

From chains to networks: the transformations of the management discourses and their implications on discipline into organizations.

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Abstract: There has been a huge transformation of the management practices during the last fifty years. That change has been reflected in the managerial discourses. Whereas the post-World War discourses were focused on rationality, careers, assembly lines, hierarchies and territorialization, recent discourses have used different concepts: information, knowledge, networks, mobility and deterritorialization. Logic is substituted by intuition. Work occupied a central place in the phase of heavy capitalism associated with solid modernity, but in liquid modernity there are no more long-term ties. Therefore, discipline must change in this new context. The panoptical model of control has been substituted by the new ways of self-control, which seem to be less evident but more powerful. Old metaphors relied on chains, middle managers and hierarchies; new metaphors tell us about networks, customers and horizontal companies. From the study of old and recent managerial texts, this paper focuses on the terms and images of control used in both modern and postmodern managerial discourses, describing them and analysing the connection between those discourses and the disciplinary forms adopted by the capitalist system.

The coils of a serpent are even more complex than the burrows of a molehill.

(Deleuze, 2005).

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Introduction: Definition of a managerial discourse.

In 1999, the French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiappello published *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (although it has not been translated to English: it is available in French and Spanish). In this book, they described the transformations of capitalism during the last forty years, focusing their attention on the way the discourses where the capitalism was reflected as an *ethos* had changed (Boltanski and Chiappello, 1999). They researched a corpus of managerial texts from the sixties and nineties to compare how the spirit of capitalism had been transformed. For Boltanski and Chiappello, these books represent one of the main places in which the moral values of capitalism are reflected. The comparison showed interesting results, as we may realize the substitution of the sixties “organization-man” (as it was described by Whyte, 1968) by a new “artist manager” with vision and capacity to create networks.

In the Anglo-Saxon countries, where most of these managerial discourses come from (especially from America), there has been some research on these texts as well as the management gurus phenomenon. There were early works such as the ones by Bendix (1974) or Anthony (1977) who focused in the way managerial ideologies developed in industry. But it is after the explosion of the guru phenomenon (which would coincide with the publication of Peters and Waterman’s *In search of excellence*) when the interest in the managerial texts starts. Since then, the guru industry has just become massive, whereas their books have become best sellers. The publishing industry produces thousands of books on business and management each year, and some of them even become best sellers. We can think of authors like Peter Drucker (2001), Tom Peters (1992) or Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2001), who sell millions of these books giving advices of how to run successfully a company. There have not been many works about this phenomenon from a sociological perspective even in the Anglo-Saxon countries, although there is a huge interest on organization theory and studies on management from critical perspectives (e.g. see Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, 2003; Sturdy, Knights and Willmott, 1992; Calás and Smircich, 1995; Parker, 2002). We find that there are two main approaches: one non-critical, which basically describes the main authors in this new organization theory (examples would be Crainer (1998) or Kennedy (1998)), and critical works which deepen into the study of managerial fads. Then, works such as the ones from Abrahamsson (1991, 1996), Guest (1992), Huczynski (1993), Clark and Salaman (1996,

1998), Micklethwait and Woolridge (1997), Collins (2000), Jackson (2001) and Clark and Finchman (2002) have covered these issues in depth. They have focused on what these texts say and their implications with new ideological efforts to achieve commitment in the workplace.

Thus this managerial discourse is a type of discourse that reflects the new spirit of capitalism, in the form of a new management ideology. The *spirit of capitalism* is, the ideology that justifies people's commitment to capitalism, and which renders this commitment attractive (Chiappello and Fairclough, 2002: 186). But the way this commitment has been expressed has been different throughout the years, as, in a certain way, it has been referred to a different capitalism. Then a difficult question rise: are there really different capitalisms? This would definitely need a further research to give a correct answer to this. Maybe we might argue that at least, capitalism has features which remain stable and features that change through different historical stages.

The transformations of the management discourse...

