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SURGES AND SEDIMENTS

ORGANIZATION CONCEPTS BETWEEN
TRANSIENCE AND CONTINUITY

STEFAN HEUSINKVELD
2004

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SURGES AND SEDIMENTS

ORGANIZATION CONCEPTS BETWEEN TRANSIENCE AND CONTINUITY

Een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Managementwetenschappen

Proefschrift

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aan de Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus prof. dr. C.W.P.M. Blom,
volgens besluit van het College van Decanen
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door

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CHAPTER 1

CONTINUOUS TRANSIENCE

'Management fashion also had an important part in organizational changes. The urge to 'keep up with the Joneses' seems to be as powerful a force in industrial circles as in social life.' (Woodward, 1965: 22)

'The last fifty years of executive life have been filled with a multitude of important new methods and techniques for running a business. Around the turn of the century business was being urged to systematize in terms of cost accounting, production control and budgeting. Then the Scientific Management movement came in, with time and motion studies and job and workflow rationalization. About the same time a plethora of monetary incentive systems, such as the Bedeaux plan came into vogue.' (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967: 160)

'Fashion favors the structure of the day (and of the culture), sometimes even when inappropriate.' (Mintzberg, 1979: 292)

'The past twenty years have seen a massive upsurge of interest in possible panaceas for the problem of becoming competitive. Organizations are constantly seeking for new answers to old problems, and the scale of investment in the new fashions of management thinking has often been considerable.' (Tidd, Bessant & Pavitt, 1997: 35)

Transience in management thinking is nothing new. As the above quotes show, a similar phenomenon keeps being rediscovered in different periods by different commentators. In particular they indicate that management intellectuals and practitioners have always been repeatedly confronted with allegedly innovative management ideas which I will refer to as *organization concepts*. Following Benders & Van Veen (2001), I consider these organization concepts here as more or less coherent prescriptive visions on organizing, known by a specific label. Then, as now, several of these new concepts allegedly have a considerable impact on both managerial discourse and praxis. Soon after their introduction, these concepts become often extensively debated and widely associated with organizational changes.

However, as the commentators also indicate, these novel ideas are easily abandoned after a short while and replaced by the next innovative vision on organizing. Unsurprisingly, these temporarily popular phenomena are easily denoted as 'fads' or 'fashions' soon after they emerge, leaving an impression in which management knowledge continuously becomes prey to transience. These initial observations leaves us asking why there is such an indefatigable quest for rejecting current management ideas and practices and how novel organization concepts come into existence. The following thesis will concentrate on this process of continuous replacement of concepts in management thinking. In the next sections of this introductory chapter I shall further explore these initial observations and set a course for research to enhance understanding of this phenomenon.

1.1 A SUPPLY OF PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

1.1.1 Carriers

Management fashion theorists relate the incessant flow of new concepts to specific processes on the *management knowledge market* (Huczynski, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996; Kieser, 1997). On the supply side of this market they identify a fashion-setting community. This community includes ‘carriers’ (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002) such as management consultants, gurus, mass media and business schools. Congruent with cultural industry systems (Hirsch, 1972; Kieser, 1997), these actors are involved with the production of new organization concepts to stimulate market demand for management knowledge and hereby enhance their business. Abrahamson (1996) hypothesized that these fashion setters constantly seek to discern preferences in the community of management knowledge users that are still in an embryonic state. Subsequently they are engaged in putting new management ideas in a form that is expected to meet the needs of fashion users. Management knowledge is hereby commodified (Fincham, 1995) and translated into a commercially valuable product that can be sold on the knowledge market (Huczynski, 1993). These ‘products’ are extensively propagated by introducing them as an issue of contemporary managerial discourse (Kieser, 1997) and thereby seeking to convince potential users of its value.

On the demand side, management fashion accounts discern organizations and managers as the main consumers of management knowledge. Managers are constantly confronted with a supply of different organizational problems. The persistence of these problems offers a fertile ground for constantly adopting new and promising solutions (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). Managers’ fear of control loss creates a constant pressure to introduce new solutions to address their ongoing problems. Another incentive for organizations to adopt new concepts is the fear that competing organizations can achieve a relative advantage with a new idea (Abrahamson, 1996). In addition, it is important for a company to create an impression that it is at the forefront of management knowledge. Adopting new ideas does not necessarily enhance organizational performance but contributes to creating a favorable company reputation (Staw & Epstein, 2000). New concepts may also serve the career of individual managers (Huczynski, 1993). By introducing new concepts, managers can distinguish themselves from their predecessors. Championing the implementation increases a persons’ visibility in an organization and enhances their innovative reputation. So various elements make that organizations are urged to adhere to innovative ideas.

1.1.2 Ability to flow

The interaction between supply and demand related forces makes that in this knowledge market some organization concepts turn into management fashions. The way a concept is presented and perceived plays an important role in their becoming quickly and widely received throughout the knowledge market. There are several key characteristics that generally enhance their *ability to flow* (Røvik, 2003). One characteristic is that popular concepts often draw heavily on utopianism (Ten Bos, 2000). This involves that propagators of these concepts tend to systematically oversell what a concept can accomplish (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). Such large promises of performance improvement are mainly used to emphasize the relative advantage (Rogers, 1995) over present ideas. Associating successful cases in prominent organizations likely reinforces this image. By generating 'social authorization' for their prescriptions, fashion setters seek to increase legitimacy for their solutions (Røvik, 1998). Legitimacy is further enhanced by expressing a concept in an uncontroversial language that is compatible with existing standards and values (Brunsson, 1997).

Another key attribute to flow is a concept's perceived simplicity (Kieser, 1997). This rests on the premise that ideas need to be presented in such a way that they are easy to understand. As Rogers (1995) recognized, the complexity of an innovation constitutes an important barrier to its widespread acceptance. Presenting one central factor as a key to success may further support this perceived simplicity. In addition, Kieser (2002) noted the use of elements such as metaphors, stylized examples and easy to understand figures. A final important characteristic of concepts for becoming widely accepted in the knowledge market is their interpretative viability (Benders & van Veen, 2001). Such a relative vagueness makes that a concept lends itself for different interpretation and usage. It allows a concept to become perceived as applicable in a large variety of different situations. While creating a common framework, interpretative viability provides space for *individualization* during a concept's implementation (Røvik, 1998) which means that a concept is recognized and accepted by different parties in a change project.

Paradoxically, while the above-mentioned characteristics are important elements for concepts' widespread acceptance, they also lay the foundation for their collective downturn. A constant supply of new concepts provides an inexhaustible space for the emergence of newer concepts and hereby induces the persistence of transience in management thinking. Ten Bos (2000) argues that management fashion tends to break the links with previous times by their fundamental focus on novelty. Management fashion accounts make it at least doubtful that such allegedly new concepts become absorbed and routinized by different carriers of management knowledge. In other words, fashion theorists suggest little bases for entrenchment (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999) of organization concepts once they are introduced. For instance Abrahamson (1996: 257) explicitly referred to this phenomenon as a 'transitory collective

belief, indicating that the longevity of management ideas is rather problematic.

After a period of excitement and high enthusiasm, a concept inevitably becomes increasingly criticized and loses its initial image of rationality and progress. Particularly, new concepts are regarded differently after their realization which plays an important part in the fading of attractiveness (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). New and promising ideas sharply contrast with the complexity and inconsistency of the current 'old' situation. However, the simplicity and major promises associated with new ideas cannot be completely realized and generate new unanticipated problems. This means that after their introduction, ideas easily become associated with difficulties, conflicts or even turn out to be controversial. These are important elements which contribute to a concept becoming 'worn out through use' (Benders & van Veen, 2001) thereby providing an opening wedge for new ideas (Jönsson & Lundin, 1977). As a result, the realization of an idea makes it become less appealing in comparison to a fairly similar, but newer idea that has not yet been applied. This process induces a continuous flow of short-lived concepts (Gill & Whittle, 1993; Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999). Hence, the patterns hypothesized by management fashion accounts suggest a *continuous transience* in management knowledge.

1.2 CONCEPTICIDE

As the previous section indicates, the market for management knowledge creates a climate that unavoidably leads to a phenomenon that, analogous to Van Middelaar (1999), I will denote as *concepticide*. This involves the continuous and collective rejection of organization concepts that have been widely embraced only a short time before. Players in this market are in a sense guilty of a collective 'assault' on current concepts in favor of new ideas. The continuous supply of new concepts result in the elimination of all the current ideas-in-use and the practices associated with them. This means that, once in knowledge market, organization concepts become object of planned obsolescence (Huczynski, 1993), because only the constant rejection of current prescriptions can feed the need for new concepts. Concepticide tends to increase the supply of problems and solutions (Brunsson, 1997; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001). An insatiable urge for concepticide result in organization concepts inevitably becoming outdated, leaving adopters of such concepts caught between transience and continuity in management thinking.

Such transitory patterns are obviously at odds with an academic ideology of accumulation (Lammers, 1988; Astley & Zammuto, 1992; Benders & Heusinkveld, 2003). Lammers (1988) shows a strong ambivalence with regard to this phenomenon. While he acknowledged that fashionable concepts play an important role in repeatedly drawing attention to management knowledge, he also pointed to a major problem this phenomenon brings i.e. a persistent

lack of accumulation. Constantly rejecting present ideas and practices leaves little opportunity for entrenchment (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). Concepticide creates an atmosphere unfavorable to accumulation and creates a fertile ground for what I have called continuous transience. A permanent inability to systematically build on existing insights and experiences means that people (1) have to reinvent what others already knew, (2) continue to make the same mistakes and (3) are unable to deal with persistent problems. In the next sections I will illustrate these points.

Firstly, concepticide means that management ideas inevitably become regarded obsolete and therefore constantly have to be rediscovered. The persistence of concepticide in management thinking brings that we are condemned to reconstruct what others already know because their insights unavoidably become lost in the history of management thinking. Continuously rejecting current ideas easily incites collective forgetfulness (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). For instance the idea of Cellular Manufacturing has been reinvented many times throughout history. In one of these instances the idea cropped-up at Scania-Vabis at the end of the 1930s (Benders & Stjernberg, 2000). As Benders and Stjernberg argue, this organization was able to translate the concept into praxis and generated substantial experience in its application. However, although the experience accumulated within this organization were published on different occasions, they left little traces in the community of management practitioners and intellectuals (Guillén, 1994). As a result, many following Cellular Manufacturing initiatives in other settings were not able to draw on the extensive experience built up in previous cases. So the experiences did not disseminate widely resulting in a lack of usage in the further development of knowledge outside this organization.

Despite the fact that the experiences in the 1940s at Scania-Vabis were extensively documented, their lessons are not generally referred to. Hence, a second point is that the inability of preserving present insights and drawing on them irrevocably leads to discontinuity in management thinking. Not being able to build on present management knowledge leaves people with no option but continuously start from scratch. By constantly having to reinvent the wheel and reiterate old debates people are condemned to endlessly repeat the same mistakes. Take for example the field of information systems development. The continuous struggle with failing information systems is unremittingly attributed to inadequate system development methods (Van Bijsterveld, 1997). Despite descriptions of long-standing problems, allegedly new methods are repeatedly introduced, each containing substantial promises of performance improvement. The eagerness for novelty characterizes the inability to systematically understand failures and shortcomings made in the past. The constant discrepancy between how information systems are presented and how they actually work in praxis offers space for the emergence and downturn of new rediscoveries. The rhetoric necessary to gain acceptance cannot meet its promises and becomes an overture for the collective rejection of a concept.

The constant discontinuity that concepticide brings reinforces the emergence of the old mistakes, but then under a different label.

