

## Disinformation and Management of Knowledge Quality

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The intelligence or the success of an organisation<sup>1</sup> depends on its aptitude for purposeful change.

Obstacles to the improvement<sup>2</sup> of an organisation can result from reluctance or inability. While inability can easily be remedied by means of increased knowledge,<sup>3</sup> unwillingness is more difficult to handle<sup>4</sup> and can even influence the simplest forms of the transfer of knowledge. Thus the decision-maker often has difficulty to estimate whether he (or she) is confronted with relevant or useless information: if one doesn't know something, one doesn't even know *what* one doesn't know.

On the other hand, Arrow's Paradox usually is effective for the provider of information when he tries to judge the value of that information (which greatly depends on the context). Therefore this knowledge has to be transferred. Since the transfer is possibly free for the reci-

ipient, the readiness for it will be diminished accordingly.

This basic problem doesn't lose its effect by simply being ignored. Closing one's eyes to these difficulties leads, at worst, to trivialisation<sup>5</sup> or the establishment of new lip services<sup>6</sup> accompanied by further loss of effectivity (this only increases the complexity of the organisation, but not its competence in solving problems).

However, obstacles to improvements need not necessarily be (micro)-politically motivated, but are often caused by *qualitative disinformation*.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon is not restricted to specific contexts, but can occur in all areas.

The fractal management approach developed here is the basis for an efficient solution to the problem. Fractal Analysis

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of organisation is in this context unspecific and can comprise anything from the whole company to parts of it, such as individual employees, teams, IT-systems, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Improvement has to be defined according to the context: it can also deal with ethical questions. The economic principle (rational principle) is basically indifferent to ethics, but that does not mean that it is unethical. It implies that any system of standards can be treated economically (this is not necessarily restricted to monetary units).

Empathy as an ethical basis for action must not disregard the fact that the perception of other people's suffering can be severely impaired by qualitative blind spots.

<sup>3</sup> such as qualifying measures, the employment of experts, or expert advice.

<sup>4</sup> this also implies aspects of micro-politics.

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<sup>5</sup> keeping one's employees disinformed, or employing only disinformed employees, increases control over the same and serves self-referential structures, however it does not necessarily increase an organisation's effectivity.

<sup>6</sup> this also implies correspondingly »deformed« communications which, at least formally, meet the demands of knowledge transfer. Brunsson refers to the »hypocrisy« in organisations which consists mainly in the disparity between talking and acting. Argyris/Schön thus differentiate between »espoused theories« and »theories in action«. Coleman stresses that rational actors conceal their interests from each other behind a »veil of ignorance«, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Glück, T. R.: Das letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken, Passau: Antea, 1997.

I have characterized these basic phenomena as »Qualitative Inhibition« or »the Qualitative Prisoner's Dilemma«, cf. Glück, T. R., Blinde Flecken in der Unternehmensführung : Disinformation und Wissensqualität, Passau: Antea, 2002

will overcome the tension between self-reference<sup>8</sup> and Kirsch's haircutter<sup>9</sup> and can be applied as scale-invariant, generic best practice.

The fractal-based view is an efficient starting-point for qualitative corporate & organisational governance; the integrative approach comprises the areas of staff, organisation and strategy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> According to Maturana the best way to answer a question is to reformulate the question according to the questioner's level of intelligence. In this context consultants are caricatured as people who take their clients' watches in order to tell them the time.

<sup>9</sup> This »haircutter« is a witty metaphor for the undifferentiated application of »cookbook rules«. It stems from the following joke: There once was a man who invented an automatic haircutter. »This is the opening for the customer's head«, he explained to the patent official, »with this dial he can choose between short, medium-length or long hair, with this lever he can determine the kind of cut, and after he presses the little red button, it won't take more than five to six seconds for his chosen hairstyle to be achieved.« - »But people have different shapes of heads«, the official argued.- »Only before the procedure«, replied the inventor.

(Kirsch, W.: Strategisches Management : Die geplante Evolution von Unternehmen, München: Kirsch,1997, S. 264)

<sup>10</sup> The quality of management is determined by management of the quality of knowledge, especially in the field of reorganisation (fractal rationalisation as the organisational increase of intelligence, in the sense of increase of an organisation's knowledge quality, by reduction of qualitative blind spots), knowledge quality certification, integrative cultural development as an alternative to the undifferentiated installation of rigid organisational cultures, which are difficult to reform (especially in the case of Post-Merger Integration), fractal knowledge management tools, qualitative corporate & organisational government, etc. The manager as the most important management tool, qualification, audit, coaching, etc.

*Basic and reference sources::*

T. R. Glück: Das Letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken, Passau: Antea, 1997

T. R. Glück: Blinde Flecken in der Unternehmensführung : Desinformation und Wissensqualität, Passau: Antea, 2002

*Internet-resources:*

<http://www.wissensqualitaet.de>



<http://www.antea-verlag.de>