location and size. The researchers posed as prospective graduate business students who had an interest in sustainability. Graduate tours were observed to improve consistency of data across the three locations. Each tour was approximately one hour long.

In keeping with Boje (1991b) and acting as participant observers, the researchers recorded the conversations between the prospective students, the parents, and the guide while riding along as the guides drove through the campuses on golf carts. The dialogues were later separately transcribed by two researchers to ensure the consistency of wording and then analyzed to find occurrences of sustainability storytelling embedded in the conversations. Specifically, the researchers were looking for references to (1) campus recycling programs, (2) xeriscaped lawns, and (3) other 'green' programs going on throughout the campus in the story fragments. When the tour guides discussed the sustainability of the campus, the researchers probed deeper to find out more. At other times, the researchers opened dialogues about sustainability topics to encourage discussion regarding how the campus is affected by the existing sustainability initiatives.

According to Boje (2008, p. 240), "story fabric is defined by four qualities along landscape and temporal dimensions: simultaneity, fragmentation, trajectory, and morphing." It is often hard for people to experience the entire, full-blown stories from beginning, middle, to end. In campus tours, the potential student experiences the story fragments since storytellers leave most of the story to the imagination of the listeners. These collective dynamics give rise to what Boje calls trajectory. "Antenarratives morph along trajectories, which is what makes them living stories" (Boje 2008, p. 240). In the following section, the researchers will provide examples of these story fragments and the impact of sustainability in campus presentations.

Study One Findings

In the following section, the researchers will examine the conversations between tour guides and 'prospective' students. Parent conversations will also be reviewed to gain a more diverse perspective of the appearance of 'green' campuses. The findings will be discussed through perspectives that are cyclical or networked between the universities researched in this paper. According to Boje (2010), rhizomes explored by Deleuze and Guattari are types of spiral processes. Cyclical antenarrative is a form of strategizing about the future as a result of reinterpretations of the past and accenting these experiences on the present (Boje 2010). Using these concepts, the following bits and pieces of conversations will start the story of sustainability on campuses viewed from prospective students and the importance of engaging frontline employees, such as the tour guides, in the sustainability process.

University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV). Less than 10 years ago, the Office of Sustainability did not exist on many campuses. Universities are recognizing the need to push ahead the 'green' initiative and are willing to go down these often difficult paths in order to establish guidelines for corporate companies wishing to do the same. Change does not happen overnight. Establishing an Office of Sustainability doesn't make your campus more sustainable, it only casts the net of awareness across those who are willing to look for it. So, how do companies make changes in their organization to include sustainability initiatives at all levels, including the tour guides? According to Boje (1991b), "the story is highly variable and sometimes political, in that part of the collective processing involves telling different versions of stories to different audiences" (p. 106). Selling a campus to the prospective student takes numerous encounters between the student and different aspects of the university. This same process is true down to the individual tour guide.

The University of Las Vegas strives to be a leader in sustainability not only on campus, but in their community. The president of the university, in 2008, signed the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment that demonstrates the leader's concern about global warming (University of Las Vegas 2012). Additional measures such as

creating a sustainability council, being ranked by the STARS program, promoting carpooling, and changing building and purchasing policies demonstrates the university is committed to environmental sustainability (University of Las Vegas 2012). They have also set up an Urban Sustainability Initiative in order to help find problems to the city's environmental challenges (Urban 2012).

The following dialogue exposes how the sustainability story is not embedded in the campus at UNLV, at least not at the frontline employee level. While driving around the campus, the tour guide directs the prospective students' attention to the lush lawns.

Researcher: *It's a pretty green lawn for the desert.*

Guide: *Oh goodness, yes. Yeah, and we will be explaining why here in a second.*

Researcher: *Oh, is it fake?*

Guide: *No. UNLV was actually originally built on a park. We try to keep the wildlife, the lawn, and the trees as intact as possible. It is a really, really, green campus and people are surprised when they visit here.*

The following excerpt came after a comment by the student about how they are into sustainability and environmentally-friendly campuses. The tour had just entered the library and the discussion continued to expand on the sustainability of the campus.

