

MANAGEMENT THEORY: A FRAGMENTED AND MULTIFACETED FIELD

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ABSTRACT

In this article there is exposed in very summarized way, the epistemological problematic of the organizational studies and the paradigms and main theories starting off from which a diversity of authors have formulated during XX century a series of focuses, concepts, categories and descriptive, explanatory and interpretive models of the organizational phenomenon. This has generated a great fragmentation of the field, but it has also enriched the debate with a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives that, sometimes complementarily and other times contradictorily, provide a complex and multifaceted look of the organizations that cannot be reduced to a single paradigm and much less still to a single theory.

KEY WORDS: Management, Organizational theory, Organizational studies.

INTRODUCTION

Management was built up as a scientific discipline, starting off from the pioneer works published during the second decade of the XX century. Its study field is the organizations. In this historical trajectory, there was a configuration of a *corpus* of paradigms, theories, models and analytic categories, formulated by diverse authors, from which it was tried to know, to understand, to describe, to explain or to predict the behavior of the organizations. After the Kuhnian revolution of the sixties, the epistemological debate on the incommensurability of

paradigms reached the management *corpus*, showing its limitations and potentialities. The two queries that are tried to be answered in this work are: a) which are the most outstanding theoretical perspectives for the study of the organizations? And b) how does the epistemological management establish itself as to paradigms incommensurability? The purpose of this work consists, on one hand, in carrying out a brief path of the most outstanding theoretical trajectories in the management field, and, on the other hand, in presenting an outline of the debate around the epistemological matter. The structure of the work responds to these two parts.

I. THE MOST OUTSTANDING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN MANAGEMENT

The management theory is built during the XX century with different focuses that try to know, to understand, to describe, to explain and to predict the behavior of the organizations: 1) classic management theory, 2) humanist management theory, 3) rationalistic management theory, 4) institutionalism management theory, 5) rational contingency theory, 6) resources dependence theory, 7) ecological evolutionist theory, 8) transaction costs theory, 9) agency theory and 10) management and postmodernist critical theory.

1) Management Classic Theory

The management classic theory is formulated at the beginning of the XX century. Taylor analyzes the workstations and the industrial operations, seeking to improve efficiency and labor productivity. The studies allow a) to know the times and required movements for each task, b) to know the human aptitudes required for each task and c) to establish wages in function of production. Fayol enlarges to the whole organization Taylor's industrial analysis, formulating principles for the direction and identifying the basic areas of the organization. Although these principles are criticized and qualified as proverbs by Simon (1947), they serve as base for the programming, coordination, direction for objectives and the development of the consultancy for companies (Perrow, 1991). The excessive rigidity and linearity of the model and the omission of the human aspects of the organization, greatly

affect the validity of this theory, although Taylor and Fayol's ideas maintain their influence intact in several aspects.

2) Humanist Management Theory

The focus of the human relations arises between 1924 and 1927 with Hawthorne's experiences and Elton Mayo's studies on the changes on physical working conditions and its effects on productivity. In spite of the abundance of studies on leadership and productivity between the 1930's and 1960's (Kornhauser and Sharp, 1932; Lewin, 1935; Brayfield and Crockett, 1955; Vroom, 1964; Lawler and Porter, 1967 and Hersberg, 1966, among other) there is no conclusion that leadership necessarily improves labor yield. Other studies on the organizational climate and the group relationships generate theoretical formulations such as the hierarchy of the individual's necessities (Maslow, 1968), the maturity theory (Argyris, 1962), the X and Y theories (McGregor, 1960) and the organization systems (Lickert, 1961). The human relations theoreticians are criticized as to the negative load that they assign to the conflict, the forgetfulness of the widest context that influences on the groups, the omission of the political aspects, the suppositions of harmony and balance and the pretense of understanding the organization as from the individuals and groups. The great merit is the accumulation of empiric evidences that show the complexity, irregularity and how unpredictable human behavior is. (Perrow, 1991).

3) Management Rationalistic Theory

The organizational rationalism continues, it develops and it deepens the ideas of the management classics, incorporating the human relations contributions. It stresses on the technological matter of programming of decisions, formalization of activities and control of the behaviors of the members of the organization, but puts aside the informal aspects, the power relationships, the conflict of interest and the influence of the context. During the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's in the organizational field prevail: the institutionalism, the decisions and human relations theory. Their seed is constituted by Barnard (1938) and Weber's (1947) works, which influence in a very different way (See Chart N° 1).

