

Putting into practice of non-essentialist model of culture: Understanding corporate culture and fostering 'employeeship'

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His publications include a book- Social Freedom in a Multicultural State: Towards a Theory of Intercultural Justice (2010), and Chapters 'Multi-stakeholder Deliberation for (Global) Justice: An Approach from Modern Civic Republicanism' in Rethinking the Future of Europe: A Challenge of Governance (2014), 'Towards re-theorizing the firm in pursuit of well-being and social justice', in Ethics and Responsibility: Global Perspectives (2015 forthcoming), as well as articles on responsible (ethical) innovation and governance and organizational culture within multi-national corporations. His current research interest includes human rights and business, and well-being and 'employeeeship'.

Introduction

Mainly based on the article published:

Nathan, G. 2015. A non-essentialist model of culture: Implications of identity, agency and structure within multinational/multicultural organizations, *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, Vol. 15(1): 101-124

SIETAR Valencia presentation

One of the main references:

Nathan, G. 2010. *Social Freedom in a Multicultural State: Towards a Theory of Intercultural Justice*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

Outline

- Introduction – the issue with essentialist notions of culture
- A non-essentialist model of culture
- Implications for agency and identity
- Understanding employeeship and self-respect
- Challenging the notions of corporate culture often equated to national culture and implications for change and leadership
- An organizational model (3P2S)
- Putting into practice – how to foster employeeship?

The paradigms of essentialism vs. non-essentialism

ESSENTIALIST PARADIGM

- Rooted in human nature
- Static
- Homogeneous
- Holistic
- Deterministic
- Bounded

NON-ESSENTIALIST PARADIGM

- Rooted in human conditions
- Dynamic (with continuity and change)
- Heterogeneous
- Internally riven
- Changeable
- Blurred boundaries

The issue

The paradigm of 5-7-9 cultural dimensions tends to essentialize national culture and ignores agency and identity – these have implications for organizational culture!

The paradigm of 5-7-9 cultural dimensions

- Hofstede's model (5)
- Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's model (7)
- GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) research (9)
 - Also included: Schwartz's model: 7 value orientations

Impacts of undermining agency and identity within culture in relation to work and organizations

- Assumption of a singular identity implicitly or explicitly equating to the national culture ignores individuals' multiple intersecting and shifting identities over time and space
- It restricts individuals' 'ethical horizons' (Nathan, 2010)
- National identities are not fixed in time (and space)
- Therefore, such a notion of identity can lead to ossify individuals; cultural conformity and stereotyping can lead to reinforcing certain social injustices within organizations and restricts agency for choice and change!

Implication

- If individuals in an organization are expected to behave, and are treated, with descriptive value orientations that ignore agency for choice and change along with normative value orientations, then **it is not clear how one might embark on an organizational cultural change according to certain ethical norms**

A model of culture within the paradigm of non-essentialism – a point of departure

- We need to understand ‘culture’ as **dynamic intersecting ‘cultural systems’** and **interacting social institutions/organizations** in which persons **individually or collectively** interact with others, directly or indirectly, **to pursue their complex of purposes** (see Nathan, 2010 based on Dilthey’s works)
- Such an understanding **rejects essentialist notions of culture being static, bounded and holistic within internal uniformity**
- It also effectively **move away from the ‘false debate’ of dichotomy between ‘institutions’ and culture’** (see Jackson, 2013)

What does it mean?

- It gives significance to agency for change and **allows meanings to be given from the agency perspective by the individual who participates** with the social world comprising these systems and institutions.
- The individual who stands **at the intersection** of these myriad intersecting systems and interacts with institutions **with multiple intersecting collective identities as well as individual identities, give and derive meanings individually and collectively.**
- Therefore, such a dynamic concept of social interactionism and meanings **does not reify culture and ossify individuals with a singular identity within culture.**

Meanings and identity

‘cultural identities do not carry a pre-given meaning that people passively enact, as is sometimes assumed, but become infused with meaning in organizational actors’ interpretations that are embedded in specific social contexts’ (Ybema and Byun, 2009:339).