Researcher: *Is printing free in the library?*

Guide: *It is fairly well priced.*

Researcher: *Do teachers recommend electronic submission?*

Guide: *You will need to talk to the teachers. I mean, if you want to be green friendly or, you know, save a tree, then I am sure the teachers would work with you.*

It is apparent the tour guide begins to understand how important sustainability is to the prospective student. The role of the campus representative changes depending on the situation and how they deal with a customer. According to Boje, "we become more of a co-producer when we begin to prompt the teller with cues, such as head nods, changes in posture, and utterances that direct the inquiry" (1991b, p. 107). It is appropriate that the guide recognized the importance of sustainability for this individual customer and changed their script. The weaving of non-linear conversations between the researchers as the posed prospective student begins to change the conversation and the story.

Critical antenarratology method looks at the interplay of managerial control narrative over more emancipator forms of emergent story (Boje 2008, p. 242).

Guide: *We also have the EPA is here on campus. They are not actually associated with the university. They have a 100-year lease so we are stuck with them for a while. They do a lot of work for the university. They also monitor the water and air quality on the university. They also provide a lot of the very pretty xeriscape landscaping.*

Researcher: *Do they fight to get rid of the green lawns on campus?*

Guide: (surprised at the question) *Ah, no we like to keep them around, but we did recently get rid of a reflecting pool which is really not conducive to the desert university.*

As this example shows, the tour guide had been informed about important landmarks on campus which support their linear approach to deciphering the comments and questions of the customer. It was later explained that managers do not provide the tour guides with scripted information, yet the tour guides are given presentations on campus elements including the buildings, sports programs, and safety. Perhaps the sustainability initiatives, or how important the initiatives

were to the administration, had not been communicated to the tour guides, the frontline employees. The connection between the earth, campus initiatives, and campus representative is lost.

A study conducted by Beard (1996) concludes that environmental education and training for staff is crucial in the current movement towards a more sustainable society, but such training is easier said than done. The phenomenon still requires more research but the reconnection with the community and/or the earth appears to be of value. This speculative benefit of using natural environment to create natural thinking has a lot more development potential for the future (Beard 1996). For example, the campus representative tour guides who present the campus with their lush 'green' lawns in a desert are not the connection between the natural environment and sustainability that should be told. The disconnect will take time to correct, but the process is starting.

"But how do companies respond to the need to change the everyday practices of staff at all levels?" (Beard 1996). Companies make their employees accountable for what they do and say. Bakhtin (1993) utilizes the idea of answerability, emerging from each specific situation a person finds themselves in. Salespeople are answerable for their acts and words spoken to the customer. They live in the moment, cognizant of their need to connect with the customer and always waiting for a response so they can adapt their spiel in order to fulfill their answerability to the employer. However, this answerability, without being cognizant of the impacts on 'others' in the situation, leaves gaps. In the above story, the employee fails to connect, at least in part, with what the customer is seeking. While attempting to be answerable to their employer and the customer, they entirely fail to connect with nature and fail to realize how their actions and words affect the world at large. What the campus representative 'ought' to do is different than the performed act of their Being in the moment with the customer. "The 'ought' is a distinctive category of the on-going performance of acts or deeds or of the actually performed act" (Bakhtin 1993, p. 6). Bakhtin (1993) refers to these ought moments as once-occurrent concrete actuality. The difference is the reality versus the Being. Every tour, every encounter with potential customers, creates this once-occurrent uniqueness. In order for environmental training of employees to truly be effective, it must be done in such a way so that the employees not only understand, but value, how great the impacts are of what they say and do on the 'others.'

New Mexico State University (NMSU). At NMSU, they have declared that sustainability is "a lifestyle and a responsibility" (Sustainability 2011). In addition to presidents signing the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment and the Talloires Declaration, the university established a Sustainability Council which has a mission of "creating and supporting an environment of sustainable practices for students, faculty/staff and NMSU stakeholders" (New Mexico State University 2010). NMSU has also installed water bottle filling stations in order to reduce landfill waste (NMSU 2013), built LEED certified buildings, and adopted purchasing protocols, and introduced other sustainability initiatives (Sustainability 2011).

The tour began by the campus representative offering the researchers bottled water since, as she said, "It is so hot." She proceeded to make a comment about how she is always thirsty and drank a lot of water since she now lived in the desert. The conversation continued as follows:

Guide: If you are going to live on campus or are going to park on campus you need a parking pass.