Chart N° 1. Barnard and Weber's Influence on Management

<i>Dimensions or aspects</i>	<i>Barnard's Influence</i>	<i>Weber's Influence</i>
Organizational System	Organic	Mechanic
Organization Axis	The human beings	The tasks
The tasks	Adaptative and sensitive	Rigid and inflexible
Organizational Model	Democratic	Authoritarian

Source: Own elaboration based on Perrow (1991)

For Barnard, the organizations are by nature cooperative systems and cannot stop being so. It excludes the conflict, the obligatory coordination and the financial incentives. For Weber people cooperate forced by the hierarchy of authority and for the separation between post and person. Both coincide in defining the organizations as an impersonal system or supra individual of coordination of forces or activities, that make the organizations more rational than the individuals.

Simon and March (Simon, 1947; Simon and March, 1958) develop and reconcile Weber and Barnard's ideas, sustaining that an organization is a group of people and what the organization does, is carried out by people, but these possess limited rationality and therefore their behavior can be controlled by the organization. These controlled behaviors configure the organizational structure. The authority, communication and formalization or programming of the decisions and the activities (technology) are the means to control these behaviors. The organization defines the objectives and goals. The conflict is seen by these authors as an impersonal problem, as a conflict of goals.

4) Management Institutionalism Theory

Institutionalism is the nearest focus to true organizations sociology (Perrow, 1991). Its most important conceptual framework is Parsons' structural functionalism. It analyzes in detail the real and historical organizational processes, nesting them in an organic whole that gives them sense. It is based on case studies, carefully documented and analyzed (Selznick, 1949). It follows the revelation tradition, demonstrating that things are not what they look like. It analyzes the non political processes of the political behavior and the non economic aspects of the economy behavior. The organizational behavior is not based on the formal structure,

neither in the objectives and goals, neither in the production of assets and services, but in the thousands of underground processes of the informal groups, power relationships, conflicts, values and interests influenced by the context. For Selznick (1957) a management process is guided by efficiency, rationality and attainment of objectives, while an institutionalization *process* is guided by values, it is adaptable and sensitive. The organizations are in themselves, rational instruments and not simply for the assets they produce or services they render. People organize their lives around them; they identify themselves with them and become dependent of them. The *institutionalism* process is a process of organic growth for which the organization adapts itself to the internal groups and to the values of the society that constitutes its context. They are practices and procedures that continue (Pfeffer, 1982). It is the crystallization of meanings in an objective way. (March and Olsen, 1976).

The economic institutionalism arises in Germany at the end of the XIX century (Schmoller, 1900) inspired by romanticism and in Kant and Hegel's ideas. It sustains that the economic process is operated within a social framework crossed by culture and history. It is developed in the United States with Veblen (1919), Commons (1924) and Mitchell who criticize the suppositions of the classic economy by non realists and for not considering the historical changes (Scott, 1995). It rejects the supposition of rational individuals making decisions as sustained by the classic economy and, on the other hand, it tries to understand history. Veblen defines the institutions as established "habits of common thought for the generality of men", while Commons changes the emphasis in the individual behavior, suggesting "transaction as an analysis unit". Williamson (1975) retakes from Commons 1) that the institutions are conceived in dynamic form as an answers to shortage and the interest conflicts, 2) that transaction is the analysis unit that should be studied, 3) that the collective action restricts, liberates and expands the individual action; the individual can restate the collective action, the routines, the transactions and the institutional context, and 4) the historical precision. It criticizes those behavior presumptions of the economic action sustained by the classic economists. Di Maggio and Powell (1983) formulate the isomorphism concept to refer to values which continue or are adjusted to certain rules of genuineness. Isomorphic processes are, for example, "total quality" or "to study English and

computer science". The organizations exist in fields of other similar organizations. An organizational field is those organizations that on the whole constitute a recognized area of institutional life: suppliers, clients, regulator organisms and others. The concept of organizational field includes the entirety of relevant actors, not only competitive organizations that form populations (Hamman and Freeman, 1977) or inter-organizational nets (Laumann, 1978).

For Di Maggio and Powell the organizations are more and more isomorphic within their fields. This process of institutional isomorphism is due to 1) the coercive forces of the context, such as State regulations or cultural rules that impose or force to an organizational standardization, 2) the mimicry or imitation among organizations, by which some are modeled one to another and 3) the normative pressures that come mainly from the professionalism of the labor force. The organizational design does not come from a rational process but from internal and external pressures that make the organizations within their fields resemble some others through time.