Finally, a persistent inability to preserve ideas leads to capricious behavior and hampers the ability to understand persistent organization problems. For instance the field of Innovation Management is flooded with allegedly new tools and methods. However, in spite of this supply of new ideas, organizations continue to make elementary mistakes (Vermeulen, 2001). Although the fundamental tensions inherent to innovation cannot be easily resolved (Dougherty, 1996) the key issues that can go wrong during innovation projects have been known for a long time. Such fundamental tensions offer important grounds for the emergence of new solutions and incessantly launching new tools (Benders & Vermeulen, 2002). When this alleged novelty does not bring the changes consistent with their prescriptions, it creates space for the introduction of newer ideas and makes people readily reject their ideas-in-use. By jumping from one tool to another one creates a constant discontinuity and limits the opportunities for accumulation. The old ideas and practices are eradicated instead of taken as a basis for further development. Such capriciousness frustrates a learning process that enhances dealing with persistent organizational problems.

1.3 CONTESTED NOVELTY

In the previous section I elaborated a general ambivalence in relation to concepticide. While some concepts temporarily receive wide attention in the knowledge market, they also bring continuous transience resulting in a lack of accumulation. Despite this strong ambivalence, people again and again tend to argue from a 'new' organization concept against an 'old' as if this is highly problematic. By continuously presenting concepts as new, current ideas and practices inevitably are regarded as old. This easily creates a starting point to ban these existing ideas on organizing.

As Ortmann (1995) pointed out, discarding the old in favor of the new constitutes a general phenomenon. Characteristic of this process is the use of a circular reference structure. Specifically, the introduction of novelty may encourage people to consider existing ideas on organizing as problematic but only a crisis of the old can shape the space for novel ideas on organizing to emerge. In other words, on the one hand management ideas and practices can only become considered 'old' by the emergence of 'new' concepts while on the other hand the 'old' is constitutive for what can be regarded as 'new'. This automatically brings us to the yardstick to which one can assess novelty in concepticide. Generally, novelty is regarded as a fundamental anomaly of a present situation. For instance, new concepts may easily prescribe the opposite of earlier ideas (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). However, I would like to argue that the relationship between new and old should be regarded as open ended.

This means that the ‘new’ not necessarily differs from the ‘old’ and may even include the ‘old’. In the following part I will elaborate this point.

Despite what the continuous emergence of new approaches would suggest, what is regarded as new does not necessarily differ so much from the old. Lammers (1988) showed for instance that the contemporary popular ideas behind the concept of Excellent Organizations, as presented in the early eighties by Peters and Waterman, have emerged incessantly in literature, only from different research traditions and under different labels. German sociologist in the 1920s and 1930s already wrote about non-hierarchical organizations with a low degree of formalization. Also in following decades variations on the same ideas were put forward. This indicates that the underlying theme on the tension between mechanistic and organic oriented forms has been a continuous subject of debate. Over time, similar insights have been incessantly rediscovered as new and renamed by different theorists. So concepticide may generate an endless stream of reincarnations in which old ideas are incessantly seen as new, but do not differ fundamentally. ‘New’ concepts may therefore become repetitions of earlier ideas aimed at the same problems and propagating the same solution (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997).

While novelty tends to discard the old, it may also include it. As Rogers (1995) and Hargadon and Douglas (2001) explain, for an idea to become accepted as innovation it is essential to combine novelty and familiarity. On the one hand, an idea must appear novel to draw attention and suggest relative advantage in relation to existing ideas and practices (Rogers, 1995: 212). On the other hand an innovation must include characteristics that are already known to increase understanding and gain acceptance among a given population. So the old and the new are not part of different worlds but meet in various ideas and practices that at particular points in time are socially constructed as new. This can be nicely illustrated by the writings of the Dutch humanist Erasmus.

At the close of the fifteenth century, Humanism was regarded as a new movement in the Netherlands. However a characteristic of this movement’s adherents was their partiality to antiquity. So ‘old’ and, at that time, relatively unfamiliar ideas and writings from Greek and Latin antiquity were rediscovered and propagated under the veil of a new intellectual movement. His work *Liber Antibarbarorum* is an exponent of this movement and includes a strong plea for the study of the intellectual heritage of classical civilization. The work heavily criticizes the ‘barbarians’ who continuously seek to keep people from knowledge about these classics. For instance Erasmus writes in answer to his critics: ‘It is ridiculous to disapprove something only because the *ancients* have invented it’ (1520/2002: 77, emphasis added).

It is ironic that, in his days, many ideas from ancient craftsmanship were nonetheless readily adopted. Hence, although the ideology of Humanism as a movement for the revaluation of the ‘classics’ was heavily contested, people were already familiar with many of the ideas and practices that had their origin

in the ancient world. This shows that old ideas in a new package do not necessarily meet with a wide response and therefore novelty does not in all cases mean continuity. At the same time, Erasmus recognized that ideas and practices that are presented as new also include the familiar, so novelty does not entail transience of the old. This shows that novelty may become an important carrier of old ideas because these can be introduced independently of their past reputation. By creating a veil of novelty a larger group of people can become more attracted to old ideas that have fallen into oblivion.

1.4 AIM

In this introductory chapter I have showed that the management knowledge market tends towards *concepticide* in which normative ideas on organizing inevitably become widely rejected by the people who initially embraced them. Accounts of management fashion suggest a pattern of continuous transience in which discourse and practices that become associated with 'old' concepts are unavoidably eradicated and replaced by allegedly 'new' ideas. However, as stressed in the previous section, the relation between old and new is not predetermined *per se*. This makes that the new may also include the old. Hence, this thesis argues that there is no *a priori* transience of management knowledge in relation to the way organization concepts are received in the market. This would imply that both during the emergence and during the decline of a new concept there is more continuity than a management fashion would suggest. Particularly, as Røvik (1996) stressed, organization concepts may leave a wide variety of different *sediments* during an alleged downturn phase.

A key element in developing the argument of this thesis is the notion of *de-coupling* (Brunsson, 1989) which points to the possibility of different relationships between ideas and practices. This means that a concept's lack of a material component allows traces to take different routes, loosely coupled to the organization concept they were initially associated with. However, in spite of the possibility of these sediments bringing more continuity it does not necessarily lead to routinization of discourse and practices (Zaltman et al., 1973; Yin, 1979; Nelson & Winter, 1982). This means that increasing the likelihood for a concept's traces to become entrenched is not without difficulty (Yin, 1979; Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999).

The central objective of this study is to explore the sedimentation process of organization concepts once they are received in the management knowledge market. This implies following concepts in their translation and tracing routes of discourse and practices associated with a concept. Current accounts on management fashion show a lack of attention to the form of these traces and how their trajectories take shape. Fashion theorists made little attempt to uncover the process by which new concepts become sedimented (Røvik, 1996). This study will reconsider the predictions of management fashion accounts referring to the unavoidable transience of these trajectories

by developing a theory of sedimentation. The thesis hereby concentrates on modeling key elements that play a central role in a sedimentation process and explains conditions under which traces associated with a concept remain viable during an alleged downturn phase. As a starting point for this research I take the central question: *how does the process of sedimentation take shape on the management knowledge market during concepticide?*

1.5 SETTING A COURSE

1.5.1 A source of problems

Studying the supply of organizational problems and solutions creates its own specific difficulties. This study seeks to trace the routes of new organization concepts, which involves an intricate journey. I based myself upon the viewpoint that there is neither a priori transience nor continuity during concepticide. In this thesis I will go back into the arena where old and new were contested and seek to rewind ideas that passed their 'closure' phase (Shenhav, 1999; Bijker, 1990). However this implies entering a tricky area. For instance Lundgren (2000) showed that his study on the diffusion of organizational innovations generated dispersed reactions among several renowned management scholars. While some considered it as a highly challenging enterprise: 'Terrific area! It hasn't been studied a lot so far, there's a lot left to do', others take a more anxious stance: 'Your area scares me to death! It's extensive and difficult.' I believe that the main difficulties here are particularly related to (1) the specific traits of organization concepts, (2) the process of tracing and (3) the diversity in the management knowledge market.

A first important difficulty is that organization concepts are hard to catch empirically. A major issue in studying concepts is that, unlike substantive innovations (e.g. Rogers, 1995), they lack a material component (Benders & van Veen, 2001). Yin (1979) stressed for instance that the routinization of 'software' innovations is much more difficult to trace than the 'hardware' aspects. Taking such purely ideational phenomena as a central object of study has important implications for a research approach. As Brunsson & Olsen (1997: 37) argued, such management fashions both reduce and increase the variety of possible outcomes. Specifically, the lack of a material component implies that organization concepts are inevitably 'translated' as they move across the management knowledge market (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996). This means that concepts are not stable entities but are constantly shaped and reshaped by relevant social groups. Concepts are likely to be constructed and modified in different ways leaving a gamut of different transformations of the initial idea. As a result, following organization concepts in their translations becomes a journey that cannot easily be set out *ex ante*.

Secondly, a further complication in studying the sediments of concepts lies in the notion of ‘tracing’ (see also Rogers, 1995: 154 ff.). Tracing the history of a phenomenon is easily considered as a purely descriptive effort. However, the events and experiences in relation to concepts are continuously reconstructed in retrospect. Novelty generally seeks to change measures and rules by which things are perceived, and hereby tends to judge earlier ideas and practices only by itself (Ortmann, 1995). For instance Shenhav (1999) portrays early developments in now widely accepted management knowledge as a chaotic and conflicting enterprise in which the prominence and sedimentation of ideas were still open-ended. However, such developments are often rationalized in retrospect by selectively tracing the trajectories of the ‘winners’ back to their precursors. This means that ideas currently taken for granted were often not so self-evident at the time they were introduced (Bijker, 1990). This engenders a danger of post-hoc rationalizations in which certain elements are distilled instinctively. In spite of this, I believe tracing is an essential, but only a first step in understanding the journey of management ideas.

Thirdly, addressing the research question requires moving over highly diverse and demanding ground. The market for management knowledge is not a homogeneous entity, but an arena where distinct actors such as mass media organization, consultancies, gurus, business schools and managers are concerned with the production and consumption of new management ideas (Abrahamson, 1996; Kieser, 1997). Each of these entities holds specific characteristics that define the shape of organization concepts in a distinctive way. This implies that solely drawing on print media output as major indicator for the patterns in this field, as management fashion theorists tend to do, cannot generate sufficient understanding about the way different actors in the market deal with concepticide. To understand the distinct domains in which a concept takes shape it is important to outline the specific characteristics of the carriers of these concepts within which this study seeks to find its way. At the same time, however, these central actors cannot be regarded as completely separate entities, so one has to account for their interrelations.

1.5.2 Tracing concepts

Tracing organization concepts in their reception requires an approach of systematic discovery. Such an approach should be flexible enough to allow adjustments during the course of the analysis while it provides enough sensitivity to keep on track to reach the research goal. I believe that an important way to deal with the above-mentioned difficulties is to enter the field with a relatively open mind and to constantly try to fit accumulating pieces of data into the emerging theory of sedimentation. This allows the development of a grounded notion of what it means for actors on the knowledge market to be involved in concepticide (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This also implies drawing on a *verstehende attitude* (Wester, 1995). The perceptions of the subjects in

involved are taken as a guide for understanding and exploring the process of sedimentation. Key terms are not fixed *ex ante* in this, so the researcher has to constantly seek to develop a 'fit' in relation to the specific field in which they occur. Also, my objective is not to cover the whole field involved in the supply and demand for management knowledge but to develop a theory that accounts for the relevant elements in the sedimentation process. This involves drawing on a logic of *theoretical sampling* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ongoing inclusion and comparing of new data should not only contribute to the theory-in-development but, also provide constant direction for further research.

Secondly, the choice of relevant domains to be addressed in this thesis is made in line with the notion of theoretical sampling. Specifically, the focus will be on print media, consultancies and user-organizations as three highly different carriers on the management knowledge market. These carriers are chosen on the basis of the issues raised by the emergent theory whereby I took advantage of the links between them. Initially I concentrated on patterns of concepticide in the media and, unlike accounts of management fashion, I used them as a starting point for further analysis. Next, I linked print media to management consultancies as the main providers of short-lived managerial discourse around a concept in the print media. Concepticide in the media also suggests a downturn of discourse and practices related to a concept within these consultancies. An exploration within these consultancies gave further insight into their relationship with organizational praxis. A decrease in attention to concepts on the part of management consultancies is not an isolated event, but is to a great extent shaped by demand related factors. I then shift the focus to the demand side of the knowledge market and studied user-organizations as the main consumers of management knowledge. These organizations often appear in the media as stylized cases used to increase a concept's ability to flow (Røvik, 1998). However, these are also the places where consultants seek to sell and apply the ideas they have widely espoused in the media.