Following this argument, we might say that capitalism is stable, in the sense that, in the end, it rests on the way capitalist enterprises obtain profits through the selling of goods and services in the markets. It has always hired labour force to do the work, rewarding them with salaries and always obtaining surplus value to invest in new business and increase capital. But we might also say that there has been a huge transformation of the conditions of capitalism during the last century. That change has been reflected in the managerial practices and in the discourses developed about them. If we regard on a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, we may be talking of three "orders of discourse" (understood in the way Foucault does (1999)), which would correspond to different stages in the development of capitalism (using Chiappello and Fairclough's terms, there have been three "spirits" of capitalism). The first discourse would be placed in the end of nineteenth century, and is focused on small family firms and a certain way of entrepreneurialism, focused on the idea of freedom for individuals in markets without institutional control (about these discourses, see also Bendix, 1974). It is a period in which the modern enterprise is starting to appear but new forms of organization of labour have not been developed yet.

In the first decades of the twentieth century there is a coincidence of several facts which suppose a big shift in the way capitalism was functioning. In the first place, the growth of the markets is a challenge for enterprises, which rapidly start to achieve a bigger size in order to conquer these new opportunities (the concentration of firms is enormous during the period 1870-1940, so the markets turn into oligopolistic). Companies grow, the number of departments grows as well and a process of bureaucratisation starts to deal with an increasing administrative work: it is the birth of the modern corporation (Chandler, 1977). The firm cannot be managed by only a family anymore; they need specialists in several areas such as finance or administration. Thus, managers make their appearance (this is described in the famous *The Managerial Revolution* by James Burnham (1967)). Management, as quoted in another famous work by Berle and Means, may be defined as *that body of men who, in law, have formally assumed the duties of exercising domination over the corporate business and assets* (Berle y Means, 1968: 196). It is the beginning of what has been called managerial capitalism.

Managerial capitalism owes very much to two factors: the development of Fordist mass production and the growing intervention of the State in economy. Fordist mass production was an attempt to increase productivity, and it was based on the principles of scientific management developed by F. W. Taylor (1947). According to Taylor, to increase productivity in labour it is needed a division of tasks, setting a measured standard of work for each worker to do each day. It would help to control the output of production, avoiding market oscillations, and hence to accumulate capital. Management designed this division of labour, and it rested on the control of timings and tasks. The assembly-line work appears, and it is based on the execution of simple tasks, sometimes just a movement. The machine now dictates the rhythms and intensity of work, not the worker. This has two consequences: in the first place, workers suffer a process of de-skilling; in the second place, it is the starting point for a stronger surveillance in the workplace (about these issues, see Braverman, 1974; Coriat, 1982; Piore and Sabel, 1984).

Taylorism had a big impact on economy, but also did the state new status in economy. To avoid economic depression, the State started to have a massive role in economy, following the success of Roosevelt's *New Deal* and Keynesian theories. It also meant the birth of a society of consumption, that is, the birth of a masses consumption whose needs would feed the industrial system. After the Second World War, in the western countries it was established

also a collective bargaining system and, finally, the Welfare State (Alonso, 1999, 2001). Therefore, the post-World War discourses were then focused on very distinctive issues².

Discourses from the first years of the 20th century to the late sixties.

In the first place, the concept was Rationality. Things could be measured in order to achieve the most efficient results. Rationalization was applied everywhere, at least a certain kind of instrumental rationality. The production system was characterized for setting standards such as timings, quantities, number of people, movements, and adjustments. Through rationality even fairness would be achieved, because fairness was rational. Thus, meritocracy would be the reflection of efficiency. The best results could be achieved by Management by objectives, about which Peter Drucker used to say: *the manager must know and understand what the business goals demand of him in terms of performance, and his superior must know what contribution to demand and expect of him –and must judge him accordingly* (Drucker, 1976: 150). Thus, everyone involved in the production processes would know what to expect, there were expectations based on concrete facts and figures. Associated with this, there is a second element, the long-term planning. The topic is stability: markets are stable. Everyone works for the same enterprise all of their lives, and according to their performance, they would have a more or less successful career. Even the sales could be forecasted. There were long-term goals for everything: a manager would be “climbing” step by step through the hierarchy, just like in the army.