Meyer and Scott (1983) and Zucker (1988) study the form in which values are given to the practices and how the interaction patterns and the structures are legitimated in the organizations, following Berger and Luckman's (1967) point of view that reality is a social construction. The actors are entities with feelings and meanings, they are not technocrats. The organizations are not configured by technological or environmental impersonal forces, as sustained by organizational rationalism, the rational contingency theory, the ecological theory, the resources dependence theory or that of costs transaction. For Scott "the institutions are structures and cognitive, normative and regulative activities that provide stability and meaning to the social behavior" (Scott, 1995). They are reproduced by culture, structures and routines. These three institutional systems - cognitive, normative and regulative - operate in six institutional levels studied by different authors (See Chart N° 2).

Chart N° 2. Institutionalism Levels Study

Levels	Cognitive	Normative	Regulative
The World System	Meyer (1994)	Krasmer (1983)	North and Thomas (1973)
Society	Dobbin (1994)	Parsons (1953)	Skocpol (1979)
The Organizational Field	Di Maggio (1991)	Mezias (1990)	Campbell and Lindberg (1990)
The Population of Organizations	Carroll and Hannan (1989)	Singh, Tucker and House (1986)	Barnett and Carroll (1993)
The Organization	Clark (1970)	Selznick (1949)	Williamson (1975)
The Organizational Subsystems	Zimmermann (1969)	Roy (1952) and Buroway (1979)	Shepsle and Weingast (1987)

Source: Own elaboration

Hall (1996) criticizes institutionalism 1) its potential tautological reasoning¹, 2) its lack of attention to what is and what is not institutionalized; there is a tendency to apply institutionalism in fact a posteriori, in an almost mystic way, where the ideas and the practices go and come for any other reason that is not institutionalization, 3) the explanation of the development of organizational myths singular and collectively on the meaning of real facts with the danger that reality, which is the base of the myth becomes a myth itself, 4) its over-extension, when applying the institutional theory to an enormous range of situations and organizations. On the other hand Oliver (1992) criticizes institutionalism which avoids the deinstitutionalization processes and Abbott (1992) that avoids or subtracts its importance to topics such as efficiency. For Perrow (1991) institutionalism contributes 1) to emphasize on the organization as a whole, and in the variety of organizational situations, 2) to consider the real possibility that at least some organizations have their own life, in spite of the desires of those who supposedly control them and 3) to put the emphasis in the context as a whole.

5) Rational Contingency Theory

The rational contingency theory arises by mid 1950's in Europe (Burns and Stockers, 1961 and Woodward, 1965) and is taken to the United States - mainly to Harvard – by

¹ A tautology is a circular reasoning, where the variables are defined, some in terms of the others, thus darkening and making difficult the evaluation of the causes. (Turner and Maryanski, 1979)

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and Thompson (1967). It is the dominant theory in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's and still maintains its validity. It exercises great influence on marketing, in the design of organizations and in the texts of enterprise consultants. This is very criticized academically. It sustains as basic supposition that organizations act rationally and they adapt themselves to the environment. It explains how the factors or variables of the context determine the organizational structures. There is not an ideal structure, but criteria to respond to those environment factors. The environment influence is incorporated to the theory in the 1960's. Each organization has its own contingencies, its risks, its uncertainty and its restrictions.

It is a functionalist structural theory that considers the organizations as organisms (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) that adapt themselves to their environment. The organizations are open systems that interact with their environment to reproduce the social system (Scott, 1981). The logic of the technologies is of closed systems (Thompson, 1967). The environment generates uncertainty. The organizations look for regularity, identity, balance (homeostasis) and they try to reduce environment uncertainty (imbalance), adapting themselves to it (balance). The closed systems degenerate (entropy). The organizations are open systems that obtain their energy from the environment. The organizational structures are differentiated in functions. There is multiplicity in ways, possible to adapt to the environment (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

Thompson adopts from of Cyert and March (1963) the concept of complex organizations to refer to factories, schools, hospitals and others. From Simon (1947), the concept of limited rationality, to sustain that the organizations face and solve problems, satisfying objectives, not maximizing. From Barnard (1939), the idea that the individuals have one foot inside and the other outside the organization and from Parsons (1960) the different levels of responsibility and control: technician, managerial and institutional.

Thompson denominates technical rationality or technology the activities that, according to cause/effect relationships, produce the desired results. A perfect technology produces the wanted result in an unavoidable way in a closed system. Since the organizations search to obtain wanted results and are open systems subject to rationality criteria, they will search to

protect their technical nucleus, reducing the number of variables that operate on it, establishing a closed system of logic. At institutional level, on the other hand, the organizations are more open to the environment and they operate with more variables, being therefore greater the uncertainty degree. The managerial role is to intermediate between context - adapting and making the organization flexible - and the technical nucleus - protecting the key activities or critics for the objectives of the organization.

