NO ORDINARY RULES. MORE ON ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR: A DISCUSSION ON FORMS AND HIBRYDISMS OF POST-BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS

MULTIPLICIDADE DE REGRAS NO COMPORTAMENTO ORGANIZACIONAL: UMA DISCUSSÃO SOBRE FORMAS E HIBRIDISMOS DAS ORGANIZAÇÕES PÓS-BUROCRÁTICAS

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Abstract

The topics discussed in this contribution are founded on two basic assumptions; the first considers a complex organization as a social subsystem in which all the specific characteristics of the "macrosystem" may be found. The second (consequential to the first) favours the interpretation of "organization-as-culture" (or as a sociocultural system). Assuming what has been said above, then, it follows (and this is the sense of this essay) that complex organizations, in as much as they are sociocultural (sub)systems, cannot be considered, perhaps today more than in the past, systems impervious to the sociocultural world of which they are a part, or in other words, it is not possible to speak of a culture of organizations as if it were a unique, coherent system of models and values: the plurality of cultural influences present in the highly differentiated contemporary societies is reflected also on the situations inside these organizations.

Key words: Organizational behaviour,organizational hibrydism,post bureaucratic organizations,organizational culture

Resumo

Os tópicos abordados neste artigo são fundados em duas premissas básicas: a primeira considera uma organização complexa como um subsistema social no qual podem ser encontradas todas as características específicas do "macrosistema" social; a segunda (consequência da primeira) favorece a interpretação de "organização-cultura" (ou como um sistema sociocultural). Assumindo que o que foi dito acima, então, segue-se (e este é o sentido deste ensaio) que as organizações complexas, em tanto quanto eles são sistemas socioculturais (sub), não pode ser considerada, talvez hoje mais do que no passado, como sistemas impermeáveis ao mundo sociocultural do qual fazem parte, ou por outras palavras, não é possível falar de uma cultura organizacional como se se tratasse de um sistema único, coerente de modelos e valores: a pluralidade de influências culturais presentes na sociedades contemporâneas altamente diferenciada é refletida também nas situações dentro destas organizações.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento organizacional, hibrydism organizacional, organizações pós bureaucraticas, cultura organizacional

PREMISE

The topics discussed in this contribution are founded on two basic assumptions; the first considers a complex organization as a social subsystem in which all the specific characteristics of the "macrosystem" may be found. The second (consequential to the first) favours the interpretation of "organization-as-culture" (or as a sociocultural system).

In other terms:

1. The first assumption refers on one hand to the concept of "the collective person" (Coleman, 1986), who personalizes all his transactions and relationships and who is portrayed as an intermediate territory of social relations (in the context of the "micro-macro" relationship), an extremely particular dimension of social activity where "a wide range of fundamental social processes" develop (Scott, 1994; p. 25); on the other hand, according to so-called "subsystem mirroring", also taken up by Teillard De Chardin (1968), in a social subsystem (as we interpret the organizations here) it is possible to find the properties, the essential aspects, the relations not only of other subsystems but also of the system of reference as a whole, a representation of complex reality therefore, rather than a "reduction" in complexity.

2. "Organization-as-culture" (Bodega, 1997; Hatch, 1999) is based on the supposition that, in as much as they are a social (sub)system, complex organizations or not, in simplistic terms, cultural "places of imitation" but rather an extremely particular "cultural bearing milieu", according to Louis' expression (in Pondy-Morgan, 1983), or a place (Crespi, 1996:228-231) where values, symbologies, norms, artefacts and works are produced and reproduced, models of action which also characterize their "specificness of existence" regarding both the external environment and internal reality.

Assuming what has been said above, then, it follows (and this is the sense of this essay) that complex organizations, in as much as they are sociocultural (sub)systems, cannot be considered, perhaps today more than in the past, systems impervious to the sociocultural world of which they are a part, or in other words, "It is not possible to speak of a culture of organizations as if it were a unique, coherent system of models and values: the plurality of cultural influences present in the highly differentiated contemporary societies is reflected also on the situations inside these organizations" (Crespi,1996:229).