Thirdly, unlike current management fashion accounts, this study combines different data sources. Specifically, print media traces have generated both quantitative and qualitative data (see Appendix I) which I will combine with secondary sources. While management fashion studies draw solely on quantitative material, I argue in this thesis that an additional qualitative approach enables the tracing of an organization concepts' evolution in different contexts, and thereby accounting for the multifaceted way in which management intellectuals and practitioners shape the meaning of a concept. This study also draws on in-depth interviews within a large variety of different consultancies and user-organizations (see Appendices II and III). I interviewed people who were closely involved with the production, dissemination and implementation of organization concepts within and outside their organizations. Hereby I particularly concentrated on the traces these concepts have left behind and the journeys they have taken after an alleged downturn phase. These

sources are used in relation to each other in a process of constant comparison. Such a variety should be considered as beneficial in relation to the object of study. This provides the necessary different viewpoints and allows creating a stronger emerging theory of sedimentation. It not only enhances understanding of the patterns within different carriers involved, but also shines additional light on their interrelations.

1.6 OVERVIEW

In this chapter I have introduced the central theme of this thesis and explained the aim of study. In the above I also demonstrated the fundamental problematic nature of tracing organization concepts and building a theory of sedimentation. The remaining part of the thesis draws on different papers in which the central theme is elaborated. Here I seek to reconsider management fashion theorists' predictions on transience and continuity. Each of the papers studies the sedimentation process in relation to a specific carrier in the management knowledge market. After outlining the specific characteristics of the carriers, slices of empirical material will be used to illustrate the arguments made in relation to the process of sedimentation. In conclusion of each chapter, I discuss the findings in the light of the literature related to the specific carriers and current conceptualizations of management fashion.

Chapter Two concentrates on concepticide within print media. As stressed, I use print media traces as a starting point for further exploration. The resulting typical bell-shaped curves are taken as a main source by management fashion theorists to indicate that fashionable concepts have little lasting impact in the management knowledge market. Discourse on a concept inevitably fades away in favor of newer management issues and prescriptions. This chapter extends this analysis beyond just measuring the extent to which a key word appears in a bibliographic database. Instead of showing a single transitory pattern, it positions print media discourse in the light of the dissemination and legitimization of management knowledge across different professional communities and highlights the role of management intellectuals in this. Here the study offers a more multifaceted view on transience and persistence. In addition it conceptualizes consultancies as central agents in the propagation of concepts in the media and shows how stylized examples of different user-organizations are used to increase a concept's ability to flow. This chapter will draw on Heusinkveld & Benders (2000a, 2000b & 2001a) and Braam, Heusinkveld, Benders & Aubel (2002).

Chapter Three traces the sedimentation process within management consultancies as major suppliers of management knowledge. Here I add another layer to concepticide as it is expressed in print media by examining the phenomenon within its main discourse providers. The findings show that after a process of new concept development, organization concepts turn into temporary crystallization points. But when interest in a concept fades within a

consultancy, these points tend to lose their coherence. The main argument in this chapter is that the traces that concepts may bring become part of a continuous process of recognition, preservation and erosion of management knowledge. The chapter particularly draws on Heusinkveld & Benders (2001b & 2002a) but also pays attention to relevant elements in Heusinkveld & Benders (2002b & 2003a).

In Chapter Four I turn to the demand side of the management knowledge market and consider how concepticide takes shape in user-organizations. Here I demonstrate a similar analysis as has been presented in relation to consultancies. It is emphasized that during its downturn a concept leaves a variety of different traces that go their own way independent of the concept they were associated with. However, the viability of the traces initially associated with a concept remains highly vulnerable within organizations in which it condenses. Here I draw on Heusinkveld & Benders (2002b & 2003c).

In a Final Chapter I will reconsider the results of the preceding chapters to carve out the implication for understanding the process of sedimentation in the management knowledge market. I stress the strong ambivalence inherent in fashionable concepts in relation to the academic ideology of accumulation. The chapter shows that a plea to urge scholars to influence management fashions is not particularly new, is not uncontested within academia and is not without further complications. Rather, drawing on Benders & Heusinkveld (2003) this study will explain the value of 'relevant repetition' and the development of an 'ideological force' that is able to understand and intervene in this process. It ends with a reevaluation of accumulation as a yardstick to assess developments on the knowledge market, a section that draws on Heusinkveld (2002).

CHAPTER 2

SWINGING DISCOURSE

In the introductory chapter I outlined the background and general aim of this study. Here I start my empirical odyssey by concentrating on sedimentation in print media. This ‘carrier’ is generally considered as a central place in the market for management knowledge. Print media traces are often used in empirical studies of management fashion and are generally referred to in more conceptual oriented papers on this topic as I will show in this chapter. Fashion theorists tend to mainly base their ideas on changes in the intensity of managerial discourse about particular topics over time. When the widespread media attention about specific organization concepts shows a short-lived pattern, they are easily dismissed as hypes or fads.

Based on Heusinkveld & Benders (2000a, 2000b & 2001a) and Braam, Heusinkveld, Benders & Aubel (2002) I seek to draw a different picture. Specifically, in this chapter I argue that the work of fashion theorists often fails to account for much of the empirical complexities involved in the development of popular concepts over time. In the next section I review relevant accounts that discuss print media in relation to the reception of organization concepts. By drawing on management fashion literature, the subsequent part will derive some propositions about the way in which concepts are received in the media. This is followed by an empirical analysis of the development of concepts in the print media during an alleged downturn phase.

2.1 MEDIA AND ORGANIZATION CONCEPTS

2.1.1 Communication channels

An essential condition for concepts to become popular it is to be part of managerial discourse (Kieser, 1997). The *general managerial discourse* is considered an institutionalized form of conversation in the environment of organizations (Furusten, 1995). This involves an ongoing communicative act on the management of organizations carried by different channels of communication. Managerial discourse may direct a business community towards contemporary

issues and present-day organizational problems. Discourse resonates both at intra organizational and trans-organizational level, but the latter is likely most visible on 'public display'. Print media articles and management books are considered important written manifestations of managerial discourse (Furusten, 1995) which arguably have grown in importance in the knowledge market (Huczynski, 1993). This means that print media is perceived as having a central role in turning organization concepts into management fashions. Although much of the general discourse resonates at a trans-organizational level, it cannot be regarded as completely unrelated to organizational praxis. Instead, managerial discourse may be considered as discursive practices that are intertwined with organizational practices (Brunsson, 1997).

The way innovations travel across a community is regarded as a process of social communication (Rogers, 1995). In line with this conception, *communication channels* likely play an important part in the reception of new organization concepts throughout a business community. Apparently, by means of these channels, management fashion industries are able to bridge the space between supply and demand of management knowledge. From a diffusion perspective one may consider print media as a means to *transmit* management knowledge from a few senders to a large audience. In this, the media provide a forum that enables fashion setters to induce intensive discourse on a concept and reach a large public of possible adopters. Diffusion research shows that the rate of adoption is shaped by communication behavior. It is argued that adopters are mainly influenced by mass media during early stages. Mass media is particularly assumed to play a role in disseminating knowledge about the existence of innovations and making large group of audience members understand how it works.

Neo-institutional theorists stress that media are not simply a means for dissemination. Rather they stress their role in the *legitimation* of management knowledge (Mazza & Alvarez, 2000). It is perceived as a place where suppliers of management knowledge seek to establish social authorization for their prescriptive visions on organizing (Røvik, 1998). To do so, they adapt discourse on a concept to the generally accepted norms of talk that define 'good' management practice (Brunsson, 1997). In this advocates of new concepts seek to keep their ideas uncontroversial by avoiding the use of contaminated terms. In addition, media manifestations generally use several rhetorical strategies as major sources of legitimacy (Kieser, 1997; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000).

For instance, in his analysis of popular management books, Furusten (1995) showed that management books often refer to the adoption of the central prescriptives by large prominent firms by telling fragmentary stories. By doing so, claims of universal applicability or successfulness may be perceived more credible. Moreover these texts are characterized by the use of undefined terms and platitudes. Furusten also found that the texts of popular media manifestations conveyed the implicit notion in which a company's success is regarded as a critical function of management leadership. When such

manifestations are widely accepted in the market they easily become norms of talk themselves. This means that managers are impelled to conform to these norms of discourse. As a result, media manifestations are not only a source of inspiration but may also turn out into a basis of social pressure.

Historical accounts reveal that print media are not only involved in the dissemination or legitimation of management knowledge but offer a central place where ideas are *contested* (Shenhav, 1999). The propagation of organization concepts in the media may encounter significant resistance from different social groups. For instance, while Scientific Management was initially presented to reduce industrial conflict and contemporary organizational problems by its pioneers, the concept became object of heavy struggles once it was launched (Shenhav, 1999). Particularly the promotional efforts generated considerable attention for the concept in the management knowledge market. As a consequence, Scientific Management became a widely publicized topic in the media and the ideas were debated across a large population of professional experts (Guillén, 1994).

Though the concept is often regarded as a basis for a large management movement, the reception within engineering circles was not uncontested. Remarkably, the concept raised strong disagreements among its most important advocates (Nelson, 1975: 182). This caused different streams of adherents challenging other's interpretations in professional engineering journals. For example, commentators were anxious that the concept would put the present body of knowledge in the shade. As a result, 'old' systematizers sought to regain credibility by stating that Scientific Management is nothing new (Shenhav, 1999: 114). At the same time Shenhav (1999) noted that by debunking the practices of 'efficiency experts', Taylor and his disciples sought to dissociate themselves from this group that tried to hitch-hike on the popularity of the Scientific Management concept.

2.1.2 Creation and selection of management knowledge

The role of media should not be restricted to the conception of a passive channel that allows the transmission of management ideas. Rather it should also be considered as active participant in the process of management knowledge creation and consumption. This means that the print media can also be regarded as important agents in the 'reception process' as they actually shape the nature of diffusion and translation within a particular context.

While above-mentioned accounts tend to consider media as merely a neutral channel, other contributions see a more active role of the media. For instance Hirsch (1972) considers the media as an important *gatekeeper* involved in making selections and interpretations of the outside world, thereby manipulating people's perception of managerial reality (Chen & Meindl, 1991; Schoemaker & Reese, 1996). It likely takes some selected elements from managerial reality, reconstructs it and feeds it back to a management audience.

So though it is at least one step away from organizational praxis, print media provides a view on the way organization concepts are propagated, interpreted and put into practice (Whitston, 1997; Shenhav, 1999).

Print media are populated by *management intellectuals* who are regarded as major group of actors in shaping the content of managerial discourse. Guillén describes these management intellectuals as an aggregate group of people including academics, consultants, managers, opinion leaders and spokespeople from professional organizations that participate in local managerial discourse (1994: 4). Within this discourse they (re)interpret and disseminate allegedly new management knowledge and practices entering a business community. Their ideas and experiences on these 'new' concepts are particularly articulated in books and articles thereby indicating the impact of certain concepts on local management discourse and practices.

The media does not merely constitute a forum to express management intellectuals' opinions but there are also commercial interests involved (Furusten, 1995: 153). Particularly some intellectuals have an interest in boosting sales volumes and establishing a reputation as 'thought leader' (Wright & Kitay, 2001). Also actors involved in the media industry play a role in this process. Clark & Greatbach (2002) emphasized the importance of collaborative relationships in producing media texts. Their research pointed out that considering the contributions of 'support groups' is essential for understanding the specific shape of management guru's ideas. For instance book editors are often strongly involved in the production of popular management books and articles.