The third element was the big corporation as a model of organization. The key elements of the system were basically “big”: big corporations with big factories, and a big State. Those are the years in which authors such as Schumpeter saw a sort of a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as entrepreneurialism was declining and oligopolistic markets were dominant³. It was also a model based on a hierarchical organization, where decisions were taken at the top levels. It also implied an idea of authoritarian bosses. The fourth element was reterritorialization: there is nationalization of certain key elements of the economy (for example, the public transport, the mail, and many industries), but there is also a discourse of effectiveness being possible only in “free countries”: there is not a global and deterritorialized

² During this part of the paper I will use the schema developed by Chiappello and Fairclough (2002: 189).

³ In fact, it is a historical period in which there is also a debate on the nature of the competent in terms of capital. Thus, those are the years in which terms such as monopoly capital are used frequently (Braverman, 1974; Baran and Sweezy, 1976)

model, but a model which is related to a concrete geographical situation. Power positions in society were also stable: they were not moving throughout the world, but remained solidly grounded in the national states.

Discourses from the late sixties onwards.

However, from the late sixties there is an enormous shift in these discourses and their elements change. The key factor is “Change”: change is essential to avoid the “future shock”, the shifts in the new age of discontinuity; that is, the arrival of a new economy, based on information (see Toffler, 1971; Drucker, 1969). Now the rapid changes in customers needs avoids any chance of planning or forecasting. The bureaucratic model is progressively replaced by new forms of organization based on flexibility and adaptation, and focused on the idea of a dominant customer culture. Markets are not controlled anymore. Logic is substituted by intuition. So, there has been an historical transition from a stable Keynesian model to a sort of a disorganized capitalism, or a liquid modernity where the rules of the rational model do not seem to work anymore (Lash and Urry, 1987, 1993; Offe, 1985; Bauman, 2003). Work occupied a central place in the phase of heavy capitalism associated with solid modernity, but in liquid modernity there are no more long-term ties. Therefore, recent discourses have focused on very different topics.

In the first place, the concept Rationality is not valid anymore. The markets are boisterous, and in permanent change. The concept, as we said, it is Change. Supply must adapt to demand, and this demand is fragmented because the consumers have very variable tastes. It is needed a varying and differentiated production Thus innovation and creativity are extremely important, as well as commitment to serve the customers. This implies that the organizations must be extremely adaptable, so certain “organizational weight” must be lost: small is beautiful. This implies that organizations must be fuzzy and they must be able to change in size and processes. Organizations should be horizontal, non-hierarchical, and built around projects. The second element of the managerial discourse of the nineties is information. It is the information age, we live in the information society (Castells, 2000): knowledge is the key factor to be successful in the markets, not any other industry. This is basically a society in which services (which include information services) are more important than industry, which is declining. The new added value of the economy is in key sectors such as Internet and biotechnologies, as well as the global finances.

The third concept is networks. Firms must be organized around networks, which is the only organizational model. These networks are organized around projects. Each project is an opportunity to develop one's employability. For the mobile and the adaptable, the ones who to manage themselves, companies will provide self-help resources. This has drastic implications on the organization of labour inside the companies. The solid hierarchies are progressively substituted by a horizontal organization in which there are no more authoritarian chiefs, but on managers who have clear goals and the capacity to inspire their subordinates. Now the forms of meritocracy rest on mobility and the ability to nourish a network. The fourth element is, obviously, deterritorialization. There is a globalisation of markets after the fall of the Soviet bloc. Governments prepare the conditions for their own loss of power: now the international capital forces through economic institutions arrange economies in order to extend capitalism to every field of the world. Soon the companies owned by the State in the Western countries have started to be privatised, and their shares can be acquired by anyone. The new information technologies are decisive to accelerate these processes.

Therefore, there is an important transition in both economy and the discourses about the economic order of things. But these managerial discourses do not just focus on networks or information: there is also an specific discourse on the organization of labour which sometimes it is not presented in a direct way, but introduced with subtlety. I am speaking of a particular issue: discipline in organizations. This will be analysed in the next section.

...And its implications on discipline: the chains...