Therefore, in the last analysis, the "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt, 2001), the multiplicity of cultural programmes, of strategies and social structures, of identities "in-search-of-an-author", of assumptions of values and norms, etc., must inevitably have important repercussions on organizational being and acting; the idea of a "unique model of organization", a kind of archetype to which reference should be made, becomes absolutely unsustainable. Probably Weber's idealtype of "bureaucracy" (1961) should be rethought in this sense, perhaps not so much to assess its validity as to "make it explode" in the context of a "multiple" rationality.

This contribution deals with the effects that two macrosocial factors take on, with significant relevance, in the reality of formal organizations, thus making them particularly "multiple": postmodernism and multiculturalism.

In other terms, the former affects mainly the organizational "structures" (making the possibility of a "univocal--structure" extremely relative and afunctional), and the latter mainly the "cultures" of the organizations, (making the idea of the organizational culture-as-a-monolith much less absolute than in the past). In both cases, it is clear, there tends to prevail an ongoing attempt to make the structural--cultural diversifications converge in a model which must remain unique, a kind of continuous stimulus towards the reconsti-

tution of a unique model of organizational rationality, despite the differences, the contradictions, the possible antitheses.

Complexity, in the sociological and economic-organizational field, is maybe an abused concept but anyway hard to outline, accurately and exhaustively. The typical features of a complex definable entity are "multiplicity (multiplicity of components and relations among them), and some sort of specific form of autonomy (an entity is autonomous if it has a behaviour based on its own rules, not defined and not definable from the outside) together." It is important to recognize the generic complexity from the social complexity, typical feature of an organisation. In fact, social formations are characterized by multiplicity as well as by multidimensionality (pragmatic, semantic, confidential) of language interactions. An organisation's internal social complexity is, nowadays, worsened by the raised external complexity (turbulence and unpredictability of the context where public and private companies place themselves). The internationalization of markets and a greater competitiveness, the fragmentation of supply followed by a demand that is more and more heterogeneous and differentiated, the ever-increasing technological development ask the organization for a complete flexibility, ability to adjust to continuous changes, attention and monitoring all possible opportunities of participation, frequent information exchange, despite the attempts to reduce and simplify the internal social complexity action.

MORE STRUCTURES

For the actual and prospective situation of organizational systems, postmodernism outlines four possible models of organizational logic: "hybridism", "cyclicity", "transversality", "turbolence" (Bergquist, 1994) coexisting in the same organization. "The first of these models," writes Bergquist, "refers directly to the postmodern subjects of complexity and fragmentation. Contemporary organizations are

described as strange mixtures of different forms and processes which incorporate premodern, modern and postmodern elements. The second model embraces the subject of complexity. In this case, complexity is described in terms of predictable and unpredictable moves which take place in the organizations in relation to their stages of development, the season in which the organization operates and the specific perspective according to which the organization is assessed. The third model, too, refers to the subject of complexity, as well as the postmodern one of ambiguity. The organizations are described in terms of an interweaving between public and private, profit and non-profit, large and small forms and functions. The fourth model refers specifically to the complexity of the variable speeds and of the aim of change within the majority of postmodern organizations" (Bergquist,1994:25).

In the context of "hybridism", whose basic assumption is, as already mentioned, the constant cultural connivance of the "old" and the "new", as well as the "more-than-new" (postmodernism), absolutely critical but just as absolutely a "melting pot" of all the most diversified diachronic and synchronic experiences, the organizations must tendentially relinquish the myth of integration between functions in a measure directly proportional to the growth of the organization itself, that is, the "classical" myth of modernity: "The integration of functions in organizations on a vast scale might be no longer possible or, if it were, it could require too large a portion of the total of the resources of postmodern organizations and a new enthusiasm for the value of small dimensions, or at least for the flexibility of the organization" (Bergquist,1994:37).

This does not certainly or necessarily mean the end of large organizations, but it is just as certain that today in organizational cultures it is impossible not to establish values and a philosophy substantially different from those which have supported "modern" organizational cultures by "hol-

ding everything together" in a structurally homogeneous way; these values and philosophy are the logic of "the hybrid composed in different forms and dynamics".

Moreover this "hybridism" is already very much present in public and private organizational realities; if anything, the real, most frequent difficulty found in these processes is, in fact, a "cultural" resistance to change.