2.1.3 Media consumption

Although common in mass communication studies, there is still little attention to the actual impact of media outlets on management practitioners. Research in media studies often concentrate on the content of the message because of the relative accessibility for study (Schoemaker & Reese, 1996). However, mainstream media studies also focus on the extent audience members are exposed to media, their initial responses and the impact of media content on audience's cognition and behavior (Gunter, 2000). Initial studies in relation to managerial media are still mainly involved with examining the quantity and content of print media traces, while the consumption of management knowledge manifestations is addressed rather tentatively.

In a pioneering study of its kind, Alvarez & Mazza (2000) seek to explore some key factors that are relevant in the consumption of media manifestations by management practitioners. Specifically, they study the reading habits of managers in relation to management books and magazines. The study mainly concentrates on the selection and acquisition process in knowledge consumption. Empirical results show that different reasons underlie managers' active search for relevant management knowledge. Although seek

ing support for problem-solving activities plays a role, management knowledge consumers also try to feed the need for sensemaking. In feeding this knowledge demand they draw on a large variety of different media. Alvarez & Mazza argue that not only practical usefulness is an important factor in this selection process, but also social factors as for example prestige play a role. These criteria do not necessarily coincide in different media. Whereas usefulness is perceived in media related to daily working environment, knowledge from other media like programs at business schools and academic publications are more associated with prestige. At the same time the research points out that academic journals only play a small role in providing management practitioners with knowledge for action.

A wide adoption of some concepts in the knowledge market presumes a close relation between discourse and praxis. Managerial discourse is often an important source of inspiration for organizational members involved in reorganizations (Brunsson, 1997). As a result the argumentative texture of prescriptions in general discourse may become transferred to local organizations. Large sales volume of books or large attention in professional journal articles can easily be held as proxy for diffusion among the population of adopting organizations. This would suggest a major cognitive influence in terms of agenda setting and cultivation of collective beliefs.

However, intensive media discourse does not necessarily mean wide usage (Furusten, 1995: 73; Heusinkveld & Benders, 2000). For instance, management intellectuals have discussed Self Managing Workteams for many years. However, empirical evidence on incidence of use in organizations shows that in many countries the usage and application of the discussed ideas in management praxis remains rather scarce (Nijholt, 2003). Organizations are generally involved in de-coupling their talk from their practices (Brunsson, 1989). This would imply that even if organizations claim using a concept and refer to the managerial discourse they not necessarily apply the underlying ideas in organizational praxis.

2.2 CONCEPTICIDE IN PRINT MEDIA

In this section I seek to derive some propositions from management fashion literature about the specific shape of sedimentation in relation to print media. The quantity of media publications on a concept that is able to gain popularity in the knowledge market typically resembles a bell-shaped curve in time. Management fashion theorists often take these print-media patterns as important basis for their conception of a concept's reception trajectory (Pascale, 1990; Gill & Whittle, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996; Carson et al., 1999a & 1999b; Jones & Thwaites, 2000). Such recurring trajectories in which a period of popularity is immediately followed by phase of decline easily suggest continuous transience in management knowledge and a systematic lack of accumulation.

Fashion accounts describe typical patterns that start when one or several founding fathers conceptualize a collection of more or less coherent ideas on organizing and propagate them under an attractive label (Gill & Whittle, 1993; Huczynski, 1993). At the basis of a concept's life cycle is the moment when the idea is introduced in the media. Often fashion setters use book-publishing industries to disseminate their ideas to a large management audience (Furusten, 1995). The receptiveness of market and the way in which these ideas are presented can turn a book into bestseller and can give its author a guru status (Clark & Salaman, 1996; Clark & Salaman, 1998). As a result, after a period of dormancy, the ideas may gain a large impact on managerial discourse. For instance although Robert Kaplan has published his normative ideas on reporting systems from the early eighties, it was not until the early nineties when these ideas attracted wide attention in the management knowledge market (Braam, Heusinkveld & Benders, 2002).

After its introduction on the management knowledge market, a concept typically generates the interest of an increasing number of other producers. When the popularity increases, a growing group of knowledge suppliers tends to follow the new idea to be in line with what is considered as novel and progressive. This likely gives rise to a large wave of publications in large variety of professional media. The ideas of initial fashion setters are hereby reproduced and appropriated in popular management press articles they do not control (Abrahamson, 1996: 269). Such an impact in discourse is often indicated by article counts of different professional journals.

For instance Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999) reveal that the number of print media manifestations on Quality Circles (QC) was characterized by a rapid upsurge during the early 1980s. They suggest that the rise of this discourse was mainly induced by widespread reports about excellent Japanese economic performance. By allegedly drawing on Japanese management practices the idea of QC became regarded an icon for the efficiency of this system of production. In the US, the concept was introduced in the late 1960s but it was not only until the early 1980s when it generated significant impact in media. This increasing media attention is often paralleled by enthusiasm and high expectations about the possibility of performance enhancement. In their study, Abrahamson and Fairchild argue that in its upswing, the content of QC discourse is characterized by positive evaluations.

At the same time it is argued that a concept's popularity in the press only lasts for a short time. A first aspect of this downturn is an observed decrease in the intensity of discourse. When a concept has been widely discussed for a while, it automatically loses its perception of novelty. In a search for 'newer' topics the 'old' may easily suffer from a lack of interest. A second aspect is that a concept inevitably leads to widespread disappointment which reduces the enthusiasm in the way it is talked about. Gill & Whittle (1993) hypothesized that after a period of excitement, a concept becomes heavily criticized for its inflated claims which eventually makes that it loses its image of

rationality. For instance Abrahamson and Fairchild (1999) found that the downswing of media discourse on Quality Circles was paralleled by increasing negative evaluations and a more critical attitude towards the concept. Reports of a concept's implementation may easily bring practical difficulties and negative results into the managerial discourse (Brunsson, 1997: 318). Not meeting its initial expectations creates a less favorable picture and easily causes a concept to become controversial. This provides space for new, uncontaminated prescriptions to emerge in discourse.

The bell-shaped media curve which many fashion theorists refer to, has grown into an icon for describing the emergence and prevalence of a concept in the market. The above showed that the short-lived patterns of managerial discourse easily suggest a fundamental transitory nature of many organization concepts. This notion is incorporated in current conceptualizations of management fashions which are regarded as 'non-cumulative' (Gill & Whittle, 1993: 292) and 'transitory' (Abrahamson, 1999: 709). This means that print media are easily seen as carrier of *swinging discourse*.

The next part of this chapter is involved with empirically exploring the process of sedimentation in the popular management press throughout a period of concepticide. After a methodological section I will enter the particularities of popular discourse. First of all I will discuss changes in the intensity of discourse on different concepts. Then, I will examine the actors involved in shaping discourse. Knowledge about the background of management intellectuals producing manifestations in media is essential for understanding the content of discourse (Furusten, 1995). I will put their contributions in the light of the professional communities they belong to and the experiences they draw on. Finally, this chapter will concentrate on transience and continuity in management knowledge by showing how concepts become socially constructed in print media during an alleged downturn phase.

2.3 PRINT MEDIA TRACES

A popular concept inevitably leaves various print-media manifestations. As stressed by fashion theorists, to be widely debated in the media is regarded an important indication of a concept's popularity (Kieser, 1997). These manifestations can be considered as important traces in themselves when they are stored and referred to in large bibliographic databases. These print media traces of popular concepts are immune to retrospective modifications which make that media manifestations offer a window to study the development of concepts over a specific period of time within the management knowledge market. In this study I will use this material as primary source (see also Shenhav, 1995) to examine and understand the shape of sedimentation in relation to the media. As stated before, these data provide a view on the way concepts are propagated, contested and put to praxis. It allows considering the emer

gence of managerial discourse and the way this discourse has changed over time.

In the following sections I extensively draw on empirical material from Heusinkveld & Benders (2001a) and also the study of Braam, Heusinkveld, Benders & Aubel (2002) that followed a similar approach. By means of both quantitative and qualitative analyses these studies sought to examine a large number of print media traces. The studies are not restricted to single article counts but particularly tried to enter popular discourse. The approach followed consists of three coherent steps. A first step entails a *database analysis* which revealed a representative universe of media traces on a concept. I selected the bibliographic databases of Landelijke Online Contents, KUB Online Contents, Excerpta Informatica and Management CD that included a large number of references to print media manifestations. Though there remains a certain overlap in these databases, the differences complement each other in obtaining an adequate view on discourse. Next the studies conducted computerized searches for the relevant years. For instance, in my study on BPR discourse I entered the related key words 'reengineering', 'bpr', 'process redesign' and 'business redesign' and searched for the years 1990-1998. For each database the outcomes were checked for possible redundancies and compared to the search results of other databases. References that outside the concept under study were eliminated. This search produced a large set of bibliographic sources on the concept that can be further examined.

A second step involves a *record analysis*. This should provide insight into the form and the traces' context of production. After initial search and cleaning up, all publications with a common lingual background can be extracted from the set of the related records. Moreover by examining reference lists a number of additional articles can be found. For instance for my study of Dutch BPR discourse this resulted in a set of records referring to 287 articles from 88 different Dutch periodicals published between 1991 and 1998. The set included 50 Dutch translations of articles formerly published in foreign outlets. These data were allocated to the academic and practice domain by considering their anticipated audience and applied research methodology (see also Barley, Meyer & Gash, 1988). After this, the professional publications were put to different subgroups as indicated by the periodicals they were published in. Hereby magazines were classified as outlets of General Management, Personnel Management, Finance/Accounting or Information Management.

Finally, content analysis of media traces should further understanding of the way a concept has been interpreted and applied in different contexts. In the BPR study a sample of 112 full-text articles was generated and examined by content analysis. The sample contained traces from each subpopulation. However, translations of articles formerly published in foreign periodicals were excluded from this sample to solely focus on national based manifestations. The sample of BPR related media traces can be found in appendix I. This qualitative survey (Wester, 1995) on print media traces allowed to make

inferences on issues such as what meaning is attributed to a concept and how has it been socially constructed throughout time. The in-depth analysis of traces allowed categorizing a number of themes that emerged in relation to the data. Here I sought to determine to what extent and how the concept has been criticized throughout period of downturn. These were contrasted with evidence indicating a more enduring impact on management ideas and practices. In addition, the content analysis traced the background of individuals and institutions involved in producing managerial discourse on a concept.

2.4 WAVES OF MANAGERIAL DISCOURSE

This section addresses changes in the intensity of print media traces that are related to a concept. A wide popularity of a concept likely results in a large quantity of traces. Management fashion accounts suggest that on a general level the quantity of these traces resemble a bell shaped curve in time. In the remaining of this section I will examine the specific pattern in these print media manifestations. The main emphasis in this section is on a systematic analysis of one of these concepts. In addition it is shown that a bell-shaped curve not necessarily applies for each popular concept or in every setting in which it appears. The second part of this section will discuss some critical notes about the use of print media traces. Specifically, I emphasize that solely drawing on database counts of print media manifestations has major limitations in obtaining an adequate understanding of transience and continuity in management thinking.

2.4.1 Intensity of discourse

Figure 2.1 shows that the number of publications on BPR over time clearly resembles a bell-shaped curve during the 1990s. Going into the underlying set of records allowed to reveal that print-media discourse on the topic emerged in 1991 with a translation of the widely cited 1990 article of Michael Hammer in Harvard Business Review. This translation was published in the Dutch equivalent Holland Management Review. Rapidly following this, the first Dutch-authored article was published in the same journal in 1992. This article did not use the same label in the title, but employed the Dutch translation 'herontwerp van bedrijfsprocessen' just as the other pioneering Dutch article in this year. The print media traces of 1993 include a special issue on the topic in a professional magazine which contributed to a strong ascent during the early 1990s. In the years following, the number of publications on the topic continued rising steeply. The intensity reached a maximum in 1995, which was immediately followed by a sharp decline in the second part of the decade. So, in support of the expectations, the intensity of Dutch discourse showed a short-lived surge quickly after an initial publication in a prominent journal.