Managerial discourses are about managing a company to achieve the most efficient results. They are discourses about managers. But these discourses are also about control of labour force. This is not something easy to discover in a first look at the texts, especially in recent times. Some decades ago, it was relatively easy to find out the discipline as a core element. In the "rational period" the focus on discipline was very important, especially in Taylor's texts. In his works and, specially, in his *Testimony before the Special House Committee*, Taylor was claiming constantly the necessity of increasing the output of production (Taylor, 1947). Workers never did as much as possible because they believed that, if they did so, the company would not need so many workers and they would be fired. These practices (called

“soldiering”) were, according to Taylor, typical of workers engaged in a sort of collective work, just like the ones who work in a factory. Therefore, management should design the work, and each worker would perform their part in the same way: it would be a fairer system and also the company would be able to control the output product in bigger markets. Taylor’s discourse was also deeply analysed by Braverman in his *Labor and monopoly capital* (1974). As Braverman states, scientific management *investigates not labor in general, but the adaptation of labor to the needs of capital. It enters the workplace not as the representative of science, but as representative of management masquerading in the trappings of science* (Braverman, 1974: 86). Discipline was assured through surveillance: engineers would measure the amount of work needed and foremen would watch over the other workers. There are a great number of publications related to the discipline in organizations with a Taylorist system (e.g., see Gorz, 1977; Durand, 1979).

The influence of Taylorist disciplinary model was huge in the managerial discourses, and corresponded with this panoptical model of discipline described by Foucault in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1979). Nevertheless, after the World War II and classic studies from the Human Relations School (Mayo, 1959), the model had to be adjusted. Trade unionism during the Great Depression made things difficult for the management boards with strikes and threatens of strikes. The new managerial theories also emphasized the necessity of improving the climate in the workplace. Hence the figure of the supervisor started to be seen as a necessary allied to stop the conflicts inside the organizations. I will put a few examples. The first one comes from Peter Drucker’s classic management book *The practice of management* (1976, original edition from 1955). He explains that:

That in this country the job of supervisor has always been both the opportunity for the worker and the first rung on the management ladder explains in no small extent the absence of classes and class war (Drucker, 1976: 387).

In the first place, there is a division between workers which explains the absence of a class struggle. They have the chance to get better positions in the hierarchy, so they basically are committed to management. The supervisor is no longer seen as a disciplinary element in the workplace, but as an opportunity for the worker: if he is committed enough to his tasks, he may reach a better position, being considered as a true member of the management board. General Motors’ president Alfred Sloan also reflected on the figure of the supervisor:

We have always taken great pains to keep foremen's morale at the highest level. In 1934 foremen were placed on a salary basis, and in 1941 we adopted the rule that their salaries had to be at least 25 per cent higher than the earnings of the highest-paid group of employees under their supervision. In addition, our foremen, who constitute our first line of supervision, have been getting overtime allowances since the early days of World War II –though the Federal Wage and Hour Law does not require the payment of overtime to supervisors. But perhaps the most important reason for the high morale of our foremen is the solid support we have given them on matters of discipline and work standards. They know that they are considered members of management (Sloan, 1972: 459).

We can read that the foremen, who were in charge of discipline in the workplace, had much better salaries, got overtime allowances and had a solid support from the top management. Supervision is presented again as an interesting position in the organization. It also has the function of dividing the workers, as it is a way of cooptation. Sloan is also convinced that management rights about several issues, including discipline, were unquestionable:

What made the prospect seem especially grim in those early years was the persistent union attempt to invade basic management prerogatives. Our rights to determine production schedules, to set work standards, and to discipline workers were all suddenly called into question (Sloan, 1972: 476).

Therefore, the management rights were basically the same as in the Taylorist model: determine production, design job tasks and discipline workers. Sloan's emphasis on these issues was rapidly being old-fashioned, though. Neo-Human Relations authors started to become more interested in the issue of motivation (e.g. Herzberg et al, 1959; McGregor, 1960) and progressively the topic started to be the organizational culture. The Taylorist model with its assembly-line work (the Chain) was in a complete crisis in the first seventies, due to the resistance of the workers, the competence from the new Japanese models of organization and the difficulties to adapt production to less stable markets (about these topics, see Piore and Sabel, 1984; Harvey, 1989; Castells, 2000; Alonso, 1999, 2001). The company needs to become flexible, which implies that there is a need to get a bigger commitment from the worker. If the worker is committed, there is no need to hire middle managers to maintain discipline, which makes organizations less bureaucratic and ready to work in a new organization: the Network.