The rational contingency theory is criticized for its tautological outline, the non consideration of the political and historical aspects, the obsession for efficiency and the omission of key actors for the organization (Hall, 1996).

6) Resources Dependence Theory

The resources dependence theory arises by mid 1970's (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Aldrich, 1979; Pfeffer, 1982) and it centers its analysis in the decisions taken inside the organizations. It has links with the focus of political economy organizations (Wamsley and Zald, 1973 and Benson, 1975) and with the exchange-dependence focus (Haselfeld, 1972 and Jacobs, 1974).

The organizations have an internal political context within which strategic decisions are taken, selecting alternatives in an active way, trying to somehow manipulate the environment to obtain advantages in terms of dependence of resources. All organizations depends on the context to obtain the resources that they need: human, technological, materials, financial and others, which are provided by other organizations that in turn obtain their resources from other organizations and so on and so forth, generating an inter-organizational resources dependence chain.

The organizations try to diminish uncertainty and contingency that generates this interdependence by means of coalitions, alliances and other forms of inter-organizational relationship. These actions are decided internally in the organizations by means of strategic options that select the best alternative allowed by the context. The decisions arise from the internal distribution of power, and keep in mind context restrictions, uncertainty and contingencies.

The decisions can have important legal or economic barriers to manipulate the environment. Big organizations can dominate the markets leaving little or no margin or possibility to the small ones to modify their environments or contexts. The ways in which the organizations can operate successfully are reproduced by means of bureaucratization, the specialization and the standardization of functions, the promotions based on performance, the transmission of the organization culture and the leadership structure.

7) Ecological Evolutionist Theory

In the ecological evolutionist theory, the context or environment selects which organizations are adjusted or better adapted to it and which are not (Hannan and Freeman, 1977, 1983 and 1989). It studies the organizational forms and the organizations population. These concepts are not sufficiently clarified in the theory and generate not few methodological difficulties for their treatment. The organizations do not adapt themselves to the environment, but rather they are selected by this, in a natural process which has three stages (Campbell, 1969): 1) Variation in the form or way of operating, planned or not, 2) selection in the ways that are successful and 3) Retention in the selected ways, conserving them and reproducing them. This conservation takes place mainly through the managerial training and the professional training based on the models that successfully function.

The organizational forms occupy niches within the context. For Aldrich (1979) "the niches are combinations different from resources and other restrictions that are enough to support an organizational form". A niche is a group of organizations that combine the same resources and have the same dependence of the atmosphere. The narrow niches, for example the ethnic groups, the neighborhood and the religious and professional groups, tend to maintain specialized organizations, while the wider niches tend to maintain more diversified organizations (Hannan and Freeman, 1983). For the study of organization populations, Baum (1991) suggests several dimensions and variables (See Chart N° 3).

The main contribution of the ecological theory is to explain how a population of organizations goes evolving and how a certain organization will evolve. Nevertheless, there are several criticisms formulated on this theory: its strong biological content and its scarce

social foundation (Perrow, 1979; Van de Ven, 1979); it does not take into account the origin of the variations (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976; Van de Ven, 1979); it does not consider the internal processes of the organizations (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976); it does not explain the adjustment processes between the organization and their environment (Van de Ven, 1979); it is based on the same suppositions that the economy sustains for the perfect competition markets and which are not verified in any case (Aldrich and Pfeifer, 1976); it considers the selection process as unavoidable (Van de Ven, 1979); it shows an environment empty of human actors, with organizations like inert masses, eliminating power variables, conflict, disorganization and other social processes (Perrow, 1979).

Chart N° 3. Dimensions and Variables for the Study of Organization Populations

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Demographic	Age	The old organizations have higher mortality rate
	Size	The bigger ones have higher survival rate
Ecological	Density	Number of organizations
	Mass	Size of organization population
	Relationship	Number of relationships between organizations
	Overlapping	Overlapping of niches of organizations
	Localization	Geographical environment
Environmental	Specialization	Competitiveness degree between organizations
	Institutional	Norms that regulate populations
	Political	The organization population's political framework
	Technological	Dominant designs
	Economic	Organizations Economic framework

Source: Own elaboration based on Baum (1991)

8) Transaction Costs Theory

The transaction costs theory arises from the economy field and tries to why the organizations exist and act (Williamson, 1975, 1981 and 1985). The analysis unit is the

transaction or exchange of assets and services. It is based on the homo economicus that acts rationally maximizing its benefit. When stressing on the transaction, it puts to one side the production problem to center on the markets. The simple transactions are carried out freely in the market, but when they are complex they become uncertain and trust becomes problematic, being justified in consequence the emergence of hierarchies or organizations as an answer to uncertainty.

