Metasystemic Re-Engineering: An Organizational Intervention

Osvaldo García de la Cerda
Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Chile

Renato Orellana Muermann
CIGAR Ltda., Chile

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades organizational transformation has become a fundamental strategy for survival. It is a multi dimensional change of relationship patterns among executives, professionals, clients, and providers that define their organizational setting. The main difficulty lies in the persistence of the emotional, experiential, and cognitive "understanding" of the roles people play in the organisation and the dimensions that intervene in the assessments regarding action and strategy.

This consideration centres the transformation effort on people. The main question to be answered is what it takes to shift people to work efficiently in a different organizational setting, and how to characterize and prepare for this setting.

This article summarises a methodological proposition for organizational transformation centred on the distinction of the "observer" developed by Maturana and Varela (The tree of knowledge) that shows that our biological condition does not allow for an objective perception of reality. This fact brings forth the notion that as a result of culture and personal trajectory each human being has its own perception of the world in which he lives. The characterization of this "uniqueness" is captured by the notion of the human being as an embodied "observer" characterized by a set of distinctions that specifies the dimensions of its perceptions and blindness. An organizational transformation is the process of developing a new "managerial observer."

The fundamental methodological proposition is that an organizational transformation process is possible if, and only if, there is a transformation of the "organizational observer" shared by the community of workers and managers as distinctions in action.

Consequently, the transformation process is a collection of diverse action-research educational interventions oriented to produce adjustments to the set of distinctions that characterize an "organizational observer."

The patterns of relations among people define a particular organisation. Therefore, to transform an organisation, a person must generate behaviour that provokes interactions that do not confirm the existing organisation. This creative action results in a redefinition of the organisation or in the separation of the people involved in attempting to replace the prevailing pattern. Therefore the stability of people involved as promoters of an organizational transformation is at risk.

Our capacity for reflection allows us to speak about the organisation as if we were external to the situation in which we find ourselves. This allows us, if we have the adequate personal history and training, to contemplate the human activity system in which we participate and identify the set of distinctions that sustain our capacity of action.

It is also possible to characterize those distinctions that are not present and allow us to determine the origin of problem situations that put the organisation's viability at risk. In other words we can characterize the capacity of action and its limitations (assuming that as consultants we have a more potent set of managerial and action distinctions). This is the basis for the design of a process of the development of an enhanced "organizational observer" capable of coupling with a set of problem situations by the acquisition of linguistic, emotional, and body competencies functional to organizational care.

We can understand management as the capacity to "take care of organizational viability." Organizational transformation can be understood as a set of actions designed to take care of viability by modifying the exiting organizational observer. As people have different histories, experiences, and concerns, a human activity system can be characterized as a system of organiza-

tional observers. Therefore, resolution for action results from the crisscrossing of conversational networks constituting the system of organizational observers and the psychic states aroused by their interaction.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology to develop the managerial distinctions, attitudes, and abilities that constitute an individual organizational observer is based upon the understanding of human being as a unit and as a system with the capacity to learn about itself, about others, and about the interactions networks in which it participates under the concern for organizational performance. In this context, the CLEHES© methodology represents the idea of a human being as a dynamic unit composed by six interactive and crisscrossing elements (body, language, emotions, history, eros, silence).

The main thrust of the methodology is to support managers through out a process of acquisition of a new set of distinctions, abilities, and practices that constitute an organizational observer and actor. Their embodiment results as a redesign of the network of relations in which the manager participates and as an adjustment of the interactions he has with people.

This process may have different forms according to the context of the intervention. The main issue is the design of a configuration of body, linguistic, and emotional experiences associated with the understanding and competencies to take care of the viability. The methodology attempts to create dramatic instances in which the participants go through a cycle of encounters, disencounters, accidents, and surprises, not only with others but with their self observation in the context of organizational care.

The different episodes of the observer transformation process occur in different educational forms such as workshops, automatic writing, the development of poems and songs, coaching sessions, project review meetings, presentations, modeling, theatre composition and acting, scenographic and choreographic arrangements, report analysis, linguistic exercises, analytic and self observation homeworks, body observation, and dance. The design of the educational interactions is done according to the following strategies:

1. Self observation in CLEHES: What to keep and what to transform of our CLEHES
2. Observation of orthogonal interactions: The affective listening (listening with eros: affection), coupling in language and emotions with others to maintain conversations of trust, cooperation, collaborative work, and cohesion, in different domains and organizational contexts
3. Observation of CLEHES networks: To understand and transform the structure of our conversational networks, and the resulting commitment networks in which we operate.

The apparent anarchy of the interactions is a result of the concern to expose people to situations which are new to them, in which they have scarce competence and in which their functional expertise is not useful. It is a result of the acceptance that what occurs, occurs in the bodies of people through linguistic and emotional coupling and therefore it does not appear wise to restrict the interactions to the professional, analytic type of languages that dominate the organizational conversations. Many times there is strong resistance to perform an activity which is assumed as an area of incompetence. The conversations elicited by resistance are a moment in which self observation can be prompted regarding interactions with unaccustomed situations.

The Development of the Organizational Observer

The triggering situation for an organizational transformation process appears as a psychic state characterized as dissatisfaction (which includes not taking advantage of opportunities), confusion of fear. The concern for organizational transformation would appear when the problem situation that has triggered this psychic state is assumed to be a menace to organizational stability. The situation appears "urgent" when we make the assessment that we face an unmanageable explosion of complexity that we assess as a risk for the organisation's viability.

Normally in an effort to develop a capacity to speak about the problem situation, a multidimensional diagnosis is performed providing the distinctions to speak about the stability of the organisation. Due to lack of

Related Content

Modeling Foreign Exchange Rate Pass-Through using the Exponential GARCH
Baoying Laiand Nathan Lael Joseph (2014). *Analytical Approaches to Strategic Decision-Making: Interdisciplinary Considerations (pp. 139-190).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/modeling-foreign-exchange-rate-pass-through-using-the-exponential-garch/102155

Understanding the Legacy of Herbert Simon to Decision Support Systems
Jean-Charles Pomeroland Frédéric Adam (2008). *Encyclopedia of Decision Making and Decision Support Technologies (pp. 930-938).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/understanding-legacy-herbert-simon-decision/11338

Lands DSS: A Decision Support System for Forecasting Crop Disease in Southern Sardinia
Gianni Fenuand Francesca Maridina Malloci (2021). *International Journal of Decision Support System Technology (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/lands-dss/267158

Lands DSS: A Decision Support System for Forecasting Crop Disease in Southern Sardinia
Gianni Fenuand Francesca Maridina Malloci (2021). *International Journal of Decision Support System Technology (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/lands-dss/267158

Systemic Approach to Decision Making
 (2017). *Multi-Criteria Decision Making for the Management of Complex Systems (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/systemic-approach-to-decision-making/180005