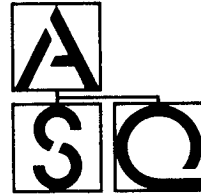


**Administrative  
Science  
Quarterly**

Volume 36  
Number 4  
December 1991

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Dedicated to advancing the understanding of administration through empirical investigation and theoretical analysis.

**Symbols and Artifacts: Views of the Corporate Landscape.**

Pasquale Gagliardi, ed. Hawthorne, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1990. 428 pp. \$59.95.

In recent years, there has been much written about organizational culture. Unfortunately, many of the discussions, theories, treatises, and revelations that have emerged in the last decade have been restricted to the cognitive realm. For organizational behaviorists, culture has become the answer to the dominant rationalistic, positivistic models of organizations that they viewed as overly simplifying organizational reality.

By generally restricting themselves to the cognitive realm, students of organizational culture have cast it as some

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deep-rooted, semiconscious symbolic manipulation, often stirred to the surface by charismatic leaders or by an organizational crisis. More often than not, culture lies insidiously or at best passively dormant until it is revealed through the insights of a student of organizational culture.

The realm of the material, the realm of the surface, the realm of the obvious have all been almost totally ignored by organizational theorists. In many ways, this volume, edited by Pasquale Gagliardi, takes us back to square one. It forces us to return to the world of physical objects, in recognition of the fact that objects are the natural homes of symbols. Through the analysis of objects (or, if you will, artifacts) we can begin to understand the symbolic and cognitive maps drawn by organizations and actors in them. As Gagliardi states in his superb essay, "Artifacts as Pathways and Remains of Organizational Life," the organizational culture only gives lip service to the concrete, only peripheral attention to the world of the artifact. It is the basic premise of this edited book that "artifacts can provide a key giving privileged access to the sensory and aesthetic dimensions of corporate life" (p. 13).

Gagliardi's opening essay provides an integrated framework that serves as an excellent analytical guide to the essays that follow. In a rich and detailed discussion, Gagliardi begins by defining artifacts and then traces the processes by which physical settings and artifacts influence the behavior of actors. Broadly summarized, Gagliardi shows the relationship between artifacts, knowledge, sensory maps, metaphors, organizational order, and organizational pathos. The strength of this opening essay is that it gives the reader a new way of looking at organizations. It gives us an escape from the habit of studying them on a normative-cognitive-symbolic level without grounding our work in the material world. If this book and this essay are important for no other reason, it is because they raise the question:

... whether in our search for "sense" we haven't too hastily skimmed over the "senses," and whether paying more attention to the "filters" which culture imposes on sensory experience might not improve our understanding of culturally specific mental representations and behavior patterns. (p. 18)

The 18 essays in this book are organized into five parts. They are entitled (in order) "Designing Physical Settings in Organizations," "Disclosing Organizational Culture through Artifacts," "Root Metaphors Embedded in Artifacts," "Artifacts and Organizational Control," and "Deconstructing Artifacts."

Part 1 is composed of six essays. Berg and Kreiner examine corporate architecture, suggesting that buildings reflect corporate images and corporate identity. Rosen, Orlikowski, and Schmahmann explore the relationship between the labor processes in bureaucratized organizations and the physical space in which the activity is carried out. Rusted demonstrates the way that housing in Newfoundland reflects the differences among the social organizations of the different communities there. Doxtater focuses on ways that the workplace is structured to reflect both expressive

and instrumental needs of the corporation. Hatch takes a look at the symbolic nature of office design, comparing the responses of employees assigned to private and nonprivate offices. Ciborra and Lanzara examine the notion of formative contexts, while illustrating the relationship between computer systems and organizational culture.

Part 2 is composed of five essays. Sassoon looks at the cross-cultural relationships between color and political ideology. Dougherty and Kunda examine photographs of customers as a mode of understanding organizational beliefs about customers. Sievers presents an analysis of an organizational logo as an expression of the explicit or implicit organizational ideology. Scholz discusses computerized information systems from the viewpoint of organizational culture. Piccardo, Varchetta, and Zanarini present a framework for analyzing and interpreting the language of leadership, viewing it as the language of an artifact expressing underlying organizational culture.

Part 3 brings together three essays. Raspa illustrates how the game of dominoes can serve as a symbolic organizing frame that makes it possible to understand the relationship between work and play in a major American pizza corporation. Larsen and Schultz unravel a Danish ministry using a monastery as a metaphor. Schwarz uses the metaphor of Disneyland in Space to assist us in understanding the degeneration of NASA as a symbol of the American dream.

Part 4 consists of three essays. Witkin examines organizational control, illustrating how artifacts can be designed as mechanisms of control in bureaucratic organizations. Czarniawska-Joerjes and Joerjes show how linguistic artifacts are used as tools of control in organizations. Turner examines failed artifacts as an illustration of an organization's inability to achieve its given purposes. Part 5 is an essay by Linstead and Grafton-Small that uses a deconstructive orientation to explore the inherent contradictions between theory and artifacts.

It is rare that a collection of essays can be as creative, insightful, and theoretically exciting as this one. The titles of the essays alone, such as Linstead and Grafton-Small's "Theory as Artefact: Artefact as Theory" or Larsen and Schultz's "Artifacts in a Bureaucratic Monastery" or Sievers' "Curing the Monster: Some Images of and Considerations about the Dragon" or "Colors, Artifacts, and Ideologies" are enough to seduce the reader intellectually. But unlike many intellectual seductions, this volume delivers even more than it promises. To my mind, it is a truly remarkable collection of essays. Most of the previous work on organizational culture gives us new insight into the cultures of organizations but almost no insight into the construct of culture. This work does both, and more. In dealing with the relationship between cognition, behavior, and the material world, it delves into some of the basic epistemological issues in organizational behavior. In examining the relationships between metaphors, descriptions, and theories, it illustrates some of the basic philosophical problems with how we theorize. Gagliardi and his colleagues have elevated the

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discourse of our discipline. They are to be congratulated and not ignored.

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