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Identity change in organizations: a philosophical exposition

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to describe how organization's identity changes in the course of time. Focus is on project-based companies.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper first highlights the concept of process thinking. Then follow descriptions of notions of identity and identity change as change processes. After that, three different identity change processes – negotiation of meaning, lauguaging and interaction – are illustrated. And after that follows the main content of the paper, namely, descriptions of identity changes in organizations. These descriptions focus on two approaches: "Unintentional identity change" and "Intentional identity change".

Findings – Identity provides organizations with powerful understanding of theories of who they are. These understandings guide subsequent resource allocation decisions. Identity change in an organization can be categorized into unintentional and intentional identity changes. Unintentional identity changes takes place through the previously mentioned three processes. Instead, intentional identity change takes place through strategy planning.

Practical implications – Finding a viable view through which organizations can understand how their identities chance in the course of time is a very important issue. Therefore, in this paper, the authors have sought to offer a brief illustration of this area.

Originality/value – In the literature, rather, a lot of attention has been focused on how identities are constructed, and what is their role, for example, in the companies' strategic management and marketing. However, less attention has been paid to how identities are involved in organizations' change processes. That is why the goal of this paper is to address that lack by studying identity change in organizations.

Keywords Change management, Interaction, Corporate identity, Language, Meaning

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Quite often organizations have a dependence on continual development and change that leads to new or improved work methods and services. However, questions of change (e.g. identity change) and survival are not easily addressed. For example, changes in organizations are often resisted because the people do not like to be changed. When change comes into view, fear and resistance to change follow – often despite the obvious benefits (Koskinen and Pihlanto, 2008). Resistance may be an erroneous attribution of slowing down the pace of change (Wiebe, 2010). Thus, questions of organizational change, including identity change, are murky, unstructured, controversial and threatening.

In contemporary organization studies, identity is one of the most popular topics (Hatch, 1997). Identity is arguably more fundamental to the concept of humanity than any other notion. What other concern is quite so captivating than dealing with

the ongoing, lifelong project of assessing identity and figuring out how one organization relates to other organizations and the surrounding world? (Gioia, 1998). Rather, a lot of attention has been focused on how identities are constructed (van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Balmer, 1998), and what is their role, for example, in companies' strategic management.

The literature on organizational identity divides the concept of identity in many different ways. One of the ways to divide it is the division between: *company identity, substantive identity and reflective identity* (Albert *et al.*, 2000, Brown, 2001; Ravasi and van Recom, 2003; Seidl, 2005):

- *The company identity deals with the question*: How does the organization presents itself as a distinguishable system to its environment? That is, the company identity means the sum of all the ways a company chooses to identify itself to all its publics – the community, customers, employees, the press, present and potential stockholders, security analysis and investment bankers (Margulies (1977, p. 6).

- *The substantive identity asks the question*: What is the unity of the organization? (Seidl, 2005) In other words, what keeps the different parts of an organization together as a unity? This means that the organizational identity mechanisms integrate the different decision-makers into the organization and coordinate their decisions.

- *According to Albert and Whetten (1985), the* reflective identity *tackles the issue*: How does the organization itself perceive its unity? Then, these authors suggest that the reflective identity refers to an organization's beliefs about itself. "Organisations define who they are by creating of invoking classification schemes and locating themselves within them" (Albert and Whetten, 1985, p. 267). However, according to these authors, only those classification schemas are relevant that are understood to refer to central, enduring and distinctive properties of the organization.

Another way to pay attention to organizational identity is how it is involved in organizations' change processes (Harquail and King, 2010; Clark *et al.*, 2010; Ybema, 2010; He and Baruch, 2010). That is, finding a viable perspective and approach, with which organizations can understand how their *identities* (i.e. any type of identity) *change* over the course of time is seen as an important issue. However, while a traditional business model is clearly useful for laying out the patterns of relationships surrounding a company, it does not provide well enough the temporally embedded accounts that enable individuals to understand how such patterns become to be. These issues are probably the most pressing ones for those companies, which seek guidance on how their identities change in the course of time.