There is, however, another form of organizational hybridism imposing itself in postmodernism, which could be defined, according to a delightful expression, as the passage from organizational "pret-à--penser" (that is, solutions and logics that, with small modifications, "suit everybody") to procedural systems and policies lacking in uniformity, where there is, nevertheless, ample room for movement for the different functions/actors existing. It is evident how, even in this form of hybridism, cultural resistances are strong (due, if nothing else, to the accumulation of decades of "procedural manuals", of organizational "certainty", of consolidated roles and habits), even if there is a general feeling that it is opportune to go beyond mechanistic schemes which are no longer feasible, especially in the presence of that already mentioned phenomenal "dynamic complexity", which seems to be a further, recent connotation of organizational cultures, or, in other words, a complexity which develops without substantial interruption.

Finally, a "hybrid" organization also supposes just as "hybrid" a substructure of organization of work, thus favouring not only, for example, full-time work and a "steady job", but part-time, temporary work and, in general, an absolutely flexible contractarian system.

A postmodern organization which adopts the "cycle" as its structure of reference, also in terms of values, in actual fact revolutionizes the "classical" theme of the organizations in the present day, that is, homeoresis (the difficulty to modify one's way of being). Thus its "first ene-

my" appears as what could be defined "the pre-eminent residues" of the culturological history of that organization, and these in any case cannot and must not necessarily "disappear", but should certainly be put in a historical context and not become a kind of inexpugnable "Berlin wall" with the aim of maintaining a "rigid" and "inflexible" organizational culture; all the more so when this is not permitted by an external scenario, with a reasonable risk of creating a Mertonian incongruence remediable only at an extremely high cost. Several important lessons may be deduced from this cyclical outlook. First of all, we must always pay great attention when new organizations are set up, because the structures and processes which are established at the beginning will then put up a lot of resistance to the changes which will be introduced later on. Secondly, it will be as well to understand that, while the deeply-rooted models of an organization give one kind of order, short--term and long-term variations inevitably lead to another kind of order. These changes produce chaos in the short-term, but order over the long term. Finally, a cyclical model of organizational life teaches us – exactly like other postmodern concepts – that organizational reality is determined, at least in part, more by the different perspective angles than by the organizational phenomenon observed. In any organization " there are good reasons for finding both order and chaos" (Bergquist, cit., p.320).

"Transversality" should be that postmodern characteristic of organizations by which they are able to exploit themselves culturally in order to emerge from their own monothematic mission and act transversally on different fronts and different objectives. Transversality has nothing to do with the modern phenomenon of so--called "diversification" (which has often produced extremely negative results for the organizations themselves), in as much as it is not a question of "doing different things" from those which constitute the original mission, but rather of acting in a different way from the usual one on several adjacent territories.

This logic is particularly significant for the public and/or private "advanced third sector" (or also for the so-called "fourth sector", as the area of "services for services" has been dubbed). This is the current fundamental structure of the economic-social system, and it implies a particular cultural vocation of a "relativistic" kind, that is, accepting the concept that "any old method is acceptable as long as it works", and that the attitude towards the "world" above, for postmodern organizational cultures, is (and must be) that "blasé" one which calls to mind Simmel.

In other words, transversality consists in having a defined mission and undefined boundaries, and in the ability to create transversal networks in order to develop the aims of the organization.

On the nature of transversality, K.Boulding writes: "In the twentieth century many societies have seen the development of 'particular' organizations which did not fit into any of the categories classified systematically. They are not completely governmental, even if usually they are the consequence of some form of governmental intervention. They are not completely commercial, even if they carry out many operations of a commercial nature. They are not even completely educational or welfare organizations, even if in certain cases they may carry out some of these functions. They often occupy particular niches in the organizational fabric of society. These organizations have been defined transversal because they possess the characteristics which belong contemporaneously to more than one kind of traditional organization"(Boulding, 1973; in Bergquist,1994:315).

It is evident how such a postmodern reality implies, for organizational cultures, substantial modifications of values and of managerial "experience".