Thus the new forms of discipline in the workplace are based on the consent of the worker (Burawoy, 1989). Since Knights and Willmott stated (1989), there was a shift from degradation (the deskilling described by Braverman) to subjugation (through managerial and psychological techniques to achieve the workers' consent in the workplace). Therefore consent becomes important. This issue has been covered by many publications (e.g., see Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Sturdy, Knights and Willmott, 1992; and Jermier, Knights and Nord, 1994, among many others). But it is not just a question of mere consent, though managerial techniques have been developed in that direction (Rose, 1999). In this paper it will be argued that there has been a shift in the management discourses that has been highly influential: not only a shift in the content, but also in the form. These discourses are characterized by one aspect which should make us reflect on why resistance is less notorious than it used to be in the sixties when the Fordist model of production was hegemonic. This aspect is the double bind.

...And the networks: discourses, mythologies and double binds.

In this paper I am going to cover the issues of discipline in modern discourses focusing on two aspects: on the one hand, certain Mythologies which are used by management in their discourses; on the other hand, the question of the double bind discourses, which lead to a point where resistance becomes difficult.

Let us firstly refer to mythologies. A myth could be defined as a collective representation that reflects certain social practices and functions, and takes the form of a narrative. These narratives have historical foundations, and commonly involve a foundational act in society or the beginning of a concrete social practice, such as a rule or a custom. Social myths have often been studied in structuralist approaches, but the version developed by Roland Barthes throughout his work "Mythologies" (Barthes, 1973) is the most relevant for our approach to managerialism.

For Barthes, myths are not just common in "primitive" cultures. They are present everywhere in *bourgeoisie culture*, although they are not building great structural narratives, but merely a corpus of discourses. In Mythologies, Barthes describes myths in different aspects of French daily culture: food (wine, steak and chips), commodities (toys, cars) or journal reports (the

iconography which is present around actors and writers). For Barthes, daily life is perceived as a group of signs and symbols that, in spite of their apparent “naturalness”, are undoubtedly ideological. They are an inverted reflection, presenting what is social as simply natural. When these signs are structured in discourses, they are called myths. Therefore, their symbolic form is expressed through a narrative. They operate as intersubjective structures of signification, organised around a concrete Mythology. Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal, which, as Barthes claims, is the exact process of bourgeois ideology (Barthes, 1973: 142).

Thus, social facts are taken out of history, and social representations become mythical. Each social sign has several signifieds associated with one signifier: there is a disagreement that avoids consensus in reaching the same signified. Nevertheless, authority or power can impose this signified. It becomes the natural signified: the myth has been born in that moment. The function of Mythologies is to integrate the individual in a concrete symbolic order through an imposition of meanings. For instance, most of the people work for organizations, social institutions where tapestries of myths have the function of creating bonds of solidarity between the members, in spite of the different social positions of each one of them. All these narratives and rethorics are based on myths, and the essence of these myths is that which appears natural but which in reality is a social construct. They offer a vision of the organization that puts some organizational aspects into the foreground whilst the rest of social and historical situations and facts remain silent. All of these Mythologies describe a world that is just a misrepresentation of what the world really is.

Since the beginning, management discourses have rested on the use of these Mythologies (Fernández Rodríguez, 2004). Some of them have been constantly used. In both Drucker and Sloan books there were two mythologies which were very important. The first one is the Mythology of cooperation: both managers and workers share the same interests, such as the survival of the enterprise or common benefits. The top director and the clerk seem to be on the same level, so their engagement must be equal. The second one is the Mythology of the engaged worker: “good” workers (most of them) are committed to their tasks and can always give more of themselves, “bad” workers protest, resist and even join trade unions (nowadays this last aspect is simply off the discourse).