The objective of this paper is to explore processes which bring about *intended* and *unintended* identity changes in organizations. In the pursuit of this objective, the paper first describes the concept of process thinking. Next the paper deals with the notions of identity and identity change as change processes. Within that notion, three different identity change processes – negotiation of meaning, languaging and interaction – are illustrated. After that follows the main content of this paper, namely, description of

identity change processes in a way in which the focus is on two approaches: "Unintentional identity change" and "Intentional identity change".

2. Process thinking

Process thinking is a body of ideas whose history is entangled in a more than two-millennia-old lineage of various philosophical works, sometimes referred as to "process philosophy" (Whitehead, 1978) or "process metaphysics" (Rescher, 1996; Bergson, 1999). Drawing upon these thinkers, recent efforts have been made in organization studies directed at understanding organization as process (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Hernes, 2009).

The gist of recent process thinking in organization studies is to think of organization as attempts at ordering, amid a world of flux, ambiguity and uncertainty, but without assuming stable external referents against which organizing may be held up (Hernes, 2010). In other words, these attempts focus on capturing the ongoing and ever-mutating character of organizational life (Weick, 1979; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), but without assuming the existence of organizations as stable frames of human action and sense-making (Czarniawska, 2004). Thus, a process view pits a metaphysics of change, in which primacy is accorded to movement, change and transformation, against metaphysics of substance which elevates stability, permanence and order (Chia, 1999, p. 210). In this state of flux, ambiguity and uncertainty, organization is seen as linking and connecting that which would otherwise be separated.

To put another way, process thinking involves considering phenomena dynamically in terms of movement, activity, events, change and temporal evolution (van de Ven, 1992; Capra, 1997; Tsoukas, 2005; Hernes, 2009). This is intended to be inclusive of weaker and stronger views of process, as described by Chia and Langley (2004). This means that process thinking may involve consideration of how and why things such as people, organizations, strategies, environments change, act and evolve over time (Langley, 2007). This is well-expressed by Pettigrew (1992, p. 11) as catching "reality in flight" or adopting a more radical process ontology, how such things come to be constituted, reproduced, adapted and defined through ongoing processes, which is expressed beautifully in Tsoukas and Chia's (2002, p. 576) reference to "organizational becoming".

Furthermore, according to the business management literature (Rummler and Brache, 1995; Hammer and Champy, 1993), typical business process models have processes, e.g. company governance, strategic management, purchasing, manufacturing, marketing and accounting. However, these models represent only the highest-level processes. More extensive process thinking research is needed because the traditional models provide only a partial picture of the world that evacuates the role of time (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001) and assume a state of equilibrium (Bromiley and Papenhausen, 2003; Meyer *et al.*, 2005). The presence of equilibrium is itself believed by the very attempts to apply such models to influence-dependent variables, for example, a business organization's competitive advantage.

On the basis of the discussion above, we propose:

Seeing process as fundamental, such an approach does no deny the existence of events, states, or entities, but insists on unpacking them to reveal the complex activities and transactions that take place and contribute to their constitution.

3. Identity

Identity is viewed as central for issues of meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, logics of actions, decision making, stability and change (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Alvesson, 2000). That is, identity describes the essence of an organization (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). This means that the identity is a major way in which organizations define or describe themselves to customers, employees, suppliers and investors, and also the way customers, employees and other groups develop an image of these organizations. Studies by Dutton and her colleagues (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Dutton and Penner, 1993) have shown that organizational identity influences which environmental stimuli are and are not noticed, and that identity can also play an important role in influencing organizational agendas.

As mentioned earlier, the research and literature on identity is divided in many ways. For example, Comelissen *et al.* (2007) divides it into social, organizational and corporate identity. Social identity work generally examines issues of cognitive process and structure. Then, a social identity is a portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group (Turner and Oakes, 1986). According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), social identity theory is best described as primarily a theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviours on the basis of the perceived status, legitimacy and permeability of the intergroup environment.