At last, regarding "turbulence", this concept refers to a complex situation, in which change, characterized by speed and phenomenologies "multiplied" with respect to modernity, may be declined for the organizations in modalities which are "impossible to plan and therefore to manage", at least according to traditional reasoning. It is evident how, for the organizational cultures, this involves just as strong a sense of "turbulence", that is, the constant capacity for new elaborations and structural elasticity (due to the assumptions of that same "turbulence" as a value of "opportunity" rather than of "threat"). "In the turbulent postmodern organizations one has to face not only new things and new ways of operating, but also situations of a 'more or less total void'" and, always in a typically postmodern way, "now we must deal with new ways of looking at the world, and usually when this process begins, before us we see only a bare wall, or an impenetrable mist, which may leave us terribly confused. At the base of this need to profoundly reorder our outlooks on change, there is the need to re-examine the way in which we understand and measure the nature and output of organizations" (Bergquist, 1996:340).

In this sense, the "organization which learns" is an important theme of the literature of sociology of organizations and seems to be a further way of interpreting the postmodern organizational cultures.

This concept is based on two main characterizing aspects:

- the existence of organizational learning (that is, an organization learns if one of its unities englobes knowledge potentially useful not only for itself, but for the whole system);

- organizational learning is greater (quantitatively and qualitatively) when, with respect to what is learnt, different interpretations develop, but with a tendentially uniform vision.

One organizational model of learning is that elaborated by Nonaka, which he defines "the spiral of knowledge"; this consists in:

- "socialization" (or implicit sharing of the learning acquired);

- "articulation" (or explicit sharing);

- "combination" (or standardization and ufficialization of knowledge);

- "interiorization", or assimilation of knowledge (Nonaka, 1988).

The "organization which learns" certainly constitutes the cultural reversal of that "unexpected consequence" of bureauocracy (Merton, 1988), defined by him as the "trained incapacity" to combine, to manage "the new", that is the organizational culture transmitted to its members "on the supposition that the reality which must be faced remains indefinitely the same" (Bonazzi, 1995:229).

Whether they are "turbulent" and/or "cyclical", "hybrid" and/or "transversal", the perspectives of the postmodern organizations which we have tried to analyse, precisely because they are postmodern, do not outline particularly precise scenarios but only the crises of the existing one and an indeterminable future. Just as significantly, however, they bear witness to a reflection and a complex and difficult research, a sure sign (at least in this) of the times.

MORE CULTURES

For some time now several external and internal factors in complex organizations have drawn great attention to the themes of so-called "organizational multiculturalism", meaning by this term a phenomenology to be found both in local organizations, which are to all effects multicultural, multiethnic, or both, and in organizations which, due to their multinational and/or international nature, are "necessarily" (and for a longer time than the former) more suited to facing this kind of reality.

In actual fact, however, these realities are certainly not "new"; if anything, what are new, as mentioned above, are the attention paid to these realities and the keys of interpretation and development in terms of organizing advantages.

Basically, if one reflects, nothing more multiethnic and multicultural has

probably existed than the Ford factories in the USA in the 1930s, but then the "scientific" approach, in the factory as in society, was one of "standardization", both in the work in the factories and in the life-styles in society: this, in both cases, for reasons of "governability" of the phenomena in both realities.

Today, factors such as:

- sociocultural instances,

- sociocultural needs,

- logics and forms of production and, more in general, of organization,

- the attenuation of the myth of a unique dimension have often led to a reassessment of diversity as something which can develop and enrich, rather than deprive or impoverish, one's "being-in-the-world".

For some time now many organizations have adopted this logic of thought and action, developing interesting strategies in this sense, which generally go under the name of diversity management, in its turn probably experienced at the beginning as a "necessity" and subsequently as an "opportunity"; in a nutshell, many organizations are stimulated to act more and more in this direction.

In other words, organizations are like "fields of social life", identified by Touraine as "concrete translators of society, and essential elements" of that society (Touraine, 1974); Crespi then points out that, "It is not possible today to speak of a culture of organizations as if it were a unique, coherent system of models and values: the plurality of cultural influences, present in highly differentiated contemporary societies, also has repercussions on the diversity of the symbolic forms within these organizations" (Crespi,1994:212).