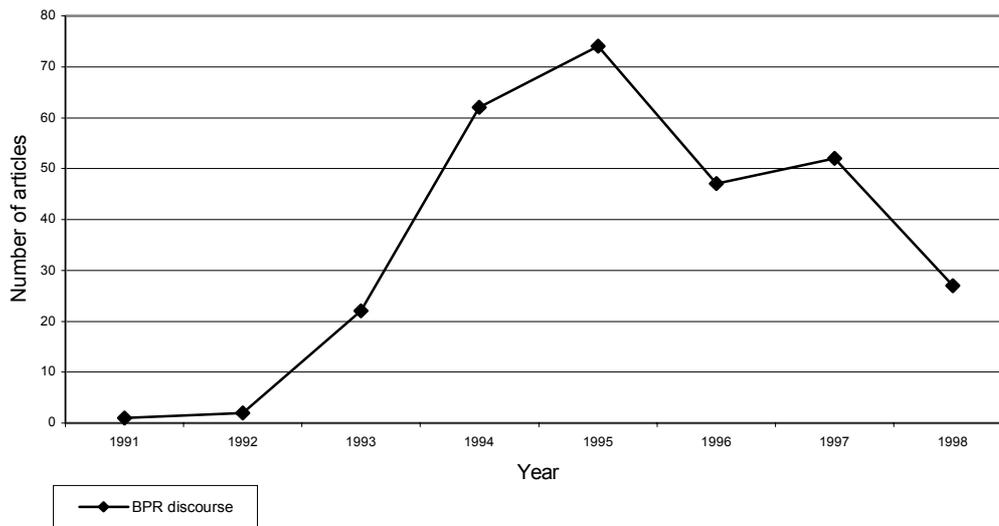


Figure 2.1: Print-media traces of BPR discourse

Unlike the above-mentioned example, not every intensively debated concept generates a short-lived pattern of intensive managerial discourse. Specifically, there may be major differences between the traces of different concepts in the print media. For instance a number of commentators considered Balanced Scorecard an important trend suggesting that the concept has become quickly popular both on the supply and demand side of the knowledge market. The expected effect on the intensity of discourse was corroborated by a relative large number of publications (Braam, Heusinkveld & Benders 2002).

However, this study did not find any indications of a sudden downswing in print media manifestations which is held as characteristic for fashionable management topics. An important aspect of the empirical data is that after the concept's emergence in the media in the early 1990s, the intensity of discourse was rather limited until 1995 after which it gradually increased. In other words, print-media attention for the BSC showed a more stretched popularity curve during its ascendancy phase. In addition, it did not show a downturn, rather, the number of traces continuously increased throughout this decade. While fashion accounts tend to argue that the life-cycle span of popular concepts seems to shorten throughout time (Pascale, 1990; Kieser, 1997; Carson et al., 1999a; 1999b), the study of BSC traces counters this idea.

Even if print-media counts reveal a bell-shaped curve, this does not necessarily mean that a concept has become temporarily popular ubiquitously. For example, Benders and Van Bijsterveld (2000) reveal that the shape of discourse about the concept of Lean Production (LP) in Germany was characterized by a sinusoid wave during the 1990s. In addition, they argue that this discourse on LP was induced to an important extent by the publication of the monograph of *The Machine That Changed the World*. This book refers to contemporary Japanese management practices and emphasized the efficiency of

this system as compared to other production systems. As indicated by media traces, LP became particularly popular in Germany while in many other countries the concept was hardly discussed. In Germany, the work was introduced in the early 1990s. In this country, the concept got significant attention of both practitioners and academics what made that the intensity of the discourse on LP to grow rapidly until 1994. This relatively short period of intense LP discourse in Germany was nevertheless quickly followed by a rather sharp decline towards the end of the 1990s. Hence, while on aggregated level data one would presume a *prima facie* general fashion, more detailed analyses shows that that the concept's alleged fashionability is restricted to only one country while the attention to the concept in other lingual areas is relatively scarce.

2.4.2 Uncovering traces

The previous part of this section followed an approach employed by many management fashion theorists. Here I showed that popular concepts leave print media traces which intensity may resemble a typical short swing, but this not necessarily the case. In this part I will discuss some major drawbacks of solely drawing on previous approach in studying reception patterns.

A first criticism is that studies of print media traces often exploit bibliographic databases without considering the specific *database composition*. However since the outcome of the search is a function of the specific characteristics of the database, it is essential to consider what can be asserted about what portfolio of bibliographic records. For instance using single language databases may have important disadvantages. Although ABI/Inform is widely known and frequently used to illustrate fashion patterns, it only covers English-language journals from several restricted disciplinary areas. Since it includes only English management journals, it cannot say anything about reception patterns in other lingual areas and therefore limits the generalizability of the findings. Other databases such as OLC cover journals in other languages than English which allows to consider differences in the reception patterns across different national contexts. So, issues involved in understanding the composition of the database may complicate the use in research on organization concepts.

A second, and related point concerns the *search procedure* by which print media traces are generated from information systems. Already in the 1980s librarian methodologists discussed the possibilities and use of computerized bibliographic databases in print media analysis. These librarian accounts pointed out that the search procedure is a difficult task which often is little understood and yields numerous occasions for misguided assessments (Hutchins, 1985: 122). In spite of the alleged advanced technological possibilities, similar problems may still occur in the retrieval of PMT from bibliographic databases. One of such problems is related to the labeling of a con

cept under study. Specifically, a concept's interpretative viability entails that its label is likely loosely coupled to management ideas and practices. As a result, a label can mean different things while a specific idea can be known under different labels. Media manifestations may use the initial term coined by an alleged founding father but this may cover a large variety of different ideas.

In addition, as a concept moves across different social contexts, the underlying ideas will likely be named differently. Organizations often give company-specific names to projects in which a concept's principles are applied. Also national-specific translations come into play. For instance in the Netherlands BPR became also known as 'herontwerp van bedrijfsprocessen' while in Denmark 'procesmæssige omstruktureringer' became a common term to name local versions of BPR (Heusinkveld, Benders & Koch, 2000). A similar case can be made for the concept Lean Production which was sometimes referred to as 'schlanke Produktion' in Germany (Benders & van Bijsterveld, 2000). How can such alternative labels be traced and to what extent can they be considered as part of discourse? Since researchers are *a priori* unfamiliar with a concept's reception, it remains difficult to determine beforehand what to search for and how to translate data needs into the language of bibliographic information systems.

Thirdly, solely drawing on bibliographic counts of traces generates only limited opportunities for further analysis. Regarding the importance of interpretative viability, most database searches may say very little about the way a concept has been socially constructed and put to use. Consequently, management fashion accounts often do not obtain a comprehensive understanding of what a concept means to relevant social groups. To further understanding about the reception of a concept, print media studies should go beyond the extent with which a key word appears in a database. Closer examination of media content generates advanced insight into the content of print media traces.

For instance, counts of print media traces showed that the Balanced Scorecard increasingly became popular topic in The Netherlands during the 1990s (Braam, Heusinkveld, Benders & Aubel, 2002). However, content analysis of these articles revealed that on some essential aspects the dominant interpretation of the concept was significantly at odds with the ideas of its founding fathers that allegedly pioneered the principles of the BSC. Specifically, while Kaplan and Norton emphasize in their writings the importance of strategic focus and alignment, this understanding was largely absent in Dutch media manifestations. Instead, BSC was widely interpreted in terms of a control instrument and associated with improving performance measurement systems and reporting formats.

So patterns of print media traces related to a concept may show important cross-contextual differences. While management fashion theorist *a priori* expect short-lived patterns of intensive discourse, various studies show that concepts may follow a large variety of different trajectories in the media.

In addition, general counts of traces still generate a simplified and highly aggregated impression of complex developments. Current analyses are often unable to unravel such aggregated developments. This means that uncritically using print media traces has major drawbacks. To get a better understanding one should enter texts and gain understanding about the context of creation (Furusten, 1995). This aspect is addressed in the next section.

2.5 SHAPING DISCOURSE

This section takes some first steps to enter the content of print media traces left by a concept. Here I will examine the background and main characteristics of the population of commentators involved in shaping discourse. First, it shows that particular *communities of discourse* play an important role in defining the shape of media traces. Taking Astley and Zammuto (1992) as a starting point, I will discuss some key differences between media traces from different *communities of discourse* i.e. traces from an academic domain and those from a managerial domain. However, further study of these traces also allowed uncovering significant cross-contextual variations within the managerial domain. These can be related to distinct professional communities. Secondly, Guillén (1994) observed that print media is ‘populated’ by different management intellectuals who are involved in producing discourse about a concept in the media. The following section empirically examines how these, what I call *providers of discourse*, act in the media and hereby define the shape of media traces.

2.5.1 Communities of discourse

Academic game

Regarding the typical characteristics of its social system (Kieser, 2002), it is not likely that the academic community will *en masse* follow fashionable concepts. The specific ‘language game’ employed in this system (Astley & Zammuto, 1992) is likely reflected in the pattern of print media traces. However, empirical studies provide a more multifaceted view.

In their study, Barley, Meyer & Gash (1988) examined the degree of influence between academic and practitioners in relation to a popular topic. They show that while Organization Culture as a topic has gained interest in both academic and practitioners’ media from the early 1980s, the initial ‘pragmatics of discourse’ differ significantly. A central belief in the practitioners’ media was that attention to organization culture would improve organizational performance. The academic press initially included contributions that emphasized organization as socially constructed system of meaning and here-with sought to argue against the views of organizations which dominated at that time. However, examination of print media traces found an increased convergence on portrayal of the topic as discourse progressed. This converging effect was particularly attributed to academics who increasingly adopted

the perspective of practitioners. This study fed the idea of academic media lagging behind in the creation and dissemination of management knowledge (Abrahamson, 1996: 269).

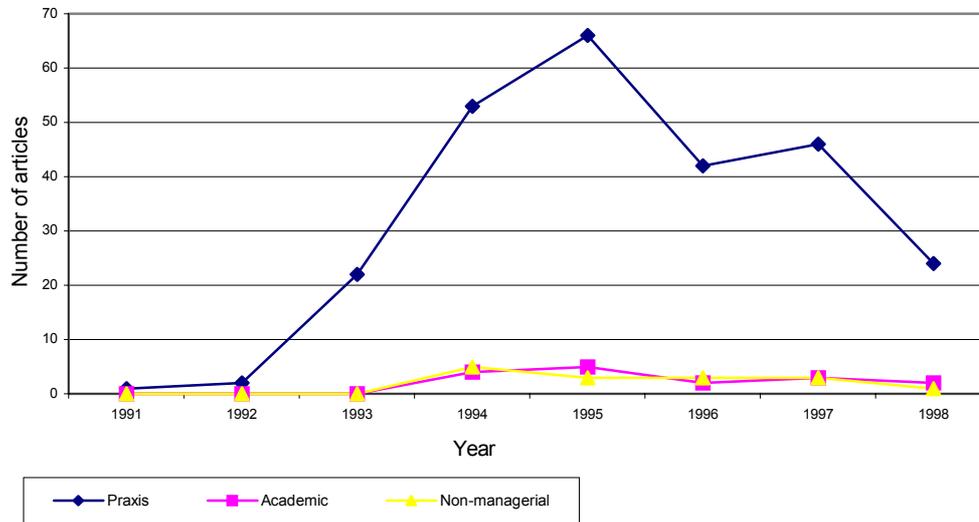


Figure 2.2: BPR print-media traces from the Praxis, Academic and Non-managerial community (source: Hensinkveld & Benders, 2001a)

As been shown by Figure 2.2, the empirical analysis reveals that most of the print media traces can be attributed to the managerial media. Although the concept of BPR spread over to academic and non-managerial channels as well, the number of traces here is rather small. Also the traces allow making inferences about the emergence of discourse. Whereas the traces of the managerial media go back to 1991, academic discourse did not surfaced in the media until 1994. In other words, the academic debate on the concept was likely initiated several years later than in the managerial press. This would confirm the initial assumption that the academic community tends to lag in their attention to popular organization concepts. At the same time, the shape of academic discourse-intensity was not sinusoidal throughout the 1990s. In the years following the emergence in the academic media it remained relatively constant and small. So analysis of print-media traces indicate that the academic domain does not easily role on the waves of a popular concept. In addition, fashionable concepts do not easily become entrenched in the academic community.