The transaction under the protection of an organization allows the surveillance, supervision and control of the process. The organizations search for more and more control by means of commitments formalization processes of and construction of monopolies. But there is also the inverse return process, to the free market transaction, for example in the recruiting of temporary personnel and in services sub-contracts.

The costs transaction theory provides a limited vision of the organization which should necessarily complement itself with other focuses. This is recognized by Williamson (1985) himself. The transactions, also, are carried out in contexts of social relationships more than of economic relationships (Granovenen, 1985). Other phenomena not sufficiently considered by this theory, are the vertical and horizontal integrations of the organizations that give origin to true domestic markets, isolated from competition and from open-markets (Lazerson, 1988).

9) Agency Theory

The agency theory also tries to explain the existence and performance of the organizations (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Fama, 1980 and Fama and Jensen, 1983). It supposes that social life is no other thing than a series of contracts, where the buyer of assets and services is the holder and the one that he provides them to is the agent. This relationship holder-agent is governed by a contract, but subject to fraud problems, scarce information and limited rationality. In the formulation of agency theory one must keep in mind 1) the holder and the agent's preferences, 2) the nature of uncertainty which generates situations of greater or less insecurity and 3) the information available to the holder regarding the agent's behavior. So, the agency theory, like the costs transaction one, justify the

existence of organizations like framework actions to agree or to suit contracts that regulate certain transactions that are necessary for the exchange of assets and services in an economy system. This regulation diminishes the uncertainty of the context and it allows certain degree of control on the key variables.

10) Management and Postmodernist Critical Theory

For Alvesson and Deetz (1996), the critical theory emerges in the organizational studies toward the ends of the 1970's and beginnings of 1980's (Benson, 1977; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Frost, 1980; Deetz and Kersten, 1983; and Fisher and Sirianni, 1984), while the postmodernist theory arises toward ends of the 1980's (Smircich and Calás, 1987 and Cooper and Burrell, 1988). Both emerge in contexts characterized by the increase of the size of the organizations, the quick implementation of communication information technologies and, the globalization processes, the changes in the labor relationships, the decrease and professionalism of the labor work force, the intensification of ecological problems and the markets turbulence.

So the critical theory as the postmodernist one, criticize the illumination of modernity and its promise of autonomous subject, progressively emancipated by the acquired knowledge through the scientific method. In speech modernity, was attributed, emancipation of the myth, authority and traditional values, through knowledge, reason and opportunities based on training and individual development. Although he partially recognizes the potentialities of illumination and modernity (Habermas, 1984 and 1987), criticizes their great stories based on abstract universal categories; the use of reason as a dominance and hegemony instrument; the mystification of progress, science and technology; the environment destruction; the unfulfilled promise of human emancipation and the social exclusion generated systematically.

The inspiration sources of the critical and postmodernist theory are a) Nietzsche's relationship between power and knowledge, b) language constructivism and the experience of the inter-subjective theory, c) Marx's social conflict theory and d) Freud's complex human subject. In Deetz (1994) this author relations two dimensions: on one hand, the origin of the

social dominant speech, that can be consent or disagreement and, and on the other, the concepts and studied problems, that give place, a priori, to the domestic emergent and elite categories. In function to these dimensions, the author places, the critical theory in the disagreement, because the identity, order and objects are built socially, and as elite a priori because it is a previous privileged knowledge. On the other hand, the postmodernist theory, although it is also located in the disagreement, it is domestic emergent because it constitutes a knowledge built during the process.

The critical theory, in a wide sense, constitutes a radical critic on contemporary society, pointing out exploitation, repression, asymmetric power relationships, distorted communication and false conscience. In a strict sense, it refers to the so called Frankfurt School, whose maximum exponents are Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas. In the organizational studies, the pretense of the critical theory is to aspire to societies and working places free of dominance. Externally, it focalizes its attention in the relationship of the organizations with the most ample society, emphasizing the social consequences of colonization of other institutions and of the dominance or destruction of the public sphere. Internally, it analyzes the dominance generated by the instrumental reason, speech and the "consensus". In a clear political agenda, it focalizes its attention in the interests of specific groups such as women, workers and negroes, studying the goals, values, conscientious forms and communicative distortions within the organizations; the institutionalization forms and ideologies and organizational practices as expression of contemporary dominance forms (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996).