Organizational culture should be seen as a "social construction" (Berger-Luckmann), as a "social fact" constructed by the "typifications" negotiated and shared by the social actors in the context of the in-

tersubjective reality of "routine". These are subsequently "institutionalized", as well as being structured mainly in roles seen as a sort of "carrying to extremes" of a set of specific, typified actions, which then become "anonymous", that is, not linked to "this" or "that" individual, as well as being reproducible, therefore, for any person of an adequate kind.

Maimone (2005) rightly reminds us that a multicultural organization is not only an idea or a philosophy, but it also represents a concrete social context. Unless we grasp the sociological dimension of a transnational organization, which to all effects is a social subset realized concretely in social actions and facts, we shall not be able to study these subsystems, or, better, these "transnational social spaces" resulting from the re-embedding process of the social practices and identity-making processes of the members of the organizations studied.

Linnehan and Konrad (in Maimone,2005:104) in their empirical research discuss the analysis of factors which may favour the development of a "multicultural culture" within the organizations. On the basis of empiric evidence, the authors reach the conclusion that social attitudes and norms can explain in statistical terms the variance of individual orientations towards cultural diversity and that, therefore, by inserting the management of the above-mentioned factors in the policies of management, it is possible to direct organizational behaviours towards the objective of facilitating the development of good multicultural practices.

It is a question, then, of outlining an intercultural managerial logic based on diversity as an organizational "value-opportunity" through some key-points, such as:

1. Constructing and developing face--to-face relationships.

2. Creating international project groups.

3. Developing processes of managerial formation and development of international importance.

4. Creating a shared portfolio of values, encouraging at the same time an interpretation on a local level (that is, how to translate values into organizational behaviours).

5. Promoting at the same time diverging values, in order to create the conditions for greater flexibility.

Be that as it may, - and we shall subsequently develop the theme of diversity management – these actions must effectively compensate and/or satisfy two basic needs, that is, favour the cultural adaptation of both the people and the system, and reduce to a minimum the consequences of the cultural "shock"; that is to say, "entering" a different cultural system in any case presupposes a change, an alignment, a translation. In other words, "adapting" is a complex process depending on many different factors ("system" factors, such as the level of cultural distance, intercultural policies, the support/backing received, etc.; "interpersonal" factors, such as the forms/modalities of communication at all levels, social networks, etc.; "individual" factors, such as the system needs/motivations/expectations, knowledge, personality). There is, however, the possibility of a cultural shock, which (Mauri-Visconti, 2005:109) implies factors such as:

a) a sense of the loss of identity and identity-making deprivation, involving values, status, profession, friendships, possessions;

b) a sort of "straining" of identity, on account of the effort necessary to adapt psychologically to the new context;

c) a rejection of their identity on the part of the members of the new culture;

d) confusion of identity, especially before the ambiguity of the role and unpredictability of events;

e) identity-making impotence as a result of the comparison with the new environment.

Already in the 1990s, in the language of management and organizational theory, the expression, and the relative procedures, "diversity management" indicated the necessity/opportunity for organizations to understand and know how to manage the "differences" of various type and nature and, in some cases, also the effective subcultures coexisting in these organizations. As Maglione (2005) affirms, diversity management is a process of change, which aims to exploit and use to the full the unique contribution which each employee can bring for the achievement of objectives, and which serves to equip the organization in the best possible way to face the challenges and the uncertainty coming from the external market. This contribution arises from a person's ability to develop and apply, inside the organization, a wide, integrated spectrum of competences and behaviours which reflect his kind, race, nationality, age, background and experience. Both individual and organizational managerial competence, which permit the realization of an efficient management of differences, may develop if the reference to a unique paradigm of thought and behaviour is abandoned, and if different quantities and orientations are present and recognized at the same time. Moreover, the management of what is "different", and diversity for ethnic group, culture, religious faith, etc., is a complex problem and at the same time a critical factor of success. It does not involve only the company organization and the policies of human resources, but it concerns all the "public" initiatives of integration and equal opportunities, and in particular the management of the phenomenon of immigration.

The questions posed by diversity management originate in the increased probability of the event of multicultural situations in companies, linked both to the phenomena of immigration and the considerable processes of internationalization taking place.