Guide pointed to the left, across from the housing and said: This is our duck pond, it is a registered wetland. You can go fishing there if you have a license.

What she pointed to is a fairly large pond, with green-leafed trees and grass surrounding it. In fact, the entire area on the south side of the walkway we were driving on is green grass with trees spread throughout. From the look of the campus it would not seem that sustainability or blending with the environment was of major concern to the tour guide or the campus administration.

In the following conversation, the researchers posed a question related to recycling on campus:

As we were leaving the building, one of the researchers on the tour asked: Can I throw this somewhere?

Sally: Yes you may, she states in a very cheery voice, and points to a trash can.

Researcher: Hmm? with inquisitive tone. No recycling?

Sally: *Yeah, you can recycle it. That would even be better, honestly. Then she chuckled.*

During the rest of the tour no mention was made of sustainability, recycling (not even where the researcher could throw her plastic bottle), or life in the desert. The campus guide understands the importance of recycling and sustainability initiatives presented by NMSU but when prompted further in the tour, the moment is lost. The tour guide may be responsible for their words and actions with the potential student especially when the story between the campus and the guide is not complete. At another campus, a different story is told from no more than 50 minutes away.

University of Texas El Paso (UTEP). According to the university website, UTEP is “committed to environmental stewardship, energy efficiency, and sustainability” (UTEP 2010). As a university they have implemented green operation practices, a recycling program, as well as programs to decrease fuel usage and programs to incorporate sustainability guidelines in construction (UTEP 2010).

The following segment is from a campus tour at UTEP. During the tour, only one statement was made regarding green initiatives, but the subject was addressed directly.

Guide: *Our campus is very ‘green’ in terms of sustainability. We try to push recycling and uphold the local desert environment.*

Researcher: *And what is that over there?* (referring to the Chihuahuan Desert Park)

Guide: *That is our park highlighting the local desert plants. People come from all over to see these plants.*

Researcher: *Does it cost anything to visit?*

Guide: *No, at UTEP, we want to be able to show visitors what the desert plants are and how they are used in our environment.*

The stories being told by the campus representative reflect the importance or the initiatives of the campuses, or do they? Bakhtin’s (1993) concept of living in the moment expresses when we feel that there are times and places that if we do not act, no one else will. “It is in those once-occurrent (now) moments, we have an emotive-ethical obligation to act, to intervene, to no longer be a bystander, to move from being spectator to being the actor (Boje 2008, p. 17). The salespeople believe they are selling the narratives that are important to the individual prospective student but they are creating these examples based on their in-the-moment answerability.

Throughout the campus tours taken by the researchers, the guides were never given a script to follow on how to portray the campus or the university initiatives. This is not surprising, since depending on their experience, the campus representative has started to memorize the information that they believe is important and should be provided to prospective students. Should stories in organization settings be told with concreteness? It is often important for the tour guide to negotiate their story-line and processing based on the individual customer. Being a player in storytelling involves the skill to manage the person-to-person interaction and the ongoing turn-by-turn dialogue (Boje 1991a).

Parents and sustainability. To take the story a step further, the researcher spoke with two sets of parents after the completion of the undergraduate campus tours. The first parents were on the same campus tour at UNLV. The parents had accompanied their daughter who wanted to attend UNLV in the fall of 2011. The parents were asked how they felt about the campus matching the local natural environment and the mother stated:

I believe it is important for the campus to compliment the natural look of the region and I do not appreciate that they are abusing our natural resources. It seems wasteful.

These parents were aware of how much water was wasted in order to maintain the lush lawns at UNLV. This helps demonstrate that there is a disconnect between the green report card initiatives set up by the university at UNLV in which they received a Grade B, the non-existent story being told at the tour guide level, and the parents’ experience with the ‘greenness’ of the campus. According to Boje, “complexity is a turn away from linearization from hierarchic levels, to something holographic. It is spirals in the dialogical interplay of narrative-order with story-disorder that produces the self-

organization of Storytelling Organizations” (Boje 2008, p. 26). In order for the spiral to continue in the stories of the campus tours, the awareness of living in the moment of the story needs to exist for the tour guides.