Content analysis of these traces showed that the concept is frequently discussed in relation to established intellectual traditions. Specifically the traces can be clustered around contributions that draw on existing insights of organizational design and change and insights of information management. A first cluster of discussions emphasizes the conceptual overlap between various approaches on organizational design despite differences in background.

Authors often point to the large commonalities between principles of the 'new' BPR concept and those of existing organizational design knowledge. Some even considered BPR old wine in new bottles when it is compared to long-standing insights on STSD. While the similarities in ideas are generally acknowledged, commentators stress that a number of essential principles are not included which may easily generate pitfalls and lead to failures. Consequently, several intellectuals conclude that the 'new' concept would benefit from including 'old' insights. For instance: 'STSD can provide BPR with a solid basis' [A3: 73]

A second cluster of traces discuss the concept in the light of current insights in information management. Also in this case commentators emphasize that the 'new' concept does not include many new elements. However, in spite of the fact that it is not recognized as novel, the concept is still considered as a useful contribution because of its focus on addressing different aspects of organizational and technological change in coherence. 'BPR cannot be called a new theory but has meaning because of its integrative approach' [A7: 100] As a result its ideas are perceived as having added value in the conceptualization of information management and are considered important issues for managers in this field.

Managerial game

In this section I discuss patterns within the print media traces related to the managerial community. While Astley and Zammuto (1992) use the notion of language games only to distinct between organization science and managerial practice, Mauws and Phillips (1995) consider this as a too much aggregated representation of Wittgenstein's ideas. They contest the conceptualization of Astley and Zammuto by arguing that each of these domains does not resemble a single homogeneous pattern but consist of large variety of loosely coupled games in which individuals can become involved. This would imply that meanings can vary in unpredictable ways between different managerial contexts.

As a result, Mauws and Philips stress the importance for research to be sensitive to different usage of specific terms across relevant communities (1995: 332). Moreover, several studies revealed that surges of managerial discourse are mainly impelled by the communicative actions of specific professional subgroups (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Guillén, 1994). For instance Shenhav (1995) attributed the rise of discourse on 'management systems' in the early 20th century for an important part to a group of mechanical engineers. By promoting these ideas they sought to enhance their profession and legitimate their ideas on organizational design. This suggests also notable implications for the language use in print media traces.

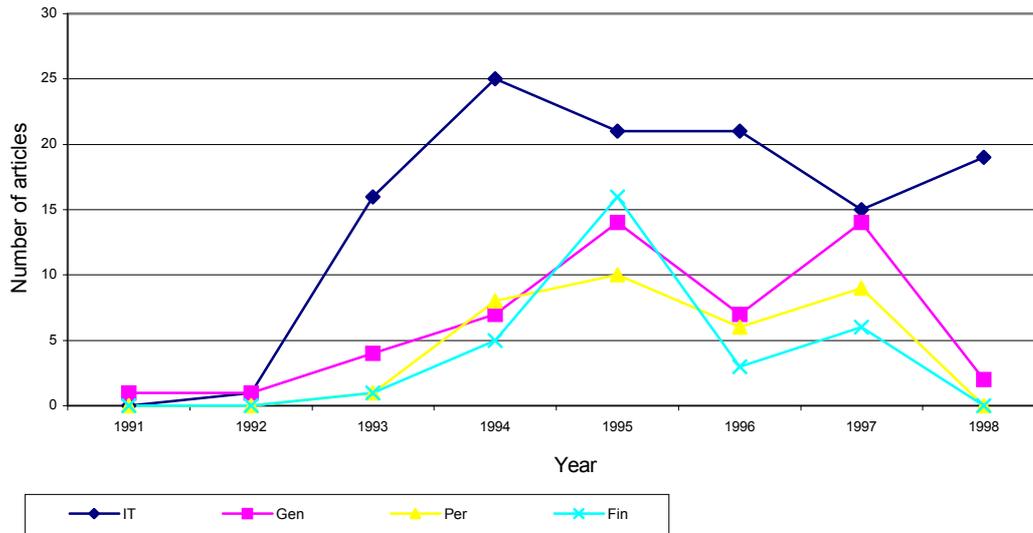


Figure 2.3: BPR print-media traces from the General management, Personnel management, Finance and Information technology community (source: Heusinkveld & Benders, 2001a)

Studies of print media traces reveal several important features in the number of traces related to different communities. Specifically Figure 2.3 demonstrates important dissimilarities in emergence, intensity and persistence between different professional communities of discourse. For instance there is a relatively large amount of traces related to IT oriented journals and magazines. This community was responsible for nearly half of the total volume of managerial media traces. First, it shows that the intensity accelerated rapidly and reached a maximum amplitude already in 1994. Secondly, unlike other communities, IT discourse is more persistent in later years. In another study of this kind, an analysis of the Balanced Scorecard discourse shows a similar pattern (Braam, Heusinkveld & Benders, 2002). Specifically the concept left far most of the media traces in accounting journals. While the variety of journals in this community that include traces of BSC discourse was rather small, the average number of articles per journal is remarkably high compared to other communities of discourse.

Both the studies of Heusinkveld and Benders (2001a) and Braam, Heusinkveld, Benders & Aubel (2002) found important evidence that the differences in intensity between communities are unavoidably paralleled by different interpretations. As Brunsson and Olsen (1997) argue, such concepts both reduce and increase the variety of outcomes. This will be illustrated by drawing on the study of Heusinkveld and Benders (2001a). It shows that while BPR was initially presented as radical approach on organizational change, mainly focusing on restructuring work processes, traces from the personnel management community predominantly discussed the 'soft' part of organizational design and change. Specifically, a notable amount of these media traces displayed a focus on personnel as critical success factor and stress inclusion of

social aspects. Management efforts on issues such as culture, commitment and communication were perceived as important during BPR effort. As one author commented: 'BPR is about people.' [Pp7: 20] or another even refers to the work of Hammer & Champy and state that: 'The book itself is for a large part about HRM.' [Pp11: 34]. BPR is considered as learning process for the organizational members involved. 'Re-engineering implicates a continuous learning process.' [Pp10: 35]. Participants in this community related BPR to different HRM instruments and hold a particular emphasis on education efforts.

Another community of discourse placed heavy emphasis on IT aspects in relation to BPR. Particularly in traces from IT periodicals, the concept became strongly associated with information systems implementation using various technologies like 'Workflow Management' systems [Pi25, Pi36] and 'E-commerce' [Pi15, Pi27]. It is even postulated that Workflow systems cannot be implemented in a useful way without a preceding BPR effort. 'A Workflow project without sufficient knowledge and experiences of business process innovation will generate unacceptable risks.' [Pi21] In the perception of management intellectuals participating in this community, BPR emphasizes the cross-functional relationships within organizations and allows dealing with technological and organizational changes in a coherent way. As a result, BPR is considered as important effort in any information systems project. This notion can be exemplified by the description of a case [Pi1]. In this, a BPR effort resulted in a reduction of work process stages and was used as input for an information systems implementation. The implementation trajectory included several organizational and technological changes in relation to Workflow Management. So one may state that managerial discourse cannot be regarded as a single entity but consists of a collection of different communities shaping their own version of a concept.

This notion has important implications for understanding waves in media manifestations. Articles in periodicals were frequently associated with a particular concept during a short period of time. As a result, aggregated counts of print media traces easily show bell-shaped intensity curves. Here various ideas are placed under a single heading because they refer to a similar label, which suggests a *prima facie* homogenization effect. However, agreement on a label does not mean that the content of manifestations refer to similar ideas and practices (Brunsson, 1997). As shown by the analysis of BPR traces, professional background plays an important role in shaping different interpretations. Although communities refer to a similar label, they mean completely different things.

This study showed that accumulated media traces associated with a concept may be anything but a coherent body of knowledge. Consequently, there cannot be a single pattern of downturn. Using one bell-shaped curve as proxy for the evolution of management ideas yield a danger of simply reducing a heterogeneous movement to a single pattern. This lead one to emphasize

the importance of relating traces of a concept to the context in which it condensed and crystallized. It also stresses the importance that tracing concepts should focus on the way communities socially construct a concept and be sensitive to differences in intensity and interpretations. I will further elaborate this in the final section of this chapter.

2.5.2 Providers of discourse

Guillén (1994) considers management intellectuals as heterogeneous group of commentators linked with a large variety of institutions. Management consultants are often regarded as main discourse providers (Furusten, 1995; Faust, 1999). A longitudinal analysis of a popular management book program and management journal showed that not only an increasing share of the manifestations is authored by consultants but consultants have also become more acknowledged as experts (Faust, 2002). It concludes that, often at the cost of management practitioners and academics, consultants increasingly gain considerable influence on the management knowledge market as been expressed in popular media manifestations. These actors have commercial interests in dominating managerial discourse. In the remaining part I will discuss and illustrate how distinct providers such as consultants, management practitioners and journalists participate in managerial discourse.

Analysis of print media traces shows that local consultants, employed at both international and local consulting firms, have extensively sought to shape local perception of BPR. They espoused their recipes and highly 'grafted' them on the initial rhetoric propagated by early American authors that advocated BPR. These consultant-authored media manifestations have an element of 'bricolage' in them. BPR was used by local consultants as a professional concept to legitimate the use of divergent methods and as an umbrella to flag their specific models and competencies. Consultants generally offered recipes that included a 'step approach' as well as different managerial tools and methods that could be applied within these steps (see also Visscher, 2001). The character of these tools often depends on the area of professional expertise of the consultant.

As an illustrative example of how consultants may act in the media I take several print media traces of Dutch consultant Batelaan who authored at least three articles about BPR [Pg1, Pg2, Pg3]. These share some common elements that are characteristic for many consulting authored media traces. The articles strongly present the concept as beneficial to many organizations. Batelaan argues that the application of BPR result in dramatic improvements in the 'internal power' of an organization. To achieve these appealing results, companies should mainly concentrate on redesigning their business processes and use IT as a leverage to improve and support these processes. Although the concept is initially presented as a far-reaching approach, Batelaan introduced different forms of the concept which vary in radicality. Also Batelaan

introduces a step approach that consists of three general phases: 'Focus', 'Re-design' and 'Initiation'. In addition, in his writings he delineates several success conditions and common failures involved in applying the concept. These are illustrated by descriptions of successful companies which allegedly applied the concept, indicating that the consultant already obtained important experience.

Print media traces also referred to organizations that allegedly owe an increased performance level to the application of a concept's principles. However theorists point to the fact that manifestations of managerial discourse are often highly stylized rather than entail detailed descriptions (Furusten, 1995; Kieser, 2002). This means that within managerial discourse a company's experiences are often discussed in a superficial manner by showing only small fragments of practices suggesting major results. This is not only to illustrate abstract principles and hereby increase understanding across a management audience. It also has a significant role in increasing the credibility of the normative ideas. Specifically, by drawing on success cases from prominent organizations, media manifestations become sources of legitimation (Furusten, 1995; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000). Røvik (2002) argues that the bases for social authorization are enhanced when the organizations referred to are private, large size and multi-national oriented. In addition, the universal applicability is suggested by increasing references to the number of companies that claim to have successfully applied a concept.

Media traces of BPR discourse include several examples of a concept's practical application within companies, but these are relatively scarce. Here management practitioners discuss their experiences obtained during a BPR trajectory. One example involves a description of a restructuring of the national Tax Department which was authored by the director of this organization [Pi5]. The application of BPR concentrated on changes in the organization's structure and control systems. This effort was fed by an increased orientation on tax payers as clients and resulted in an integration of different processes and the implementation of different information systems. In a final note the author draws attention to important conditions for redesign related to the organizational staff.

