

Exploring the Politics and Processes of Meaning Making and Breaking by the Vocabulary of Deleuze & Guattari (1987)

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Abstract:

It is a central tenant of modern (transaction cost) economics that organizations must develop “economic farsightedness” by weighing alternative options in terms of their second best opportunity foregone. Although this assumption is set in a doctrine that focuses on the importance of “making incommensurables the same”, economics has never really engaged with this process of collecting and collectivizing information.

In consequence, the usefulness of TCE for management research has been questioned by several, who call for more attention to the craft of organizational entity and boundaries. For example, we do not know much about such morphogenetic processes in organizations, where current knowledge and past experiences are brought together in order to rethink future organization.

This study explores how Deleuze & Guattari (1987) offer a set of theoretical coordinates that allow us to explore this economizing process. By giving attention to actors ongoing (de-) territorializations of organizational spaces, they conceptualize the politics and processes of meaning-making and –breaking as a dialogical process by which “economic farsightedness” is constituted as a “synthesis of differences”.

Ethnographic material is presented in terms of a case that explores the sense-making process of an organization following in the wake of new management objectives reframing fundamentally the strategic significance of suppliers and the importance of supplier management. The case is used to present and discuss how ethnographies - exploring the processes of collecting and collectivizing knowledge, resources and capacities - can help us supplement economics-based theories of organization with important empirical insights.