Another set of parents were approached by the researcher at the UTEP campus after completion of the undergraduate campus tour. The parents were with their son who wishes to transfer to UTEP from a local community college. The researcher asked the parents about the importance of green lawns on campus. The father stated the following:

Coming from a farm, we do not appreciate that campuses are wasting water. I would not want my child to go there (to those universities). That would be my last choice. This is not the case here at UTEP.

The online UTEP story and the campus tour match the university’s sustainability initiative. While walking and speaking with individuals on campus you feel the presence of the ‘green’ initiative. The entire campus holds the story, living in the moment, in touch with the natural environment. UTEP initiatives are seen, heard, and felt on the campus.

Salespeople intra-play the frontline communication with the potential customers telling the story of the organization. In campus tours, the guides become the storytellers for the campus. They are in the moment and in personal contact to present the administration, student and faculty/staff objectives to the next generation of campus residents. Frontline employees need to be a part of the organization’s objectives and sustainability awareness is no different.

Study One Discussion

The stories told on these campus visits create a spiral nonlinear antenarrative. In the southwest and beyond, sustainability awareness is growing. Creating an upward spiral of existence for sustainability in all companies, and specifically universities, is the desired goal, but it is not there. It is not heard in most conversations. It is not told in the stories to prospective students. One way to recognize these changes in the conversation is through Deleuze and Guattari (1987) Rhizome antenarratives. Rhizome antenarratives are nonlinear itinerant processes that do not behave as stable lines or cycles. If the spirals of communication are not consistent, how do you change the spiral?

According to Tolle (2005), living in the moment creates the sense of Being or awareness of the positive influences on one’s own life. Living in the moment of Being is a difficult task. Many projects, people, and ideas often keep people from living for the moment at hand. The campus representatives are often working part-time to make extra spending money. In some cases, showing prospective students around campus is not a priority for them; it is merely a job. If this spiral does not change they will lose that moment of Being with the potential student.

Being, presupposes the acknowledgement that my own uniqueness and the uniqueness of my place constitutes an inessential moment that has no influence on the character of the essence of the world’s being. (Bakhtin 1993, p. 16)

Creating awareness of the importance of their moment may bring the tour guides into the moment. Understanding assemblages and how these elements play in the moment bind the campus representative to the moment.

Boje (2010) explains assemblages as the material objects that a person includes in their creation of Being. Jane Bennett (2010, p. 24) introduces assemblages as “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements of vibrant materials of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within.” These energies that the campus representative brings to the prospective student are part of their assemblage. For example, the guides use golf carts to transport students on campus tours. They often carry clipboards and pens emblazoned with the university logo. Their attire is part of the assemblage, displaying the image of the campus for the prospective students. Being in the moment and understanding the impact of their assemblage on the prospective student can promote the image of sustainability and any other image the university wishes to portray to the public.

According to Boje (2008, p. 1), “Narratives shape our past events into experience using coherence to achieve believability while stories are more about dispersion of events in the present or anticipated to be achievable in the future.” In other words, the storytelling encounters experienced between the tour guide and the potential student is creating an anticipated experience for the potential student. For example, the tour guide will explain the recent activity on the ‘green’ lawns of the campus in hope of creating the image of fun, excitement, and friends to the young freshman student. However, this may not be the image the university wants to present in their objective to build a sustainable future.

From study one the researchers found several inconsistencies on how the sustainability story is told to prospective students. Students viewing a college online see a different story than those on a tour and, even further, the parents of

potential students see a completely different story. In Study Two, the researchers look more in-depth at one specific university to help understand how the story is told from inside the organization which leads to what is observed by the final consumer.

Study Two: The Sustainability Story of a University in the Desert

Storytelling in organizations can take many forms. It can start from the top down (e.g., from the CEO), from the bottom up (e.g., a janitor gossiping to another on the production floor), or can be from any direction and at any level in the organization. Storytelling can be formal or informal, and is pervasive in all types of organizations. Universities are storytelling organizations, defined by Boje et al. (2004b) as "systems of opposed narrating and antenarrating in 'story space' that is contested collective memory" (p. 6) and should be studied in their natural setting. In study two, the "green" stories of a university, located in the desert of the southwest, were analyzed. The written story as told by the web developers and administration of the university is contrasted with the stories being told by other employees and students in the university organization. All of this is done in the "context of struggling viewpoints" (Boje et al. 2004b, p. 7).

