

Challenging Organisations and Society

reflective hybrids®

On the Move: Patterns, Power, Politics

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Journal “Challenging Organisations and Society . reflective hybrids® (COS)”

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Maria Spindler and Tonnie van der Zouwen

Editorial

Patterns of Power and Politics are on the Move

With this issue of *COS . reflective hybrids®* we address a challenge that embraces our awareness, conditions and actions. We ask when and how to look beyond established patterns and create societal innovations, invent new political vessels, govern natural resources, organise power relations, show social rank systems and change gender stereotypes. This issue shows that no matter in which position we are, each of us has to deal with moving patterns of power and politics. The articles highlight that conditions can and must be consciously addressed and transformed when circumstances and life concepts shift.

At each point of human history we need to find form-answers for shared risks in order to create prosperity and dignity for a shared future. Those who actively can and want to create society and organisations have to address individual conditions and hot topics that urge us to move on with our relations on global and individual levels.

Patterns stabilise relations. They are the communication channels and structures for agreements and values, for opening up and closure. We need patterns to deal with complexity in order to bring our desires and options to life. Yet how we build them has a big impact on how we relate to each other. Over time those relations can become normal for us, influence our perspectives of norms and in consequence influence our values and actions: e.g. when and how we include or exclude people, how we share natural resources, how and where we address our values, how and what we decide and thus reduce or increase our options, which focus we choose to reflect upon our own values and actions, etc.

In this issue we see patterns, power and politics as nexuses. Patterns in the form of decision making give us the fundament for how we want to play out power and politics. At the same time the nexus perspective allows us

to perceive politics as producing patterns and power, as a framework that defines patterns in society through organisations. None of those frameworks and forms is considered as the absolute best. The articles provide lenses to perceive between and beyond patterns, norms and forms, lenses that can be used on a wide range of organising levels, from societies, governments, companies and institutions up to states on a global level.

With this issue we want to invite our readers to step into a more distanced position and question how we can become aware of our patterns of power and politics and how we can create relations which serve the needs of our future civic and private coexistence. We assumed that a multidimensional hybrid positioning provides us with the opportunity for a multidimensional depth of focus. Therefore we asked the authors to focus on shifts in perceptions, patterns of power and politics in the ways we as consultants, leaders and scientists deal with challenges in our organisations and society and focus on questions like:

- From the perspective of reflective hybrids facing challenges in organisations and society, what are our concerns? How can we support shifts in patterns of power and politics?
- Which patterns of observation and action have we established in science, management and consulting, with what consequences? Which disciplines are concerned with patterns of observation?
- How do we perceive power in theory and practice, regarding challenges in organisations and society? What are our main premises?
- How can politics set conditions for organisations and society that support facing these challenges?
- Which patterns of politics and power are seen in my daily practice as manager, consultant or researcher, and how do they influence individuals and organisations?

- Which trends and changes of patterns for power and politics in organisations and society can be observed?

The five articles and one conversation show how we establish patterns in order to give ourselves and others orientation for our daily life and our belief systems. These patterns support or limit our society and human dignity, especially the space for action and connection. The six contributions tell us stories with different fermented coatings and layers by combining theory and practice in reflective ways.

In *Silver Lining of a Dark Cloud*, Robert Jan Blomme, Jack van der Veen and Venkataraman Venugopal argue that collaboration in Supply Chain Management can benefit from the economic crisis and serve as a nexus for new patterns in two ways. Management attention will shift to making the right products for the right customer, and it also calls for social innovation, with new ways of strategic management and new organisational values. Social innovations are needed to implement high levels of collaboration within and between organisations, to create more value for customers and organisations alike, and can function as a crisis-buster.

In *EU Think Tanks in the Back Seat? Perspectives for the 21st Century* Doris Dialer and Gerda Füricht-Fiegl argue that EU think tanks' evolution has resulted in an interconnected hybrid EU think tank sphere, built on a common need for access to the political elite, to financial resources, and to media attention. They look at three Brussels-based EU think tanks and prove that their activities are driven by the logics of the market or more precisely by the 'art' of responsiveness to political demand and the ability to sell ideas. EU think tanks tend to please politicians and EU stakeholders and act as a driving force behind already established political debate. The authors show the need to update think tanks to a future orientated "EU shaping" system.

In the spirit of sharing hybrid practice, John Colvin offers in his article *Pathways for climate adaptive water governance in South Africa Reflections on developing transdisciplinary learning* a reflection on an attempt to develop a transdisciplinary approach to co-researching good practices for adaptation

to complex societal issues. Natural resource depletion, soil degradation, food insecurity, increasing poverty and water and energy crises are just a few examples of such complex societal problems warranting a transdisciplinary response. As a new mode of knowledge production, transdisciplinarity can produce both practical, useful knowledge for solving real-world problems and theoretical, scientific knowledge for better understanding of our complex world.

In *Organisations as Power Relations*, Peter Heintel and Maria Spindler focus on organised power relations. Organisations are seen as a nexus of routinized relations interwoven with human dignity. The three power-relation qualities power over, power with and power for are re-defined and discussed for organisations and leadership in relation to a differentiated and complex world. The authors show in theory and practice that organisations, leadership systems and every single person have responsibilities, because it is through patterns of arrangement and perpetuation of power relations that power is exercised as we choose and organise how people behave in relation to each other, how much opportunities, limits, security, risk, sense, and liveliness we enable for individuals and for collectives.

Mohanakrishnan Raman, Balakrishnan Ramasamy and Bhavani Mohanakrishnan share their long experience with education and change management processes in India in their article *The Caste System in India*. They conclude that the Indian organisational climate, although exposed to modern types of industrialisation, is still strongly dominated by a hard to change caste-class system. This system advocates placing high-caste people at the top of the hierarchy. Not only in organisations, but also in politics, sociocultural patterns are shown to be still highly based on Hinduism as the major religion, resulting in a view of leadership that adores heroes, hindering community development and organisational growth.

In their conversation *Depolarizing Gender: Questioning Stereotypes and Patterns that So Often Define Us* Elizabeth Debold and Liselotte Zvacek highlight the binary polar between male and female: rational – emotional.

They ask why are we still in a world where those projections are alive and create a hierarchy between male and female; why the patterns are engraved on our society, our social systems, our communication, our minds and hearts as stereotypical. Conchita Wurst is seen as part of a movement to break down the gender polarity - as neither and both masculine and feminine. One way of changing those power-patterns is deep processing, slipping into the female archetypes and then then looking for our sense of self and worth, and acting less with readymade mind-maps and more in the awareness of the here and now.

We wish you an inspiring time with this issue.

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