Organizational and corporate identity research tends to address the patterning of shared meanings. According to Puusa and Tolvanen (2006), these identity types, when realized by organization members, has an effect on how strongly individuals within the organization identify themselves with the organization or corporate. Strong identification then, according to these authors, results in stronger commitment to the organization or corporate and their goals. Nonetheless, across these areas, there is general consensus that collective identities are:

- made viable by their positivity and distinctiveness;
- fluid;
- a basis for shared perceptions and action;
- strategically created and managed;
- qualitatively different from individual identities; and
- the basis for material outcomes and products.

Further, in the opinion of Gioia and Patvardhan (2012), identity should be seen as a process. Rather than viewing organizational identity in its usual fashion as some sort of entity, thing or "being", they suggest that identity might be better viewed in terms of ongoing process or flow. Such a counterintuitive stance generates a different way of understanding identity, which when viewed in concert with its more usual portrayal actually produces a more insightful understanding of this key concept. Thus, here it is presupposed that identities can change and go one tentative step further, that the "thing" that is changing is actually fleeting snapshots of a process in constant motion, then it is possible to acquire an informative and insightful alternative view of identity itself.

Thus, understanding of identity (i.e. social, organizational or corporate identity) as a process can become tightly coupled with other organizational processes and standard operating procedures. That is, identity and any associated processes can form what

Mintzberg (1978) has called an organizational "gestalt". Such a gestalt not only places a company in a unique position *vis-à-vis* its rivals in the competitive environment, but it also provides that company with a set of organizational competencies that supports or enhances its identity.

4. Identity change as change processes

Research that has incorporated the concept of organizational identity into organizational change suggests that identity provides individuals working in organizations with powerful understanding of theories of who they are (Ashforth and Meal, 1989; Stimpert *et al.*, 1998). This understanding guides subsequent resource allocation decisions so that organizations evolve in a particular way, which results in various change processes (Grand and Ackeret, 2012). For example, how financial and non-financial resources are attracted, generated and allocated to particular activities, projects and themes. In other words, organizations grow in ways that are consistent with their identities.

However, according to Tsoukas (2005), we do not know enough about how change is actually accomplished. Even if we can explain how and why an organization moved from one position to another, it would not be detailed enough to show how change was actually accomplished on the ground – how plans were translated into action and, in so doing, how they were modified, adapted and changed. Feldman (2000) has shown how organizational routines are actually "emergent accomplishments" that perpetually *interact and change in action*. In so far as routines are performed by human agents, they contain the seeds of change (Tsoukas, 2005).

Furthermore, according to process-oriented thinkers (Dawson, 1994; Hernes, 2009), change must not be thought of as a property of organization. Rather, organization must be understood as an emergent property of change. Change is, ontologically, prior to organization; it is the condition of possibility for organization and organizational identity. This means that change is the re-weaving of individuals' webs of beliefs and habits of action as a result of new experiences obtained through *interactions*. In other words, organization is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, channel it towards certain ends and give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules. At the same time, organization and organizational identity are a pattern that is constituted, shaped and emerged from change.

Many studies incorporating the concept of identity have highlighted its *social nature* (Alvesson, 2000; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Dutton *et al.*, 1994). Concept of organizational identity is closely tied to individuals' own beliefs and understanding. The decisions about resource allocation that reflect an organization's identity will most likely be imbued with a deeper meaning. This social nature of identity also helps to explain the problems associated with organizational change and adaptation. For example, changing identity in business organizations involves much more than economic costs. The companies thus find it very difficult to change in ways that are inconsistent with their identities, because the people of those organizations find the social task of giving up old meanings and accepting new meanings as expensive (Stimpert *et al.*, 1998).