Microstoria

In microhistory, the history is built more on little facts than traditional history and is more concrete (Szijarto 2002). Szijarto (2002) states that "the closer relation to the little facts entails a stronger reality"(p. 210) and microhistory can "convey the lived experience to readers directly on the micro-level of everyday life" (p. 210). Each level at which an organization is presented or portrayed, shows a different aspect of that organization. Different aspects are also displayed in different contexts (Szijarto 2002).

Similarly, regarding storytelling, microstoria focuses "on the excluded narratives of the 'little people'" (Boje 2001, p. 45). It is a type of antenarrative analysis "due to its open history approach and its skepticism of grand narratives of macrohistory" (Boje 2001, p. 45) and can be used for contemporary problems in organizations and not only for looking back to analyze history (Boje 2001). According to Boje, "the stories and counter-stories fashion a web of stories, an antenarrative soup out of which the tension between microstory and macrostory lives" (2001, p. 61). This study examines the university from within the organization by looking at it from what the marketing department and administration portray in the university website, as well as the happenings and discussions in the university sustainability council. "The narratives that emerge....reveal how particular places are socially constructed and how they differ according to the self-definitions of the actors" (Burley, Jenkins, Laska, and Davis 2007, p. 350).

Predictions

Since there are many different layers and actors in the university organization, many widely-varied motives for individual actions and words, as well as reasons for being a part of the university organization, there will be as many different stories, or at least subtle nuances to the same story. There will be contradictory narratives and antenarratives, as well as macrostories and microstories that take place. Certain people in the organization, coming from a position of power, will act differently than those coming from a position of protectionism. Others will act entirely different, as they enter the sustainability story from a position of interest in the environment, with no prior organizational agendas.

For this study, the researchers examine New Mexico State University. This university, located in the southwestern desert, receives 350 days of sunshine a year, but only 8.5 inches of rain. On campus there are four student organizations that have a sustainability and/or environmental focus. In 2007, the university president agreed that the university would become a member of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. In 2009, the university declared the "Year of Sustainability", which was designed to engage university students, staff, and faculty in sustainability issues. The president of the university at that time signed the Talloires Declaration of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. This was followed by the university community examining practices and setting sustainability goals. As part of these efforts, the university earned third place in a nationwide recycling competition between college campuses. In September of 2010, the university created an Office of Sustainability, which falls under the Office of Facilities and Services. The head of this department is also the head of the university Sustainability Council, which is comprised of volunteers.

Internet Appearance of Sustainability

Even though the university is located in the desert, and touts a focus on sustainability, the website of the university, which is often the initial point of contact for prospective students, tells another story. When a prospective student goes to the website, and clicks on the link to get information, the visual story shows oak trees with green leaves.

If the prospective student decides to visit the campus, another link takes them to information on how to arrange that. At this point, a picture appears showing a concrete walkway, lined by green grass and leafed out trees not indigenous to the area. In the background you see a bald mountain. This does not all demonstrate a desert setting. A virtual tour of the campus is also available. Some of the panoramic pictures they see include the administration building, the duck pond on campus, and the main building for the agriculture department. These pictures portray green trees which are not native to the desert, green grass, and water. The stories told by the website, and the views of the campus, do not tell a story of a desert campus that has sustainability as one of its goals.

Sustainability of Administration

As an active participant in, and co-creator of the next section of the story (Boje et al. 2004b), the researcher witnessed first-hand struggling viewpoints in the context of the university sustainability council and the sustainability council business plan task force. In this story space the researcher is a part of, and witness narratives and antenarratives occurring in a complex organization, coming from many different voices.

It is a Wednesday morning about 8:30 a.m. One of the researchers was asked to come to this meeting by a professor who had learned of their interest in researching sustainability. In the room, there are 15-20 other people. This group included faculty, staff, students, and the new director of the Sustainability Office at the university. Also, there was another member of the council who was linked in via closed circuit television, from another university campus extension site. The director opened the meeting and almost immediately there was discussion regarding what is being done on campus.