- We need to take into consideration the individuals’ **ideas of life** and **lived experience**, which is the philosophical position of Dilthey – ‘idealism-realism (*Idealrealismus*)’. **This aspect captures both descriptive and normative value orientations, the context and change.**

One's worldview

- One's context is not solely determined by one's membership in one's culture, whether it is a national culture or subculture of one's ethnicity; it is an intersection of many cultural systems and common institutions.
- One's worldview (*Weltanschauung*) is formed gradually through one's ideas of life and lived experience (Nathan, 2010).

Implications for organizational culture: Agency, identity and structure

- Meanings should be understood from the participant's perspective who is at the intersection of intersecting various cultural systems and interacting institutions → **do not ascribe meanings from the observer's perspective**
- Agents have multiple intersecting collective identities and personal identities → **be wary of ascribing a singular identity and pre-given meaning within all contexts (can lead to misrecognition and non-recognition *in their* identities)**
- **Diversity management should move beyond ascribing singular identities of nationality as cultural identities, religion, race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality → consider the implications of multiple intersecting collective identities and asymmetrical power relations**

Meaningful work and well-being

Activities are meaningful when they are in accord with one's worldview – ethical convictions

However, one may be mistaken on their ethical convictions due to unjust social conditions

One's well-being is constituted by engaging in meaningful activities

Leadership and organizational culture

It **should not be about 'management of meaning'** (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009)

It is **important to understand the meaningful work from the perspective of the employee**

Meaningful work

- An employee **engage** in activities of work that are according to **one's ethical convictions**
- One can be **authentic to oneself** in his or her work
- One can maintain one's **self-respect**

How should we identify employees?

- Employees are not cultural dopes as resources to be managed -> consider them as **stakeholders with agency for change and choice**;
- Recognition of employees **in their multiple intersecting collective identities as well as personal identities**
- Within the context of intersecting 'cultural' systems and interacting 'institutions'

Employeeeship and self-respect

Three conditions for employeeeship:

- autonomy
- ownership
- responsibility

This will foster **personal responsibility** and allow employees to maintain their **self-respect constituted by autonomy, character and conduct**

Self-respect

A self-respecting individual has **the responsibility and moral duty to reflect on himself/herself as a moral being**. The concept of self-respect should highlight autonomy, character and conduct as essential components (Nathan 2010).

Autonomy: Essentially it entails **taking responsibility for oneself**

Character: Enables people to **communicate and interact with the social world**

Conduct: Social participation and engagement, taking into consideration others' interests while pursuing one's own interests – **no blocking or burdening or arbitrary interference**

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a '**subjective measure**', an emotional response to self evaluation in terms of liking or feeling good about oneself; it **depends on how one feels about one's capacities, performance and perception of others' opinions.**

Self-respect as a moral foundation

will enable:

- taking responsibility for one's failures without blaming others
- giving due credit to others on their successes
- failures to be taken not as a shame on oneself (lowering self-esteem) but as learning with self-confidence – no loss of self-confidence
- mutual recognition (no need to demand for respect)
- diversity to be embraced as a source of growth – (no need to develop us vs. them syndrome)
- pursuing one's interests whilst allowing others to pursue their interests – no blocking or burdening or arbitrary interference
- not to take pride on what is given by birth or to be ashamed of

Model of impact and model of challenge

Model of impact

- It is about the impact one makes to the society
- One may have ethical conviction about making a positive impact

Model of challenge

- It is about performing facing 'fair' challenges
- It may or may not have an impact