The organizational critical theory is composed of two large study lines: **1) The ideological criticism and 2) The communicative action.**

1) The early ideological criticism is carried out by Marx, who described the way in which the exploitation relationship appeared as legitimate. The economy conditions and class structure were central in the analysis. Then, starting off from the 1970's, the dominance and exploitation by the proprietors, and later on by the administrators, were the ideological critic's central topics. Other studies refer to the coercion processes (Gramsci, 1929 and 1935; Burawoy, 1979 and Willmon, 1990), to the cultural-ideological control (Hodge, 1979;

Czarniawska-Joerges, 1988; Deetz and Mumby, 1990 and Kunda, 1992) and to the organizations as expressions and producers of ideologies (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Alvesson, 1987; Alvesson and Willmott, 1996).

The ideological critic's 4 recurrent topics are the naturalization of the social order, universalization of managerial interests, instrumental reason and hegemony.

a) The *naturalization* of the social order: The social order is abstracted from its history and its origin; the organizational processes appear as "natural" and the organic and mechanical metaphors prevail. For the ideological critic, organizations are socio-historical constructions (Lukács, 1971; Benson, 1977; Giddens, 1979; Frost, 1980 and 1987; Thompson, 1984 and Deetz, 1985 and 1994).

b) The *universalization* of the managerial interests: The interests particular to organizations are universalized and treated as if they were of interests to all. The multiple demands of property to financial estates decreases. Money fulfils a dominant role. For the ideological critic, the managerial advantages can be seen as historically produced and actively reproduced by the ideological practices in society and in the organizations themselves (Tompkins and Cheney, 1985; Knights and Willmott, 1985; Lazega, 1992; Deetz, 1992; Offe and Wiesensthal, 1980).

c) The *instrumental reason*: Habermas (1971, 1975, 1984 and 1987) describe technical reasoning as instrumental and tending to be governed by what is theoretical and hypothetical. Their opposite is the practical interest. It is a constituent interest of the preservation and expansion of inter-subjectivity from the possible action oriented towards mutual understanding. The practical reasoning focalizes itself in the understanding process and mutual determination of purposes.

d) *Hegemony*: is a concept analyzed and developed by Gramsci (1929 and 1935) as a complex net of conceptual agreements and materials which occur in everyday life. The hegemony conception suggests the presence of multiple dominant groups, with different interests and the presence of power and activity even in the dominated groups.

Several objections have been formulated to the ideological critic: a) that it is ad-hoc and reactive, explaining after the happening why something does not happen instead of

predicting the future; b) that is elitist and c) that it is too simplistic. The greatest criticism is the one formulated by the postmodernist theory, in connection with the rational and reflexive agent's idea, able to act autonomously and cohesively. The ideological critic has responded to these objections, researching empirically dominance systems, insisting on the interests' asymmetries and treating the ideologies as dominant without seeing them as a simple instrument (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996).

2) Communicative action is part of the systematic philosophy developed by Habermas (1984 and 1987). It distinguishes two processes of historical learning and rationality forms: The strategic-scientific-technological one, associated with the system world, and the ethics-politics-communicative one, associated with the world of life. The world of life is built creating and recreating the meaning patterns. It can be considered as entirely rational, more than instrumental or strategic, with interactions guided by the communicative understanding rather than the world imperatives system or by the non-reflexive traditional cultural values. Communicative understanding depends on the non distorted communication, of the presence of the free discussion based on agreement, argument and dialogue. The non distorted communication provides the base for the highest rationality form.

In the communicative rationality there is no power, status, prestige, ideology, manipulation, experts' role, fear, insecurity, incomprehension or any other form of ideas repression. It is a method to analyze – query; tested, accepting - the validity of different demands, based on understanding, sincerity, truth and legitimacy. The communicative action is an important aspect of the social interaction in society, in the social institutions and in daily life (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996).

Vattimo (1992) criticizes Habermas his "benign and benevolent vision of the human species" that counts with the knowledge and the argument to change thought and action, a position about which the postmodernists are highly skeptical (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996).

The critical theory has carried out important contributions to the organizational studies (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996; Alvesson, 1987; Sieven, 1986; Fischer, 1990; Hollway, 1984; Mumby and Pumain, 1992; Ferguson, 1984; Frost, 1987; Deetz and Kersten, 1983; Calás and Smircich, 1992):

- The vision of organization as technocracy, mystification, cultural drowsiness and colonization power.
- The analysis of the direction, favoring of the organization members passivity, to be able to manipulate them.
- The ambiguity analysis, the contradictions and the codes in the organizational communicative action.
- The narrow thought which generates the dominance of the instrumental reason and the money code.
- The constrained working conditions, where creativity, change, development and meanings are ignored or subordinated to instrumental values.
- The asymmetric social relationships among experts (including the administrator elites) and non experts.
- The extension of control on employees and concealment of their social reality.
- The control on consumers and the social ethics-politics agenda, prioritizing the money code.
- The environment destruction.
- The false appearance of objectivity and impartiality of the management techniques used in the organizations.
- The dominance of groups, ideas and institutions.
- The conflicts between practical reason (communicative action) and the instrumental reason (maximization of results).