The first point of discussion was the lighting at the football stadium and faculty positions being cut. The conversation went as follows:

Faculty member: The President said that if we could save (a dollar figure was given) from electricity being used, that faculty lines would be reinstated.

Grounds Department Manager: We have looked at the energy usage at the stadium and it only costs (a dollar figure was given) per time they are used for a game, which is really not that much with the current lighting that is there. If we were to go in and change those lights out, we really wouldn't save that much money. There are many other places on campus that we could spend that time and money better.

A member of OASIS (Organization of Aggie Students Inspiring Sustainability): But what about the times the lights are left on all night?

Grounds Department Manager: We looked at that, and in the past 12 months, there have only been four times that has happened. And, the only reason it happened was the supervisor left an employee in charge and they forgot to turn them off.

Another student: Really? I live across the highway and can see the lights on all night long fairly often.

Sustainability Office director: No, that can't be. I also live across the highway, and the lights, when they are on, shine directly in my bedroom window, and I can assure you that doesn't happen.

One thing discovered was that "identifying stories in context (in this case in the context of the sustainability council meeting) will be rewarded by the discovery that there are a multitude of stories that are not discernable at first" (Boje 1991, p. 4). It was quickly apparent that, without knowing the titles and positions of these people, that each person had a different perspective, and a different territory to protect. Protecting territory and defensiveness are heard in the voices of the participants in the conversation. The meeting continued for about an hour while members discussed various aspects of

business, but at each turn, each person had their own story, or perhaps micro-story, of which only they knew their motivations.

Many of these members are also a part of the sustainability council business plan task force of which one of the researchers became an active member. The goal of the task force was to create a business plan that would be presented to the university provost and then president for approval. In this setting, different stories, even differing than those from the general council meetings, emerged even though the actors in the task force were a subset of the general sustainability council.

In the first meeting the researcher was an almost silent participant, again invited to help develop the writing of the business plan. It became apparent, even during that first meeting, that there were many voices wanting to be heard, in even a group of only eight people. During the second meeting, the group began working on the mission and vision statement for the council. The Director came with "sample" mission and vision statements that sounded as though they came directly from university leaders' verbiage. As everyone worked together, throwing ideas into the pot for wording and what needed to be in those statements, once again it became apparent that many of the participants had agendas of their own.

This group met weekly for almost two months. Over the course of that time, while Being in the moment, and then in the researcher's sensemaking of these events, the researcher began to sense that there was a strong connection between the Sustainability Director, the university administration, and the Office of Facilities and Services. From week to week, even after the wording, statements, or even goals of the Sustainability Council were decided unanimously by the Business Plan Task Force, they would change. During the subsequent meeting, somehow the business plan would take on a different life and direction. Sometimes it was minor changes, but at times, not. It was almost as if the task force was only a formality, and the business plan a way to ensure the director validated her existence for being.

During the second or third task force meeting, the researcher witnessed "protectionism" first-hand. In a conversation about recycling goals, one of the members (who was the Supervisor of Recycling and Waste) talked about a type of trash can they were looking at purchasing that would cut down on how often trash had to be collected on campus. Almost instantly, the Director of Marketing Services, with laptop fired up and ready to go, pulled up an environmental website that said there were problems with this trash can and they were not environmentally-friendly because, since they compact the trash so much, it doesn't break down. She went on to say that they are actually worse for the environment than putting the trash in a landfill the way it is originally. Immediately, the Recycling and Waste supervisor defended his position, and how the units, even after the cost of purchasing them, would save the university money.

What was discovered when deconstructing the experiences throughout the sustainability council and task force meetings, is that there are many partial, fragmented stories being told (Boje 2001) and that stories apparently are "highly variable and sometimes political.....and involves telling different versions of stories to different audiences" (Boje 1991, p. 1).

Sustainability Story

A story network analysis attempts to link story fragments into maps read as nodes and relationships (Boje 2001). In this section, the researchers created a story network analysis for the sustainability council members in order to show linkages and relationships between the acting members (See Figure 1 below). As can be seen in this chart, there are many relationships that are visualized that could explain alliances, political positions, positions of power, and more.