Since the eighties, new Mythologies appear. I will put some examples taken from two of the paradigmatic management texts from the nineties: Tom Peters' *Liberation Management* and Michael Hammer and James Champy's *Reengineering the corporation*. I will start with some excerpts from Peters' book:

This book lays down a daunting challenge to bosses and workers. (Or, rather, this book assesses the challenge that the *marketplace* is laying on companies). The average worker –hose maker, trucker, railroad conductor, or management consultant- “will be expected” to:

- work mostly in self-managed project teams;
- shift team membership periodically;
- learn several, formerly “professionals only” skills, and achieve towering competence in one or two;
- work constantly with customers and vendors;
- take the initiative consistently and invent improvement projects as a matter of course.

That is, the employee “will be expected” to do these things *if* the company plans to survive, and *if* top management trusts workers (and supervisors and customers and vendors) to get on with it. The last “if” is the \$64,000 question upon which the effectiveness of the newflanged organization hinges: No trust equals no project organization equals no removal of layers of middle management equals no willingness to share strategic information equals no multiskilled training equals no self-management (team or individual) equals no intimate “outsider” (customer, vendor, partner) involvement –equals no dice. That's the equation which cannot be avoided or evaded (Peters, 1992: 461-462).

There are new expectations for both workers and managers. In these new managerial discourses it is interesting to notice that discipline is not exercised by concrete actors anymore. Now, nothing has to be imposed: it is simply “expected”. The challenge of “Change” implies that absolutely everyone in the company must be self-managed. The interesting concept in this text is “Trust”. Trust equals no removal of layers of management: that is, these foremen present in the texts by Sloan or Drucker must be removed. They are not necessary anymore, since we are speaking of “self-management” and expectations. There is also a displacement on the idea of organization as a system. It is no longer a closed system: now, there are external elements which influence the organization such as the vendors or the customers. This also means that hierarchies are not so important, since their decisions are conditioned by those external factors.

This idea is also reinforced with the notion that the employees are rewarded for their implication. Hammer and Champy say about this:

After reengineering, work becomes more satisfying, since workers achieve a greater sense of completion, closure, and accomplishment from their jobs. They actually perform a whole job – a process or a subprocess – that by definition produces a result that somebody cares about. Process performers share many of the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurs. They are focused on customers whose satisfaction is their aim. They're not just trying to keep the boss happy or to work through the bureaucracy (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 69).

Basically, the workers feel much more integrated because their jobs are more interesting and challenging. They want to satisfy the customers, and they act like if they were entrepreneurs. If they share many of the challenge and rewards of entrepreneurs, this means that there is a coincidence of interests. So, this means that there is not a necessity of having a supervisor: people discipline themselves at work. Another example is the empowerment:

Empowerment is an unavoidable consequence of reengineered processes; processes can't be reengineered without empowering process workers. Consequently, companies that reengineer must consider additional criteria in their hiring. It is no longer enough merely to look at prospective employees' education, training and skills; their character becomes an issue as well. Are they self-starting? Do they have self-discipline? Are they motivated to do what it takes to please a customer? Reengineering and its consequent empowerment have powerful implications for the kinds of people companies will hire (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 71).

The authors explain that the companies will select people self-starting, self-disciplined and motivated to please the customer. This means, obviously, that from the beginning their character is carefully controlled, that through selection the right person is going to be chosen. Once this kind of people is selected, there is no need of an imposition of discipline: people are already disciplined. Hammer and Champy are right explaining that this idea involves powerful implications. For instance, we do not even need bosses:

Process teams, consisting of one person or many, don't need bosses; they need *coaches*. Teams ask coaches for advice. Coaches help teams solve problems. Coaches are not in the action, but close enough to it so they can assist the team in its work.

Traditional bosses design and allocate work. Teams do that for themselves. Traditional bosses have little to do in a reengineered environment. Managers have a switch from supervisory roles to acting as facilitators, as enablers, and as people whose jobs are the development of people and their skills so that those people will be able to perform value-adding processes themselves (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 77).

If we do not need bosses, this means that the traditional disciplinary figure, the boss, has lost its space in the discourse. This is very important, as this implies a shift in the way work has been conceived: now teams do it for themselves. This has very much to do with a proclaimed disappearing of Fordism because of the arrival of a more service-based economy (Offe, 1985; Lash and Urry, 1987, 1993). Peters describes this transition in this text, in which he offers new interesting ideas:

Calm despotism may have had its place when the market was calm. But markets have clearly turned boisterous. Boisterous competitive circumstances call for boisterous individuals, boisterous teams, boisterous buckyborgs, and boisterous corporations. It's about that simple.