Ashforth (1998) argues that identity is a perpetual work in progress. One's identity is a product of *social interaction*, grounded in specific contexts at specific times, such that one's sense of self-in-organization is emergent and somewhat fluid. The process of

identification is crucial because the nature of identity and the extent of identification are not determined by the pre-existing nature of the person or organization. Individuals, groups and the organization mutually shape one another over time and become comingled: each level of analysis is neither static nor discrete, neither independent nor autonomous. Thus, from a process perspective, organizational identity change is constituted by the communication processes among organization's members. Organizational identity is then an emergent outcome of different interaction activities which bring about or advance organization to change its identity.

According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), there are trends away monolithic to multiple identities and from fixed views on identity to discursive and constructed approaches to the subject matter. Many scholars of identity and organizations (Brown and Starkey, 2000) argue for paying more attention to identity processes. Individuals and organizations are said to be better understood in terms of becoming rather than being (Ashforth, 1998). Glynn (1998, p. 238) notes that the literature about organizational identities is "focused more on a static sense of being identified rather than becoming identified", reflecting the dominance of the functionalist paradigm in organizational research. Furthermore, the concept of reflective identity by Albert and Whetten (1985) has been criticised for its emphasis on perceived endurance as a defining characteristic. For example, Gioia and Thomas (1996) ask "How can identity be enduring if strategic change is to occur?"

Thus, from a process perspective, organizational identity change is constituted by the communication processes among its members (Taylor and Van Every, 2000; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Organizational identity is then seen as an emergent outcome of different interaction activities which bring about or advance organizations to change their identities. In the next three sub-sections, the discussion deals with the concepts of negotiating of meaning, languaging and interactivity, which are here considered as three communication related identity change processes.

4.1 Meaning and negotiation of meaning

According to Seidl (2005), meaning is the difference between the real and the possible or between actuality and potentiality. A momentary actual experience or action refers to other momentary not actual but possible experiences. That is, events refer to and are related to many other events and possibilities. It is these related events and possibilities that constitute meaning. (Mingers, 1995, p. 145).

An object in the situation of an individual, for example, a task in marketing, provides the consciousness with a meaningful content. A meaning emerges, as this content becomes referred to the object located in the situation of the person in such a way that he or she understands what the object implies. That is, an individual can understand an object only in terms of a meaning or a group of meanings (Koskinen and Pihlanto, 2008).

Meanings are components from which the world, as people experience it, is constructed (Koskinen and Pihlanto, 2008). Continuous restructuring of meanings occurs, as people observe and learn new things. Meanings are often forgotten, fading into the unconsciousness and perhaps retrieved into the consciousness anew. Thus, the experience of meaning is not a mechanical realization of a routine or a procedure. This means that people's engagement in practice may have patterns, but it is the production of such patterns anew that gives rise to an experience of meaning. All that people do and say may refer to what has been done and said in the past, and yet they reproduce a new

situation, an impression, an experience: they produce meanings that extend, redirect, dismiss, reinterpret, modify or confirm – that is, negotiate anew – the histories of meanings of which they are part. In that sense, living is a constant process of *negotiation of meaning* (Wenger, 1998).

Works in phenomenology and pragmatism, both of which locate continuity in the meaning that people attach to their actions, ascribe durability to the temporary stabilization of meaning structures. Meaning structures (Heidegger, 1927) signify heterogeneous wholes that people activate as a means to provide meaning to their actions. Furthermore, Heidegger extended thinking about meaning structures to include the idea of interaction between elements. Thus, interaction takes place on a sense of the unit and the whole and is not exclusively a process of building the whole from its elements. For example, a business organization may be understood as a meaning structure.

All in all, it is important to understand that a meaning is a socially constructed phenomenon (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1979; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). This indicates that meaning is not only unavoidably subjective but also is constrained by the context of the goals that individuals seek to achieve. Understanding and action thus derive from the framework of meaning ascribed by the organization's members.

4.2 Language and languaging

We human beings are human beings only in language. Because we have language, there is no limit to what we can describe, imagine, and relate. It thus permeates our whole ontology as individuals: from walking to attitudes to politics (Maturana and Varela, 1987, p. 212).