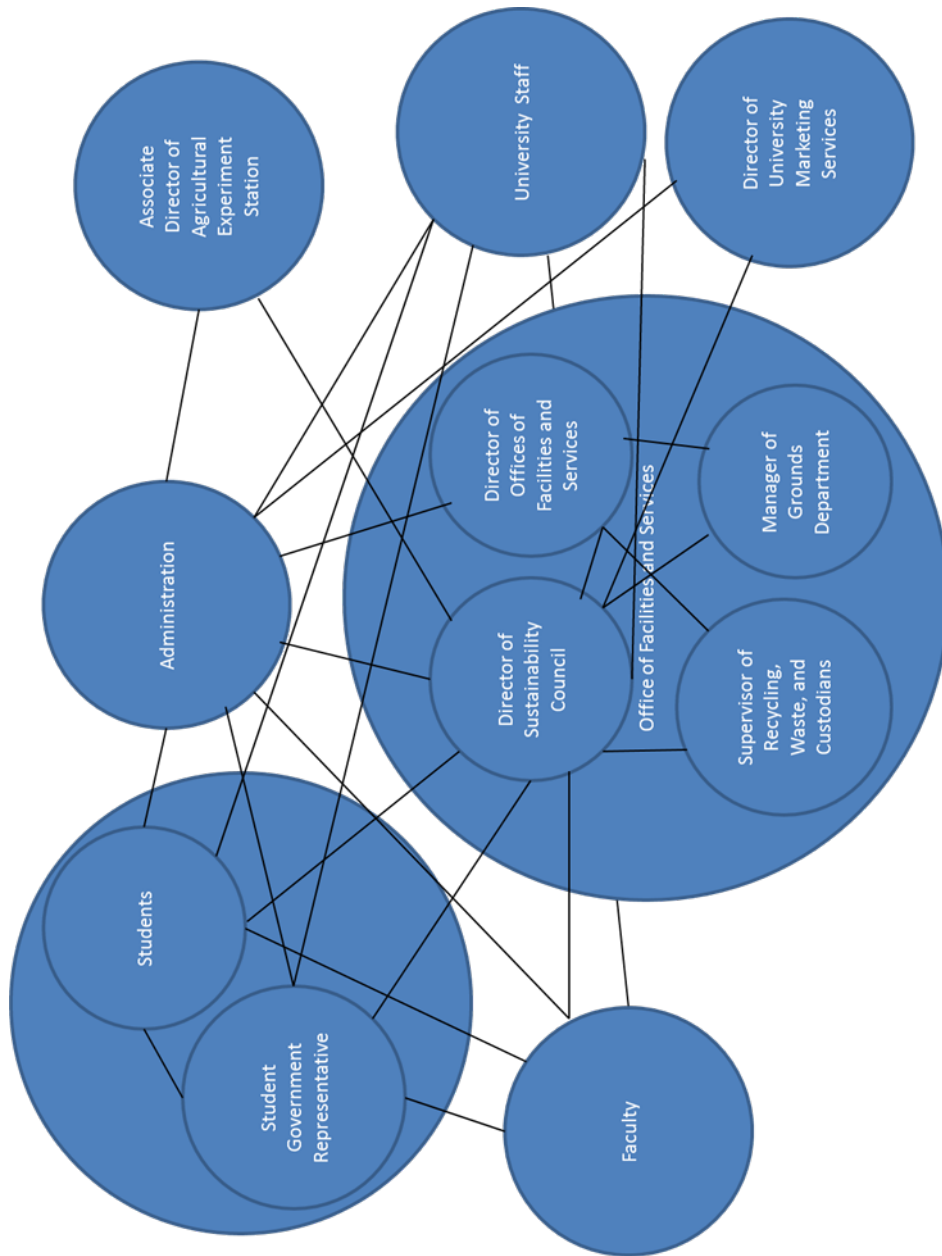


Figure 1: Story Network Analysis.

Study Two Discussion

The dominant narrative the university organization studied puts forth, almost as propaganda to the stakeholders, as it relates to sustainability and sustainable behavior, is that they are making changes and attempting to be a more "green" campus. This is being promoted through the development of a Sustainability Office, the talked about "push" for adding sustainability into the curriculum, recycling programs as well as other programs and initiatives. However, a first-hand observer can see there are different stories being told on different levels. Because of the researcher's observations and experiences, there are questions surrounding what has been seen, and what has been told compared to the true story that is unfolding.