Which leads to an extraordinary paradox. You are out of control when you are "in control". You are in control when you are "out of control" (Peters, 1992: 465).

This sentence describes perfectly the new managerial discourses. There are four remarkable elements. The first one is the shift in discipline: "calm despotism had its place when the market was calm". Peters is reflecting on the old ways of discipline: during Taylorism, markets were under control as the system (mass production plus Keynesian politics) was designed to be stable and to avoid crises. Once the markets become boisterous, this model has no place. Therefore, the second element is this idea of "Change" which is unavoidable. This is the key factor in the new economy. The third element is the emphasis on freedom. This emphasis might be considered a mythology. There is a clear reference to an employee who demands Freedom. This means that the worker is seeking desperately to be empowered and highly committed. This is the new mythology of our postmodern times: the workers seek for liberation; they seem to ask for a more rewarding job. This also implies a second mythology; this one is about what it means to be conservative. In this mythology, the worker rejects anything that has to do with old ways of doing things, such as hierarchies, bureaucracy or planning, and implies also consent of production. And finally, we identify a third mythology: the one related to customer's authority. Now, the source of power in organizations does not

seem to be inside the company, but in the market. The sovereign customer demands the employee to be committed.

Therefore, these new mythologies are a core element of the new discourse. Employees demand to be free, so we are organizing labour to satisfy that need. Companies seduce the worker offering a job full of challenges and rewards, or at least that was these discourses explain. But then a question rises: are they really free? It looks that they are free but basically to satisfy the needs of the customers, what is really helpful for the enterprise. Thus we have a shift in the content: the new seductive mythologies focus on topics such as freedom, creativity, and self-fulfilment. The question is to understand what is behind that discourse: more compromise from the worker, and everything which might seem unfair such as overtime is always justified by the customer needs. This involves more consent and more subjugation.

But there is something else. The messages focus constantly on paradoxes. You are out of control when you are “in control”. You are in control when you are “out of control”. The new discourses are full of these paradoxes. For instance, freedom brings more commitment:

On the one hand, we’re going beyond hierarchy, and trying to liberate almost everyone in the organization. Yet that liberation leads to many a sleepless night – the result of membership in project teams with sky-high standards, imposed by oneself, but by demanding peers as well. This paradox, one of several, is the heart and soul of the bold new journey on which we’ve embarked (Peters, 1992: 473).

This is the typical paradox. Thus we find that the employees are constantly driven in two different directions. On the one hand, they must be free, break the rules, wear casual clothes, fix their own schedules, listen to MP3s at work, and so on. On the other hand, they must respect the top management’s authority, they must carry out the objectives, and they must be accountable in their job. In sum, there is a tension between freedom and imposition. The messages encourage the workers and managers to be free; on the other hand, it is supposed that they must follow the top-management decisions and be committed to the enterprise.

This situation is called a double bind. Double bind theory is about relationships and what happens when important basic relationships are subjected to chronic invalidation through paradoxical communication. It was formulated, among others, by Gregory Bateson in his work *Steps to an ecology of mind* (1973). In a strict sense, Bateson’s double bind theory is

grounded on a theory of communication, based on Bertrand Russell's Theory of Logical Types. The phrase "double bind" expresses the idea that the "victim" of these types of situations (which imply unresolved sequences of experience), whatever he does, cannot ever "win", that is, he cannot get out of the situation, or escape from it. Bateson identifies some necessary ingredients for a double bind situation:

1. Two or more persons, one of which can be designated as "the victim" (the one who suffers the effects of the double bind).
2. A repeated experience, which finally comes to be a habitual expectation (for the victim, obviously).
3. A primary negative injunction, which may have either two forms. The first one may be described as: "Do not do so and so, or I will punish you". The second one would be: "If you do not do so and so, I will punish you". Bateson selected a context of learning based on avoidance of punishment rather than a context of reward seeking.
4. A secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level, and like the first enforced by punishments or signals which threaten survival. It includes a wide variety of forms: for example, "do not see this as a punishment", "do not see me as the punishing agent", or "Do not submit to my prohibitions".
5. A tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from escaping from the field.
6. Finally, this set of ingredients is no longer necessary when the victim has learned to perceive his universe in double bind patterns (Bateson, 1973: 178-179).