The most widespread vision in the sector at the moment is, however, flawed by an error of formulation because it forsees the use of traditional, standard models of reference and of a normality, which require an "approach" and "particular treatment" for those who are not included.

The risk is that all the policies based on diversity could be founded on discriminations which should be opposed, and which tend to confirm and make the human being "one of a series", when he is, in fact, unique, creative, original and unrepeatable.

A policy of diversity management which is not centred on man as an individual (and therefore "different" from all the others), in fact risks standardizing procedures and, above all, behaviours. This approach is neither functional for a market which is more and more varied and hypercompetitive, nor respectful of the "single individual".

It would be more correct to substitute the term "diversity" with "variety", and variety should be accepted as a social and economic value. All policies, both in the public sector and in private companies, should therefore favour the maximum integration between the life project of the single individual (whether Italian or foreign, male or female, atheist or religious, black or white, heterosexual or gay, etc.) and the project and objectives of the companies and organizations. However, in order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to acknowledge that even after their rights have been guaranteed, people are still different.

Certainly it is necessary to have an approach to a management of human resources whose aim is to make the most of the differences which each individual brings into the organization, and which distinguishes two macrocategories of differences: primary differences and secondary differences. The former are those differences referring to elements such as age, gender, ethnic origin, mental competences/characteristics, which are part of an innate patrimony of the individual and can be modified. The secondary differences, on the

other hand, refer to elements acquired in time, such as, for example, educational background, family situation, geographical location, income, religion, organizational role, professional experience. Differently from the primary differences, these characteristics can be modified several times or be abandoned in the course of time.

Mauri and Cologna (in Mauri-Cologna; cit.) add that this organizational action, in the way it has been developed in an Anglo-Saxon context, in particular in the U.S.A, has certain implicit requirements, which it is as well to dwell upon with some attention, if one wants to set an approach modelled on "diversity management" in the Italian context. Above all, consider diversity: if one thinks of managing "diversity", this means that one acknowledges the existence, in the social context, of some differences which remain such, precisely because they need to be "managed". This in itself is an important assumption and not at all axiomatic in the political-social statute of a nation-state like Italy. According to the analysis of regimes of diversity tolerance elaborated by Michael Walzer, the societies which form nation-states are characterized by the manifest hegemony of a single dominant group (ethnically and linguistically homogeneous, or represented as such), which organizes common life so that it reflects above all its own history and culture, actively extending the identity of the dominant group to the whole social body. So doing, the nation-states determine the nature of public education, the symbols and rites of the polis and make of their political system a true "motor for the reproduction of the nation" (Walzer, 1997).

Thus it is a question of projecting and realizing complex strategies which, from "inclusion/reception" to "inclusion/continued relationship", allow both the persons and the organization to express the best of their "differences" on a common mission, shared and accepted according to the criteria proper to the "intercultural perspective" (acquaintance-respect-acceptance-discussion) which, at this point, can

only become a trait (but also a value) in the cultural constellation of the organization.

Since, as we have already said, an organization is not an "island" but an intermediate territory of society/culture, it is evident how the "diversity" strategies will be extremely facilitated if the organization itself is situated in an overall more historically cosmopolitan context and thus "open" to diversity. On the contrary, "In a traditionally very homogeneous country, without contacts with other cultures and with opinion leaders who preach the preservation of one's own roots as an inalienable value in contrast with any form of encounter which leads to the dilution of one's own convictions" (Bombelli, in Mauri-Visconti, 2005:31) diversity management could seem more like "mobbing", or exclusion, rather than based on a logic of inclusion. It is clear that all this may be of great interest for reflection on a "macro" level on how a multicultural society, or better, a postindustrial one, can develop.

CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the premise, the starting-point for this attempt to describe organizational "multiple" forms is in the reflections (worthy of assent, in my opinion) of Eisenstadt (in Sachsenmeier-Riedel, 2002) on modernity as "more models" of actions/systems rather than a kind of unique interpretative paradigm, structured and structuring, reifiable and reifying, with all the problems which this implies: problems, moreover, which are "historic" in sociological thought.