More often, consultants co-author articles with management practitioners. This is clearly used as legitimation for their specific approach. For instance Mesters, Nieuwenhuis and Koot discussed the application of BPR within a pension fund firm [Pg25]. The first two authors were employed at the case organization, the third was consultant and employed at a large international consultancy. In their article they discussed the organizational actions in relation to the consultants based step-approach which started with planning and ended with a realization phase. Unsurprisingly the authors conclude that the concept has been beneficial for the organization. Also journalists joined in discussing applications of the BPR concept in organizations. In addition there are journalists contributions in which opinions from different experts about

concept are placed next to each other. Surprisingly, I found little traces of a concept's failures in praxis, even when discourse proceeds towards a downturn.

The dominance of consultants in discourse on a concept likely affects the pattern of media traces and has some implications for considering sedimentation. First, a large involvement of consultants likely reinforces a sudden intensity media traces because these actors easily follow fashionable concepts (Benders, van den Berg & van Bijsterveld, 1998). In addition, their strategies of planned obsolescence (Huczynski, 1993) reduces the longevity of a concept's life cycle in the media. Consultants have commercial interest in introducing new ideas while rejecting current concepts. This results in a lack of endurance in the traces both in quantity and content. Consultants easily evaluate a concept in a positive way to quickly gain enthusiasm in the market for their services. But when this market tends to become saturated they quickly abandon the initially adulated ideas to create room for new prescriptions. Secondly, when media manifestations are used as outlet for consultancy services, a concept's downturn in the media likely affect internal consulting practices. I will elaborate this issue in the next chapter.

2.6 SHAPING A DOWNSWING

Transience is easily suggested by a decreasing number of a concept's traces over the years. Particularly, this is amplified by the observation that discourse providers mainly consist of consultants who, arguably, tend to follow a logic of planned obsolescence (Huczynski, 1993). However, by drawing on the same traces I will seek to draw a more nuanced picture than management fashion theorists would suggest. Specifically, in this section I will enter the content of media traces and consider how a concept has been socially constructed over time.

The next section will show how within a reception pattern transience and longevity co-exist. First, management fashion accounts stress an amplification of negative evaluations that inevitably makes a concept to become controversial. Instead of an increasing criticism, I only found important indications of a collective ignorance. In a second part I will consider how a concept is perceived as new and how it is socially constructed during a period of decline in media attention. The traces show more continuity during the emergence and downturn phase of a concept than management fashion accounts suggest.

2.6.1 Developing a critical stance

As shown by Heusinkveld & Benders (2001a) Dutch media traces contained a number of critical opinions that contested the ideas carried by the initial BPR advocates. The number of these traces is relatively small and most them stem

from academic discourse, but also several can be found in managerial media. Examination of these traces reveals that the concept has been criticized for lacking a methodological fundament on organization design and holding limited scientific foundation. Several times BPR was compared to the Dutch approach of Sociotechnical Systems Design. Most of these stances argue that the concept does not have any contribution to existing knowledge on organizational design and change management. The initial conceptualizations of BPR are downplayed because of their inadequate attention to particular elements of change management such as the development of learning capabilities, participation, culture and communication. Some accounts contest the concept because it incorporates a simplified view of work processes and creates large expectations that often result in risky approaches. As a result, applying BPR principles creates unfavorable conditions for human development in organizations.

It is even asserted that BPR is morally wrong because it can be considered as a 'symptom of cynicism and egoism' [A5: 65]. This account argues that BPR neglects the complexities of work and sacrifices everything that is valuable in an organization for the sake of competition. As a result BPR is described as a ghost that should be exorcised from organizations. The concept is also regarded as a new form of Taylorism because it holds an overemphasis on rationalization of work by considering organizational design as merely a technical problem. Huizing and de Vries stress that due to criticisms on various aspects, BPR is likely 'over and out' [Pf6: 430]. They argue that particularly a lack of attention to change management and its association with downsizing made that the concept gradually obtained a negative connotation. As a result they expect that the concept will move to the background while the underlying principles can still be considered useful.

So, unlike expectations of management fashion theorists, the number of critical notes seems however relatively small and they are dispersed throughout the whole time-span of discourse. Hence, critical sounds were not heavily amplified during BPR discourse. Despite several critical notes, the study found little reports of failures and its social construction did not conclude in a general rejection of concept. Though the amount of critical articles or reports of failures does not amplify throughout time, the intensity of discourse strongly decreases after several years. Arguably discourse just faded away as communities and intellectuals direct their attention to other contemporary issues. In addition, the underlying ideas that were promoted under a concept like BPR may be relabeled what means that they cannot be found any longer in association with the initial banner. The next section indicates that some of these communities appear to have stronger bases that increase the likelihood of entrenchment.

2.6.2 Flow of management knowledge

Emergence

The previous section suggested that academics tend to lag in discourse on popular concepts. However, these topics often have been discussed in academic discourse before. As a result, organization concepts such as BPR are easily regarded as just an appealing and simplified reformulation of existing organizational knowledge. So in the light of present research traditions new concepts tend to reiterate old debates and show a lack of systematic accumulation (Lammers, 1988).

Consistent with the conclusions drawn in 2.5.1 I will illustrate this point by discussing the social construction of BPR within the IT community. Content analysis of these traces showed that contributions mainly discussed viewing organizational and technological changes in coherence. In this BPR was perceived as an advanced phase in the convergence of knowledge about IT and organizations. Management intellectuals in the IT community considered the initiation of a BPR effort in an organization a valuable opportunity to conceptualize IT in relation to issues of strategy, structure and people. For instance Jägers, Jansen and Still consider the integration of IT in organizations as the major issue in BPR [Pi20]. As a result they state that: ‘The optimal use of information technology means that information technology becomes an essential part of the strategy, the structure and the processes.’ [Pi20: 50].

However commentators may easily stress that management intellectuals and practitioners involved in discourse about a concept do not build on previous accounts. Ideas on these matters are known for a long time in academic traditions on information management. For instance Edström expressed the notion that information systems generally do not generate the prospected results already in the early 1970s. For instance he stated that: ‘the majority of systems have had a low payoff ...’ (1973: 118). Edström attributed this to the fact that organizations cannot easily consider the possibilities of technology to organize their work in a different way. To reduce dysfunctional effects of these information systems he suggested to simultaneously restructure organizations and hereby take different aspects into account. As he argued: ‘We must consider the effects on organizational structure, tasks and people of new information systems.’ and goes on by stating that: ‘The information system should support the general organizational philosophy’ (1973: 131). By presenting these ‘old’ insights as new, BPR propagators were able to increase the attractiveness of the concept in the IT community. At the same time this may generate comments like: ‘BPR with IT repeats to a major extent the concepts and approaches of systems planning without much explicit referencing.’ [Pi38: 771] This reinforces the impression that old knowledge is reincarnated and presented as new thereby starting from scratch.

Media traces indicate more continuity in the emergence than suggested in fashion literature. Brunsson (1997) assumes that management knowledge is

likely not a scarce resource. Organization concepts are to a large extent constructed locally rather than a result of diffusion efforts. This means that processes of cropping-up (Brunsson, 1997) play an important role in a concept's adoption. Specifically, adhering to a new concept in discourse does not contradict with drawing on existing knowledge. The inherent interpretative viability allows that 'old' ideas and practices can easily be associated with a 'new' concept. Management intellectuals may easily adopt the legitimate rhetoric in managerial discourse to which they are connected. This gives a common point of reference while it does not necessarily produce homogeneity in the ideas associated with it. As shown in a previous part, while different management intellectuals refer to the same labels, they unavoidably talk about different things. So although managerial discourse evolves continuously by the emergence of new concepts, the intellectuals producing these texts do not necessarily start from scratch.

For instance, the analysis of media traces shows that the BPR concept is considered as an umbrella that may include a large variety of 'old' insights. Particularly management intellectuals in the IT community acknowledge they combine different ideas-in-use and refer to it. Consider the following: 'BPR is a relative new concept that to our opinion mainly consist of the integration of previously attained insights, methods, techniques et cetera.' [Pi3: 393] or: 'Insights from Information management, modern Information Technology, Administrative Organization, STSD, and Logistics have to be integrated in one approach for redesign.' [Pi8: 11] Often intellectuals emphasize that that existing insights are integrated under the BPR label while at the same time the concept offers a new perspective. Not only on a conceptual level, but also management intellectuals recognize that in praxis a variety of existing ideas has been used.

One example of how the interpretative space of a concept has been exploited to include 'old' insights in an organization is shown by description of case study in a Dutch mechanical engineering company. Central in this project was the application of BPR, though it was clear that ideas from different approaches were combined. Specifically, existing insights from Information Management were used as a basis for conceptualizing BPR. The ideas were translated into a step approach that was followed during the organizational change project. The authors described the use of various methods and techniques in support of the distinct phases. 'For the communication with organization experts and upper management we chose the Value Chain model and during the analysis of within a selected bottleneck for the PBI model. The decision making processes in the group sessions were supported by the Delphi method.' [Pi32: 482]. So to a certain extent print media traces show that in the reception of 'new' concepts, management intellectuals draw on 'old' insights.

Downturn

Also in an alleged downturn of discourse, this study found important indications suggesting more continuity than management fashion literature suggests. The study indicated that particularly the IT community shows several important bases for entrenchment (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). A previous section already indicated that the IT community produced a relatively large quantity of media traces during the 1990s. Moreover, local surveys pointed out that the concept is regarded as one of the most popular and important IT related issues in The Netherlands [Pi39]. De Zwart [Pi12: 12] describes a study that revealed that over 80% of the companies using Workflow Management implemented this technology in combination with BPR and DIP. Also the concept is often referred to as a popular topic in the field. For instance IT intellectuals expressed that the concept 'create a furor' [Pi18: 1] and hereby called the concept a 'trend' [Pi20: 49], 'hot item' [Pi29: 33], 'very popular management concept' [Pi24: 37] or a 'buzz that captured organization experts and manager from information technology' [Pi6: 39]. This at least suggests that the concept has become widely known across the IT community.

So by creating a veil of novelty, an increasing number of people in the field becomes attracted to old ideas. Apparently old forgotten management ideas can draw from an inexhaustible source of renewed excitement by a different group of people. As shown by the analysis of BPR traces, the concept was perceived to have set many managerial agendas across the IT community. Introducing IT in organizations has never been an unproblematic issue (Van Bijsterveld, 1997). Considering BPR's traces, the concept managed to impel a temporarily extensive discourse on several of these insoluble issues. The solutions were put in terms of focusing on cross-functional relationships as well as addressing technological changes and organizational changes in a balanced way. The allegedly new concept was regarded to offer a novel solution to address these problems that, according to its propagators, would yield dramatic performance improvements. As a result the concept played a role in the further dissemination and appreciation of management knowledge within a particular community of discourse. Arguably, BPR brought some old and forgotten ideas to a larger public, but then many years later.

At the same time the ideas are increasingly regarded as common practice. The traces from the IT community show a wide plea to include the new concept in current system development methods. For instance the IT community further debated the application of organizational knowledge in relation to their perceived problems. Introducing IT in organizations is strongly associated with process redesign [see for instance Pi25, Pi47]. De Zwart expresses for example that: 'Workflow is rarely introduced without a preceding BPR effort' [Pi12: 12]. Here BPR became synonym for mapping organizational processes on a detailed level and linking these processes with IT applications. Applying BPR is considered an important prerequisite to fully exploit the specific possibilities of new information technology in organizations. Vinig even

makes a strong plea to redesign the system development process. He goes on by stating that companies should use BPR as a starting point for IT implementation trajectory. 'BPR is the key to the flexibility of the system development process' [Pi44: 18]. In addition elements of the concept are also regarded common practices in descriptions of IT implementation projects.