This situation is easily recognized in certain close interpersonal relations between people, such as the ones inside a family with very close ties (Bateson, 1973; Selvini *et al.*, 1978). What is the effect of this peculiar situation? Bateson's hypothesis is that whenever a double bind situation occurs, there will be a breakdown in any individual's ability to discriminate between Logical Types. This situation has the following characteristics:

1. When the individual is involved in an intense relationship; that is, a relationship in which he feels it is vitally important that he discriminates accurately what sort of message is being communicated so that he may respond appropriately.
2. The individual, then, is caught up in a situation in which the other person in the relationship is expressing two orders of message and one of these contradicts the other.
3. The individual is unable to comment on the messages being expressed that he might correct his discrimination of what order of message to respond to. Thus, he cannot make a communicative statement (Bateson, 1973: 180).

When these paradoxical messages are received from a given authority as orders which must be carried out, the receiver cannot obey these orders but must disobey them. In this case, they are simply messages that, through a logic prism, seem deceptive, but in human communication look both absurd and real at the same time. These paradoxical messages are quite normal in these management theories. They are often present in the new “liberatory” management preached by consultants and HRM experts, for instance Tom Peters, but also many more. Freedom becomes an obligation, but also something which is not demanded but given. It has its limits, as it cannot lead to anarchy. The employee is free to do what the enterprise wants from him.

What is the effect of these situations? Obviously, a situation of ambiguity is created. The employee is always asked to do contradictory things: breaking the rules and following the rules, being free and obeying, being creative but just in the way he is asked, etc. These paradoxical orders are underlying the new management discourses on entrepreneurship and commitment with an enterprise to help competitiveness. Therefore, these are discourses which socially have a key role, as they are used to justify the new politics of capitalism as well as the new labour relations. It is not difficult to realize that the introduced ambiguity has an important effect: the individual trapped in a double bind situation basically cannot leave it, and can enter into a state of behaviour disorder. One possible hypothesis is that the double bind maintains him committed to his work in a defensive way. He does not know what to expect, so he prefers to obey all the orders without reflecting upon the situation he is living. His resistance would simply decrease and the subjugation in organizations would achieve a higher level. Therefore, double bind discourses can be understood as a way of reinforcing power in organizations.

In the end, new management rests on psychological control. It is basically a shaping of the self, incorporating the strivings of the individuals into the activities of the organization (Rose, 1999). But it is also a seduction through a message (the mythology) and confusion through several messages (the double bind). Therefore, what we have is mainly pure consent, because we are seduced; and less resistance, because we are confused. There has been a shift from a system based on chains and discipline through foremen and tasks to a system based on networks and new forms of self-discipline. There has been a transformation from disciplinary organizations to organizations in which the regimes of control are subtler.

Conclusion: from discipline to control in organizations.

It is clear that discipline is exercised today in a more subtle way. Fleming and Spicer have argued that there is a covert resistance in organizations through several ways: humour, irony, or cynicism (Fleming and Spicer, 2002). Nevertheless, it seems that these new forms of resistance do not seem to have a huge impact in capitalism. The panoptical model of control has been substituted by the new ways of self-control, which seem to be less evident but more powerful. Old metaphors relied on chains, middle managers and hierarchies; new metaphors tell us about networks, customers and horizontal companies. But the new metaphors are also expressed in a way that they seduce and confuse at the same time, and in this ambiguity is where comes its strength. In his Post-Script, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze expressed his strangeness at the fact that many young people requested apprenticeships and permanent training, and ways of being “motivated”. He was right to identify this problem: people seem to desire to be even more compromised to the capitalist system. As a member of that generation, I am trying to discover, following Deleuze, the telos of these new managerial discourses, these new forms of discipline (Deleuze, 2005).

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