Eisenstadt again (cit.) critically analyses, moreover, a further idea originating from the above: that of an almost absolute synchronization of different spheres produced by social action on the basis of a substantial formal rationality, and finally, always as a critical set of intercorrelated and interdependent conceptual procedures, the theme of the emphasis on modernity as a generalized "path of homogenization".

This paper has tried, by re-examining these considerations, this approach, to apply them to social (and cultural) subsystems, known as "complex organizations", starting from the idea that social subsystems (the intermediate territories of social activity) reflect all the fundamental properties of the macrosystem itself.

At this point, it is worth asking what kind of structuring logic and organizational behavior can be deducted from what described above: let's then try to give some partial answers, thus:

a) in terms of "structure":

Once again, organizational "flexibility" (Costa, 2000; Brofman-Beckstrom, 2007) can be described as a fundamental cultural value as well as a structural model for the organizations. Before being a structuring form of the organizational acting, latusensu flexibility ("adaptive", "strategic", "systemic") is above all a category of thought capable of modifying the configuration of the system constantly. In scientific literature, according to the different approaches, flexibility is visualized as a "net" (especially in its meaning of "internal network"), as a "sea star", as a "lean organization" etc. Notwithstanding each of its specific configurations, flexibility appears to be the dominant conceptual model in the current context. A context made of uncertainties and sudden, multiform changing.

This is because traditional structures, both hierarchical and vertical, have proven to be "genetically" less suitable to face and deal with the unpredictability. On the other hand, in all its declinations, flexibility allows adaptability and innovation, a bigger opening toward the outside as well as more efficient relationships within the organizations themselves. In other words, flexibility enables an adequate porosity between the "social space" and the "organizational space" (Taylor-Spicer, 2007).

Always more, postmodern organizations tend to configure themselves as "hypertexts". This metaphor turns out to be particularly powerful for it evokesthe image of a "rationally chaotic" organization encompassing, at the same time, multiple forms, instances and contents:these latter not always convergent (or, in better words, in a state of conflict within each other) or hardly structurable in the traditional terms of the organizing.To sum up: a "multi--dimensional universe" (Maimone, 2010: p. 15) that needs flexibility to live and develop itself.

b) in terms of "culture"

It is important to remember and point out that what previously said about the diversity management privileges the most current approach to the DM itself: a strategy of proactive adaptability to the shifting social contest and, at the same time, a cultural theme of organizational development.

"Critical Management Studies" (Sveningsson-Alvesson, 2003; Gioia-Schultz, 2000; Alvesson-Willmoth, 1996; Zanoni--Jansenn, 2007) have also highlighted how the DM can actually be interpreted as a sort of further strategy of management and control of the uncertainty deriving from the unstable relationship between "social environment and organizational behavior". On the other hand, DM can also be seen as a paradoxical, ethnocentricrevisitation of the diversities and problems concerning, more than the functions of intercultural integration, the dynamics of progressive assimilation within the hegemonic organizational culture.In other words, almost the contrary to Bennet's approach in"intercultural sensibility" (2002).

All of this, as often happens, establishes diversitynot only as a managerial strategy but alsoas a cultural value spread throughout the organization. This same spread, on the other hand,will not take place but through an effective sharing firstly matured across communicative and formative processes and subsequently thorough "democratic" relational praxis. These latter must beconstantly inspired by a cultu-

ral relativismwhich, as mentioned before, doesn't mean "stillness" but social practices of mutual recognition lived pragmatically (Rorty, 1989; Malizia, 2008).

In other words, organizational multiculturalism is a problem of management but not only of managers'. The way in which an organizational culture establishes itself not only in a manner of "creation/patrimony" of the few imposed to the many but as a "social construction". So multiculturalism cannot be seen as a mere top--down strategy but as a real organizational experience.

Clearly the discussion is incomplete, lacking, if nothing else, further confirmations or denials which can come only from research and further theoretical reflections. This is, therefore, an initial attempt at reconsidering organizational morphogenesis not as "exceptions" (with respect to a dominating and determining logic of "homogeneity", of a "unique model" of modernity) but as an objective situation of reference both for the organizational practices ("organizing") and for the study of organizational phenomenon. One hopes, however, that in spite of the above-mentioned limits, this contribution can add something useful to such a complex subject.

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