On the other hand, postmodernism describes a historical period marked by a deep social change. It has elaborated a group of philosophical reflections on organizations (Featherstone, 1988; Kellner, 1988; Parker, 1992; Hassard and Parker, 1993), inspired by Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Deleuze, Guattari, Laclau and Moufle. It is based on: **a)** speech centrality, **b)** fragmented identities, **c)** the critic of presence philosophy, **d)** The loss of foundation of the great narrations, **e)** The connection between knowledge and power, **f)** The hyper-reality and **g)** Research as resistance and indetermination.

a) *Speech centrality* replaced the unconscious structure in postmodernism, as the distorted communication replaced false conscience in the critical theory. Language as a particular, domestic construction, from life's experience, opposes itself certainty, to objective truth, to prediction and control of nature and to the social world that sustains objectivism. There are two versions regarding speech centrality: 1) the one that emphasizes speech in a special linguistic sense, where the language in use is intrinsically related to meaning and to perception and 2) Foucault's vision of speech, as a thought system that contains and informs material practices that produce peculiar forms of subjectivity, not only linguistically, but also practically, by particular power techniques.

b) With the *fragmented identities*, postmodernism rejects the sure unitary identity as the center of the social universe, based on the notion of autonomy and individual self-determination. On this position there are two versions: 1) one that sustains that man's western conception has always been a myth and 2) the one that sustains that the individual vision as coherent, integrated and autonomous is false. Organizations continually emerge, they are constituted and constituent produced and consumed by the subjects.

c) *The critic of the presence philosophy* sustains that the material of the world only becomes an object in a specific relationship. The linguistic and non linguistic practices are central for the production of the object (Mead, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger). For the normative social science, the primary function of language is to represent objects. For example, a "worker" is an object (also a subject) in the world, but neither God nor nature made this "worker", but rather - so that he exist – one requires: 1) a language and 2) a group of practical social practices, that classify human beings in "workers" and "non workers". Questions such as, what is a worker really?, what constitutes a worker?, how does a human being do to be a worker?, they are not answerable, looking at something in the world that can be described as a "worker", but rather products of the linguistic and non linguistic practices that make of this something, an object.

d) *The loss of foundation of the great narratives* makes reference - for example - to Marxism's fight of classes, to the survival of social Darwinism or to the invisible hand of market economy. There are two positions: 1) narrations are always a deceit that have been

used as support of a dominant vision of the world and of order and 2) narrations generate incredulity.

e) *The connection between power and knowledge* (Foucault, 1977 and 1980) is expressed in the formation of speech itself. Power resides in the demarcation and the speech system.

f) *Hyper-reality* has to do with the world, understood not as a reality but as a simulation.

g) *Research as resistance and indetermination* is a kind of anti-positive knowledge, based on the deconstruction.

II. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL MATTER IN MANAGEMENT

The organizational study field is fragmented and multifaceted. For Burrell and Morgan (1979), all the organizational theories are based on a certain conception on the nature of science and society, adopting as foundation a subjective or objective dimension.

Chart N° 4. Science Nature

<i>Supposed</i>	<i>Subjective Dimension</i>	<i>Objective Dimension</i>
Ontological	Nominalism	Realism
Epistemological	Anti-positivism	Positivism
Anthropological	Voluntarism	Determinism
Methodological	Ideographical	Nomothetic

Source: Own elaboration based on Burrell and Morgan (1979)

It is difficult to reconcile these positions outlined by Burrell and Morgan if we consider - as done by these authors - the objective and subjective as rigidly antagonistic or as two completely different realities. However, reality, or at least what we can know of it, is at the same time objective and subjective, it goes building up with objective elements (that exist independently of the subject) and subjective (that belongs to the subject). This is for example is the position that sustains the structuring theory (Giddens, 1984).