By the words of Sorri and Gill (1989, p. 71): "The language we use influences how we experience our world and thus how we know our world".

Indeed, our linguistic distinctions are not isolated but exist "[…] in the network of structural couplings that we continually weave through *languaging*" (Maturana and Varela, 1987, p. 234). Meaning arises as a pattern of relationships among these linguistic distinctions, and thus, we exist in a "semantic domain" created by our languaging. Self-awareness arises when we use the notion of an object and the associated abstract concepts to describe ourselves. Thus, the linguistic domain of human beings expands further to include reflection and consciousness.

Becker (1995) suggests that not all linguists see the task of theory as relating meanings because placing meaning outside of language is to presuppose in one's description and explanation the very condition that languaging creates. That is, if there is no meaning outside languaging, then languaging is not expressing, representing or encoding anything, and the need of those structures vanishes.

Over time, organizations develop their own distinct domains of language (von Krogh and Roos, 1995; Teubner, 1991). There are two explanations for this. First, the obvious explanation is that languaging may be understood as the "stuff" that the organization is made of (i.e. organizational identity). By introducing the concept of "organization", people linguistically distinguish it from something else, i.e. the organization – environment distinction (Fiol, 1989). Hence, the emergence of an entity/organization presupposes languaging (Blackler *et al.*, 1998). Second, the broad linguistic distinction of organization-environment allows organizational members to make finer linguistic distinctions. These basic distinctions allow them to coordinate their other linguistic

distinctions given the concept of the organization. For example, the term "customer" requires the environment-organization distinction. Then, it is possible to understand a domain of language as tradition. In the process of languaging, an organizational tradition is formed. This tradition will affect languaging, or in the words of Varela (1979, p. 268), "Everything said is said from a tradition".

Given the variability of language, it is meaningful to speak of organizational languaging (von Krogh and Roos, 1995). Organizational languaging presupposes organizational knowledge and gives rise to distinctions that form an integral part of the concept of organizational identity. Organization has its tradition through which new conversations can take place. It demands that its members continue to language about it on all scales for it to survive.

Thus, language and languaging are a useful interpretative lens through which to understand identity and its change, because they act as devices for people; to make sense of past events and actions (Reissman, 1993); to present themselves and others (Horrocks and Callahan, 2006); to share meaning in a collectivity (Ylijoki, 2005); and to provide legitimacy and accountability for their actions (Currie and Brown, 2003; Czarniawska, 1997).

4.3 Interaction

Interaction is a kind of action that occurs as two or more objects have an effect upon one another (Granovetter, 1985). The idea of a two-way effect is essential in the concept of interaction, as opposed to a one-way causal effect.

In the opinion of Stromer-Galley (2004), the concept of interaction is confusing because it refers equally to different phenomena. One can identify interaction between people; between people through mediated channels; between people and computers; and between computers through software, hardware and networks. The first two are a type of social interaction that occurs between people. The last two are a type of interaction that occurs between people and computer networks.

Social interaction is a dynamic, changing sequence of social actions between individuals or groups who modify their actions and reactions due to the actions by their interaction partners (Granovetter, 1985). Thus, social interactions form the basis for social relations. We are here interested in social interaction, because it is seen to be one of the main processes by which the identity of an organization is changed in the course of time.

According to Rafaeli (1988), interaction is an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any message is related, to the degree to which previous exchanges refer to even earlier transmissions. Interaction, Rafaeli (1988, p. 110) contends, is a "[…] natural attribute of face-to-face conversation", but can also refer to mediated interaction between people. Thus, interaction is not simply reaction, but rather reciprocity, wherein participants in the exchange can turn-take and reverse roles freely: "It is a process-related construct about communication" (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1998, p. 175). In Rafaeli's (1988) conceptualization, then, interaction is not a characteristic of a medium.