Conclusion

These everyday types of behavior are like ships on the surface of the ocean. Underneath the surface is the miscommunication of the values and beliefs between administration and frontline employees, in this case the campus tour guides. Beard (1996) discusses the levels of training in a three-step process. The first step is the reinforcement or the seeing of the process. After awareness is built then the individual can decide if the values, beliefs and assumptions can be

questioned and challenged. Finally, the organizational culture is influenced by this individual acting as the representative of the sustainability goals. The individual moment of Being reinforces, or leads to change in the organization's culture.

The motivation of the employee is at the core of the change process. If the campus representative guide does not understand the importance of presenting sustainability to prospective students then the spiral effect will continue to be stuck in the linear narrative storytelling. It may be worthwhile for organizations to provide scripts for tour guides. On a larger scene, training employees at all levels of the importance of organization-wide initiatives becomes important, especially for sustainability. In order to change the molded processes, it would be beneficial to provide employees with updates of these programs. Awareness gets the ball rolling and belief keeps up the momentum. Helping these employees realize the importance of living in the moment and taking part as their Being in the story brings the entire organization together to overcome these obstacles.

This research contributes to existing theory by demonstrating how the narrative, living story, and antenarrative can at times be in synergy, and at other times, not. Both studies look at how individuals within the organization provide a narrative of sustainability found at different levels. As stated previously, Boje (2010) defines narrative as the dominant force in the storytelling domain; focused on the past, on form and structure, but not looking much at the future or at agency. In study one, the researchers explored three similar universities' sustainability narratives through the stories told by the tour guides. Study two looks in-depth at the narrative between various sustainability stakeholders at one of the universities from study one. It is clear that the narrative is not communicated effectively between individuals at all levels of the organization.

The living story in study one is the university tour where stories are unfolding in the dialog between the tour guides and prospective students. According to Boje (2010), the story is all about networking in the unfolding present, where each story is dialogically related to another, and must be told to tell of another social relationship, even in a different context. In study one, we found how the living story varies between the different settings even though the overall story of sustainability between the universities is fairly similar. Additionally, in study two the living story found at the university administration level is vastly different than that found in the campus tour. The context of the story and social relationship dynamics vary between each study event. This may be influencing the development of the sustainability stories for each university. Even though each university has a sustainability story to tell, the dynamics of the social situation and the context of the story affects the overall development of the theme presented. These findings can provide guidance for universities attempting to increase their appearance of sustainability. Paying close attention to the story individuals at all levels in the chain of command are telling, can clarify to those on the outside attempting to come in, the organization's sustainability stance.

The current study also adds further understanding regarding antenarrative theory. Boje (2001) explains that antenarrative gives much attention to the ambiguity of sensemaking or takes the guessing out of what is happening in the flow of an experience. In simple terms, antenarrative attempts to define what is going on here, in this particular situation. The researchers conclude from study one that the tour guides have limited information about the importance of sustainability of the campuses and how their presentation may be influencing this situation or perspective to prospective students. Additionally, the researchers are aware of how the effect of their presence in the tours may have influenced the antenarrative, but only in a limited amount. However, in study two, the antenarrative is clear that sustainability is a significant value to, and goal of, the administration. The lack of communication with respect to the importance of representing the living story of sustainability to prospective students is lost between those that actually meet and represent the university and those that organize, plan, and set policy. These findings may be of great importance to the environmental promotions of organizations. Tapping into the narrative, living story, and developing the antenarrative on a continuous basis at all levels can improve the sustainability presence for the entire organization.

The most important implication for sustainability storytelling on campuses created in this study is that story researchers can benefit by working directly with organizations, such as campus guides, potential students, and their parents. Walking around the campuses, smelling the fresh mowed lawns, and learning the stories told by the different campuses heighten the need for campuses to better tell their sustainability story. Being present on different campuses paints a picture of how vastly different the stories campuses tell potential students. The stories do not match and it is hard to miss how misunderstanding of organization initiatives cascade to the frontline employee. Finally, understanding storytelling research encourages us, and hopefully others, to work directly with companies to see how important it is to include everyone in the organization in any kind of change process.

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