Ref: Dworkin, 2000

Minimal and common conditions for employeeship

➤ Non-domination

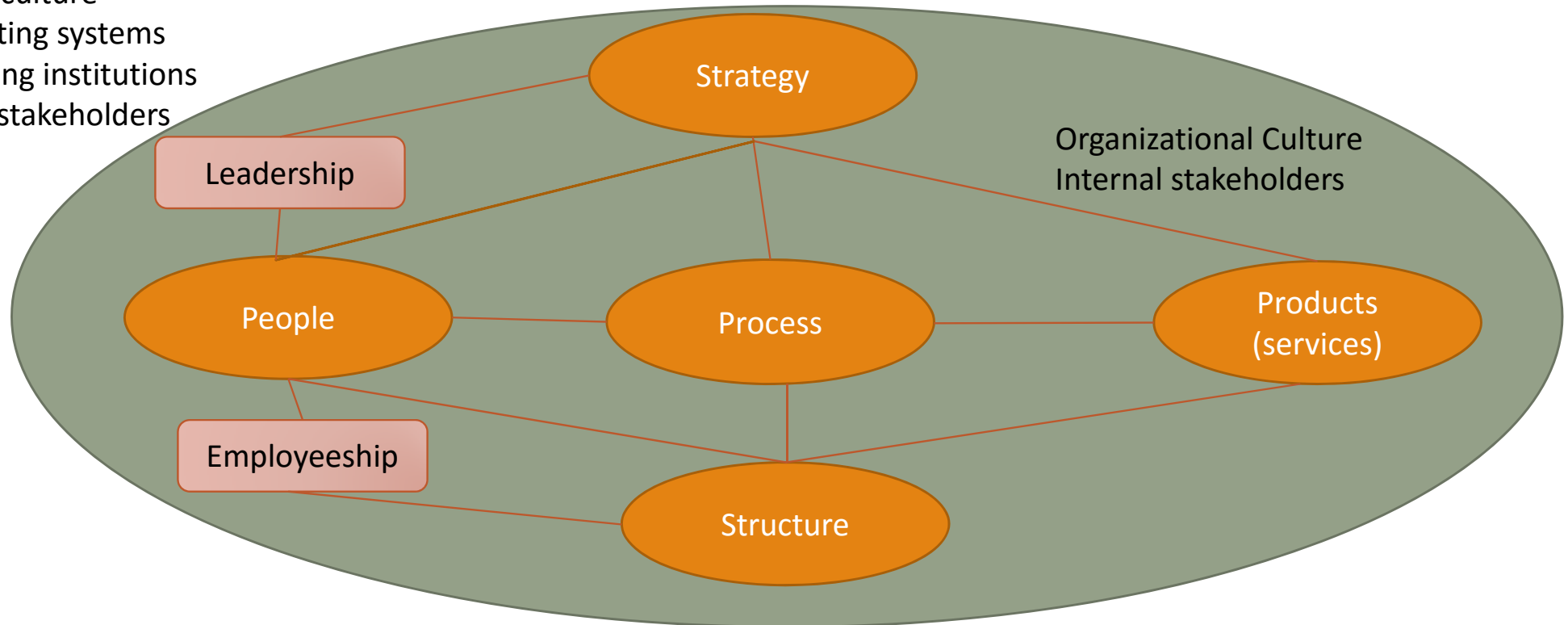
- No arbitrary interference

➤ Recognition

- In their identities
- Listening to their viewpoints
- Endorsement of viewpoints (which shall not impede the above conditions)

3P2S organizational model

National culture
-Intersecting systems
-Interacting institutions
External stakeholders



Resources vs. capabilities

- Resources are not capabilities
- Capabilities require both resources and ability to utilize resources
- **Formal and informal rules can impede capabilities**
- **Informal rules (culture) can be cognitive and normative**

Human resource management or employee stakeholder capability management?

- It is about **managing employees' capabilities** not about managing them as resources!
- Employeeship will enable development and execution of capabilities facing fair challenges
- **Leadership, culture and structure should foster employeeship**
- These should provide those **minimal and common conditions – recognition in three dimensions and non-domination**
- Both formal and informal rules – **institution based view** as well as resources – **resource based view** need to be taken into consideration

How can we re-humanize employees instead of de-humanizing with essentialist notions of culture?

Foster dignity at workplace

- **focus on employeeship** instead on leadership
- **diversity management should go beyond traditional notions of identity that are rooted in essentialist notions of culture** and even gender – consider intersecting multiple group identities and personal identities
- organizational culture and systems – **not reducing to national culture and identity**
- **how employees give meanings and derive meanings** within their organizations?
Consider intersecting systems and interacting institutions
- **how can we implement the minimal and common conditions? What kind of organizational structure, culture and leadership will enable?**



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