Koskinen and Pihlanto (2008) argue that most experiences of others take place in face-to-face situations because there another's subjectivity is available through a "maximum of symptoms" and the here and now of the persons continuously impinge on each other, both consciously and subconsciously, as long as the face-to-face situation

continues. The authors further argue that misinterpretation and/or having the other actor hide his or her intentions is less likely in a face-to-face interaction than in less close forms of social relations.

Trevino *et al.* (1987, p. 557) suggest that there exists a link between the selection of media and the ambiguity of the message to be conveyed. In situations characterized by a high degree of ambiguity, no established scripts or symbols are available to guide behaviour. "Meaning must be created and negotiated as individuals look to others for cues and feedback to help interpret the message".

Thus, interactions play a ubiquitous role in business organizations. Individuals and organizations interact to find the right party with which to exchange; to arrange, manage and integrate the activities associated with this exchange; and to monitor performance. These interactions occur within companies, between companies and all the way through markets to the end customer. They take many everyday forms – management meetings, phone conversations, sales calls, problem solving, reports and memos – but their underlying purpose is always to enable the exchange of goods, services or ideas.

On the basis of the discussion within the above three subsections, we propose:

> Organizational identity change is constituted by the communication processes among organization's members. In other words, organizational identity is an emergent outcome of different identity change processes, like negotiation of meaning, languaging, and interaction.

5. Identity change in organizations

Much of the organizational literature dealing with organizational development and change is concerned with intentions. This is owing to the fact that there may be no social organization without intentions, even if things do not turn out as intended. The very fact that there is intentionality is likely to lead to some results of a collective nature, even if no collective intentions lie behind the results. That is, without intention, there is no way to direct the energy of organization. With intention, the state of "one-to-many and many-to-one" is achieved, as individual intentions synthesize and the intention becomes the intention of each participant (Nonaka *et al.*, 2008).

But change also happens unintentionally; that is, it may also happen when people carry on doing what they did before. Aligned with Bergson's process views are those of James (1996), who emphasized the importance of working from what he called "streams of experience". For James, the world comes in "drops of experience", and the inclusion of past experiences in present experiences constitutes the relatedness of events (Ford, 1993). An example in organization studies is Carlsen's (2006) study where he draws on the idea of "streams of experience" found with James in a study of how identities in an organization, rather than being taken as an achieved state, are enacted "through authoring" (Carlsen, 2006) in processes of organizational becoming. In the following two sub-sections, these two different types of identity changes – unintentional and intentional identity change – are discussed.

5.1 Unintentional identity change

Contrary to what is commonly assumed, doing the same thing is not synonymous with sticking to the status quo (Hernes, 2009); that is, even repetition of seemingly identical actions is not static. This is because when an action takes place at another time, it cannot be the same simply because the outside world has moved on since the last seemingly

identical action. Something new is produced through the repetition because new connections may be possible that were not possible before. In other words, the action taken by an individual produces a new reality in which possibilities reside for something new. The occasion does not necessarily constitute a new reality as such, but it may enable the emergence of a new, even slightly different identity for an organization.

When people are working for a company, they participate in conversations (von Krogh and Roos, 1995). In this way, they recognise in each other something mutual, which they address. What they recognise has to do with their ability to negotiate meaning. In this experience on mutuality, participation is a source of identity. However, that participation is not tantamount to collaboration. It can involve all kinds of relationships, conflicting as well as harmonious, intimate as well as political, competitive as well as cooperative (Wenger, 1998). That is, working for companies grows people's experiences and shape their identities, and it also shapes those companies and their identities; the transformative potential goes both ways.

The use of language in face-to-face interaction is a tool in this shaping. Words and language as projections of human meaning are a form of reification (Wenger, 1998). In face-to-face interactions, however, speech is extremely evanescent. Words affect the negotiation of meaning through a process that seems like pure participation. According to Wenger (1998), it is this tight interweaving of reification and participation that makes conversations such a powerful tool for communication.