Chart N° 5. Society's Nature

Regulation	Social Change
Status quo	Radical Change
Social Order	Structural Conflict
Consensus	Dominance
Integration	Contradiction
Solidarity	Emancipation
Satisfaction of necessities	Deprivation
Present time	Potentiality

Source: Own elaboration based on Burrell and Morgan (1979)

The same thing happens to the dichotomy between regulation and radical change. Society is a combination of different regulation degrees and change, in constant conflict which are solved in different ways. Only in the case of the big revolutions, for example the French revolution, the social change opposes itself as completely antagonistic to regulation, the conflict being solved violently by imposition of the radical change on the status quo. With these two *dichotomies*, "objectivism / subjectivism" and "social regulation/social change", Burrell and Morgan build a matrix with four big paradigms in which they place the different social theories linked with the organizations:

Chart N° 6. Paradigms and Organizational Theories

SUBJECTIVISM	RADICAL CHANGE	OBJECTIVISM
Humanist Radical Paradigm		Radical Structuralist Paradigm
Anarchist individualism		Marxism
Critical theory		Conflict Theory
French Existentialism		Russian Social theory
Anti-organizational Theory		Organization Radical theory
Interpretive paradigm		Functionalist Paradigm
Phenomenology		Integrative Theory
Hermeneutics		Systems General theory
Ethno-methodology		Objectivism / Pluralism
Symbolic Inter-action		Bureaucratic Dysfunctions Theories
SUBJECTIVISM	REGULATION	OBJECTIVISM

Source: Own elaboration based on Burrell and Morgan (1979)

Analyzing the results of several empiric researches on development levels of *paradigms* of different disciplines, Pfeiffer (1993) concludes that the organizational studies have low-level paradigm development due to several factors: a) The reference to other social sciences; b) The low remuneration of those who are devoted to said studies; c) The low written production; d) The lack of interconnection regarding the written production; e) The nonexistence of a research agenda and f) The theoretical and methodological dispersion, sustaining the necessity to achieve a consensus that favors the paradigmatic development of the organizational studies, based on: a) A reduced number of outstanding specialists of the discipline, b) The authority of this elite, c) A standard methodology, d) A program of standard research and d) The acceptance of certain central theories. At the present state of development of the discipline, Pfeffe's proposal would be reached around the functionalist paradigm, due to its hegemony, but with this reduction one would have to discard an important quantity of scientific production developed around the other paradigms pointed out by Burell and Morgan, which would mean a setback and not an advance in the discipline. Pfeiffer's proposal has a strongly dogmatic bias.

Scherer and Steinmann (1999) discuss the problem of incommensurability of the paradigms, understanding as the triple relationship of orientation systems that include theories, rules, structures, values, interests and cultures. A system is incommensurable with another regarding certain comparison rules, when three conditions are given: 1) the radical difference between orientation systems, 2) the competition or conflict between systems and 3) A certain action course. There are no comparison standards that rationally solve a conflict problem.

These two authors discuss the incommensurability problem in the organizational studies from several theoretical conceptions: a) The axiomatic-deductive reasoning concept; b) The paradigmatic relativism (isolationism), c) The paradigmatic dogmatism functionalist (hegemonic) and d) The paradigmatic pluralism. From science, there does not arise a perspective solution to the problem and we are at a break-even point because the level of the theories requires a goal-level of paradigms and these, a goal-goal-level of understanding and thus they would go on until the infinite.

Scherer and Steinmann intend then to adopt Geert-Lueke Lueken's (1991) proposal, based on methodical constructivism (Lorenzen, 1973, 1987) of the Erlangen School, a German city located near Nurnberg, in Bavaria. To solve the incommensurability problem, Lueken proposes the argumentation concept: "a symbolic action dedicated to overcome a controversy and to reach consensus". He put to one side the axiomatic-deductive concept of reasoning and sustains that praxis precedes theory, that is to say action methodically precedes knowledge. From the world of life or pre-theoretical praxis, the theoretical praxis arises and then the praxis based on the theory that in turn returns to refeed itself by the pre-theoretical practice in dialectical form. Scherer and Steinmann suggest to dissolve the rigid structures of thought and action to begin a learning process, in a new conception way and to carry out organizational studies (Morgan, 1983), building a consensus from practice.

CONCLUSIÓN

There is not a single way of looking at an organization. Even more, the multiple looks from different theoretical angles are imposed as an imperious necessity if one wants to build a vision which is the most comprehensible possible on this phenomenon so complex as are the organizations, with their multiple dimensions and transversal matters, which cannot be explained satisfactorily from a single theoretical perspective.

Each theoretical focus contributes its own. It contributes its own look, certainly partial, of what they consider as organization.

The effective combination of these different theoretical focuses in a research is not an easy task, but neither it is impossible, if we keep in mind that the researched objects - as Bourdieu points out - are always built, that is to say they are systems of conceptual relationships and not physical demarcations of real objects.

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