The use and utilization of different words is not a spontaneous phenomenon in the identity change processes of an organization. This means that there is a triggering action, for example, such as a conflicting questioning about existing practices in the organization (Engeström, 2000). These triggering actions create culturally new patterns. Hence, technologies, tools and work routines used mediate the relationship between an individual and company, and the division of labour mediates the relationship between people and the shared activity (Blackler *et al.*, 1998; Engeström 2000). Together, this constitutes an environment, i.e. an infrastructure, through which individuals change a company's identity.

All in all, in the process of unintentional identity change, people negotiate with one another about what they are doing here, how they should behave, their relationship with the company and the meanings of the tools and technologies they use.

5.2 Intentional identity change
Intentional identity change (Hellgren and Melin, 1995) is considered here to be a part of strategic thinking. Hence, most strategic thinking in companies is a group activity. Many contribute towards building the case, defending positions and questioning assumptions.

Members of the same management team will initially have different views of where to go. Even if a political compromise on action is reached, this does not imply an alignment of visions. Alignment of strategic visions through rational argument is achieved through a conversational process. People continuously influence each other's "memories of the future". Strategic management is concerned with many visions that are active and interacting at the same time. Visions tend to be tacit, taken for granted; they are seldom made explicit, but operate in the background.

Beyond the formulation of sophisticated strategies and the design of suitable organizational structures and processes, success or failure depends upon an additional

dimension of business policy. This hidden face of strategy, which is difficult to analyse and formalize in a rigorous manner, has often been the company's identity (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Schein, 1987). That is, a strategic intent can be thought of as a carefully articulated vision augmented by the organizational effort and commitment to bring it about. In fact, a powerful and strategic intent often allows a company to transcend the limitations of its resource base as conventionally defined and to tap into the unexploited reserves of employee motivation and imagination (Boisot, 1998). By pursuing "stretch goals" rather than "fit goals" – that is, goals that actually expand an organization's capacities rather than merely reflect them – a company can achieve levels of performance that could not be predicted on the basis of a rational analysis of its resource base alone (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). In this sense, a strategic intent favours emergent strategies over planned ones.

6. Discussion and conclusions
Most fundamentally, this paper is inspired by the concept of process thinking to open up new ways of understanding of identity change in organizations.

Organizational identity is seen as central for issues of meaning and motivation, commitment, loyalty, logics of actions, decision making, stability and change. This means that organizational identity describes the essence of an organization or corporate. However, organizational identity is not unambiguous concept, but it can be categorised in many ways. One way to pay attention to organizational identity is how it is involved in organizations' change processes.

Process thinking, as explained in the text, involves considering phenomena dynamically in terms of movement, activity, events, change and temporal evolution. This means that process thinking may involve consideration of how and why organizations' identities change over time. However, seeing process as fundamental, such an approach does no deny the existence of events, states or entities, but insists on unpacking them to reveal the complex activities and transactions that take place and contribute to their constitution.

From a process thinking perspective, organizational identity change is constituted by the communication processes among organization's members. Organizational identity is then an emergent outcome of different interaction activities which bring about or advance organization to change its identity. There are almost "infinite number" of processes that affect organizations' identities. However, communication related micro-processes which bring about changes of organizations' identities and which are presented in this paperis: negotiation of meaning, languaging and interaction.

In the text, the identity change in organizations is categorized into unintentional and intentional identity changes. Unintentional identity changes takes place through the previously mentioned three micro-processes. Instead, intentional identity change takes place through strategy planning.

A strategic intent (e.g. intentional identity change) can be thought of as a carefully articulated vision. However, a strategic intent often allows companies to transcend the unexploited reserves of employee motivation and imagination. By pursuing "stretch goals" rather than "fit goals" – that is, goals that actually expand an organization's capacities (i.e. unintentional identity change) rather than merely reflect them – a company can, however, achieve levels of performance that could not be predicted on the basis of a rational analysis of its resource base alone.

Thus, as demonstrated in the text, an organization's identity reflects multiple perspectives of various phenomena that comprise the organizational membership, and exists in the sense that members share an understanding of what it might be. An organization's identity change is a process of social interaction undertaken by these organizational members.

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