The previous part suggests that a concept may induce an increased dissemination of specific management knowledge across a community. Perhaps otherwise hidden knowledge becomes now at least widely discussed and acknowledged as relevant. So the print-media traces' content indicated more continuity than a single bell-shaped curve would suggest. A variety of 'old' ideas reincarnated under an attractive label and are now considered as 'normal' within a field of IT management intellectuals and practitioners. Some authors state that the popularity of BPR has resulted in opportunistic usage. It is expected that BPR loses its meaning and that the term moves to the background. For instance Huizing expressed that 'at that time the label BPR has probably been banished to the history books' [Pi18: 13]. So although the concept's principle are now widely seen as a 'normal' part of system development methods, it is questionable whether these ideas continue receiving attention after the downturn of the concept in the print-media.

I argue that a key factor in this is the presence of providers of discourse who use print media to continue raising attention to specific ideas. As an illustrative example of this I take a special issue of a prominent Dutch IT journal. This issue was published in May 2003, several years after BPR's alleged downturn in the Netherlands. In the editorial comments the concept of Business Process Management (BPM) is introduced as a valuable approach to enhance organizational performance. At the same time it is argued that this concept draws on prior approaches: 'It is not particularly new since Nolan and Norton were talking about business process redesign years ago, just like Hammer and Champy as well as other illustrious duos. Now it is time for a reevaluation of the subject' [Pib1: 1]. Other commentators in this issue also consider BPM as the most recent development in thinking about business processes and often refer to early publications about BPR.

Although the authors recognize the importance of the subject to organizations, most of them state that its implementation is not without difficulties and propose the use of specific 'step approaches'. This shows that the ideas associated with an allegedly transitory concept likely sedimented in a community. At the same time several providers of discourse continued emphasizing and promoting the ideas in the print media, but now under another label. So even if concepts are considered as 'normal' and routinized practices they inevitably are in constant need of attention to prevent the 'old' ideas from erosion. However, the process of relabeling not only hampers the accumulation of management knowledge but also significantly complicates further tracing the continuity and transience of ideas in the print-media.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Popular concepts unavoidably leave a large variety of traces in print media. These media can be considered as a central place in the knowledge market where management knowledge is propagated, legitimated and contested. Prior analyses of print-media traces tend to easily confirm the continuous transience in management knowledge. Management fashion theorists use bell-shaped intensity curve as an icon to describe transient patterns in the attention for certain concepts. These studies suggest little opportunities for entrenchment of the ideas carried by concept. However, in this chapter I argued that using media traces in a meaningful way to study concepticide is a less straightforward exercise than it seems in which many pitfalls have to be avoided. This study showed that a concept's print media manifestations can still generate important insights into the process of sedimentation.

First, closer examination of the often-used approach generated some important notes about methodical problems in making inferences about the sedimentation process. Bibliographic databases are habitually and more or less critically used to examine patterns in managerial discourse about organization concepts. As the number of available and easy accessible databases explodes with the increase of expanding IT related technical possibilities, such research may be expected to flourish in the future. Unfortunately, however, to my knowledge there is hardly any methodological literature that discusses the possibilities and limitations of doing such research on organization concepts (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2000).

One critical note is that searches are not simply routine procedures that involve merely entering a keyword into a search system and counting the results. Rather, it requires a carefully trailed route of trial and error in which preferably multiple and diversified sources should be exploited. Currently many databases include a relatively large amount of bibliographic data that may be exploited seemingly easily by the use of information systems. However, when using databases for research on organization concepts one has to account for the composition of the database and the search procedure that can retrieve the traces involved. Given their ready availability, these databases will stay an important source to examine concepts' patterns in the media. This chapter emphasized that print media traces are often attractive to students of management fashion but exploitation of these traces continues to be a probabilistic process (Hutchins, 1985: 109).

Another note is that studies of management fashion still are restricted to counts of media manifestations. While this may provide a useful indication of the discourse intensity over time, it says little about how a concept has been received across different contexts. In other words, one cannot solely draw on print media counts to make inferences about concepticide in the knowledge market as a whole. As a result, management fashion accounts tend to provide a one-sided view of a general phenomenon in which they inevitably find few

bases for entrenchment. Solely viewing the reception of concepts in terms of short-lived patterns in the quantity of traces presumes a simplified and aggregated notion of knowledge market developments. Still the bell-shaped curves are used as icon for the transitory nature of many organization concepts while the content and context of the traces are largely neglected.

Secondly, findings of the analysis made in this chapter indicate that a general transitory surge is only an accumulation of some parallel developments within separate domains. These are only brought in relation to each other because they share the same heading. In other words, fashion theorists easily apply an archetypical transitory pattern to a heterogeneous movement. In this chapter I distinct between *communities of discourse* and illustrate how a concept is likely translated in a variety of different versions. This observation has notable implications for considering the process of sedimentation because it means that one can hardly speak of a collective pattern of downturn. Instead, empirical findings indicate the importance of relating traces to its specific context. In addition, I stressed the importance of considering underlying *providers of discourse* who seek to bring their ideas and experiences in the media. Empirical studies show that different kinds of management intellectuals have shaped print media traces in their own specific way. In this, consultants tend to dominate the population of intellectuals that participated in discourse.

The study found little indications of an increasing or widely supported criticism on a concept in print media traces. A concept's decrease in popularity is not necessarily paralleled by negative judgment in the media. More likely, concepts are no longer newsworthy after a while and the managerial media as well as management intellectuals (most of them consultants) are particularly receptive to 'new' issues and success stories rather than feeble accounts of failed attempts. So unlike what management fashion accounts hypothesized, I found that the intensity with which a concept is contested does not notably amplify over the years. The lack of a collective rejection during a downturn in media traces allows that aspects of transience and continuity more easily co-exist in a new configuration.

While management fashion accounts emphasize a 'continuous transience' of management knowledge, closer examinations of print media traces revealed a more multifaceted picture. By concentrating on traces from a specific community of discourse I illustrated how in its emergence a concept may be presented as new while at the same time draws on 'old' insights. In a similar way, the analysis of the traces' content reveals some important bases for a concept's entrenchment. Specifically it suggests more continuity as people know the ideas on a wider scale, perceive these as 'normal' and consider them as common practices. In addition, enthusiastic providers of discourse are an essential condition in continuously drawing attention to 'old' ideas, likely under a new banner. This implies that it is at least problematic to maintain that concepts a priori follow a transient pattern in the print media.

Thirdly, the findings of this chapter also create a need for further exploration. As Schoemaker & Reese stated, the study of media content is in principle not enough to understand the production as well as the nature and extent of its effects (1996: 24). Unlike previous accounts studying concepts in the print media, this study took a longitudinal approach and entered the content of discourse to show how a concept has been socially constructed in time. In addition, the analysis particularly concentrated on the alleged downturn phase rather than examined some of a concept's early writings. This approach furthered the study of print media traces beyond just measuring with which a key word appears in a bibliographic database.

However, analysis of print media traces cannot easily account for the loose coupling between discourse and praxis during a concept's downturn. Also it is at least one step away from organizational praxis which complicates making inferences about other important aspects of the management knowledge market. As stated in the above, I consider this analysis only as a starting point to further explore sedimentation in the knowledge market. For instance, print media descriptions of a concept's application in organizations mainly concentrated on its initiation and implementation, but hardly addressed what happens during a post-implementation phase. Similarly, the decrease in print media attention also suggests a downturn of a concept within management consultancies as the most important discourse providers. Whether and how this occurs will be elaborated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

PERISHABLE COMMODITIES

The preceding chapter outlined the way in which consultants play a prominent role in the propagation of organization concepts in the media as important providers of managerial discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to gain insight into the way the process of sedimentation takes shape *within* consultancies during concepticide. Management fashion accounts portray consultants as important suppliers of transient management knowledge. As the previous chapter indicated, consultants easily seek for new issues when the current concepts are no longer newsworthy. This picture suggests hardly any opportunity for accumulation of management knowledge in consultancies.

However, in this chapter I will argue that allegedly short-lived organization concepts leave a wide array of different traces behind within consultancies. In developing the argument I draw on Heusinkveld & Benders (2001b; 2002a; 2002b) and Heusinkveld & Benders (2003a). First of all I will discuss relevant literature on management consulting and particular in relation to organization concepts. The next section derives from management fashion literature some predictions about the way such concepts may evolve in consultancies. Then I will empirically explore central elements of the process of sedimentation within management consultant firms.

3.1 CONSULTANTS AND ORGANIZATION CONCEPTS

3.1.1 Suppliers of fashionable management knowledge

Historical accounts demonstrate that fashionable concepts have played an important role in the way consultancies have legitimized their profession, intervened in organizations and created their business in the early twentieth century (Guillén, 1994; Kipping, 1999). For instance various Scientific Management techniques and the Bedaux System of work measurement are regarded as important determinants in the expansion of pioneering management consultancies in the 1920s and 1930s. During the 1960s, a firm like McKinsey extensively encouraged the dissemination of the Multidivisional model across

European countries (McKenna, 1997). A short time later, consultants from the Boston Consulting Group became widely renowned for their Portfolio Matrix. A more recent example shows that Gemini extensively propagated their concept of Business Transformation during the 1990s and was able to apply it to various organizations, more or less successfully (O'Shea & Madigan, 1997). In the remaining part of this section I shall further elaborate the role of popular organization concepts in consulting practice.

The persistence of managerial problems and forgetfulness in organizations provides important opportunities for consultants to continuously sell their services (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). However, the specific characteristics of the consulting industry and its specific 'products' constitute a major barrier in hiring consultants (Clark, 1995; Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003). In particular, the difficulty of measuring the quality of consulting services *ex ante* creates an important base of uncertainty for clients. To overcome this uncertainty, generating legitimacy for their services constitutes an indissoluble part of the consultancies' work (Bloomfield & Danieli, 1995; Wright, 2002). It is essential for consultants to draw on socio-political skills to constantly create a favorable impression of their competencies. As a result, theorists refer to consultancies as 'systems of persuasion' emphasizing the importance for these firms of using rhetorical strategies to support 'claims of knowledge' (Pettigrew, 1975, Alvesson, 1993; Clark, 1995). This means that to sell their services, consultants have to constantly convince clients of the value of their expertise in dealing with managerial problems. Various accounts indicate that popular concepts play an important role in this consulting praxis. Particularly, introducing organization concepts enables consultants to (1) shape client interaction, (2) generate business and (3) build a reputation.

First of all, organization concepts are important means for shaping *client relationship*. As Brunsson & Olsen (1997) argued, the popularity of certain concepts both reduces and increases the variety of legitimate options. This means that on the one hand, management fashion provides a certain order by collectively restricting the variety of acknowledged solutions on the market (Kieser, 1997). The wide popularity of a concept may restrict the number of legitimate managerial issues recognized in client organizations. When the same concept turns out to be applicable to a large population of client organizations, it allows consultants to concentrate their efforts on developing their services. Referring to legitimate rhetoric on the market reduces uncertainty for consultants when they enter into a relatively open-ended relationship with clients (Sturdy, 1997; Fincham, 1999) and helps to obtain a position in a project. On the other hand, the interpretative space of a concept (Benders & van Veen, 2001) creates an opportunity for anticipating to the specific client situation. While establishing a common framework, these concepts allow for the creative and pragmatic application of different approaches and techniques by individual consultancies (Benders et al., 1998; Visscher, 2001). They provide space that enables consultants to deal with unexpected circumstances. Consultants

generally produce their services in a politically charged environment (Bloomfield & Daniely, 1995). In this context, a concept provides a common language for different organizational members and facilitates the collaborative action of these participants (Werr, 1997).

Secondly, organization concepts are also regarded as important drivers of consulting *business*. For instance CSC index, as one of the initial propagators of BPR, was able to expand their revenues from thirty million in 1988 to one hundred and fifty million dollars in 1993 (Jackson, 1996: 576). As another example, Gemini consulting generated considerable revenue from the sales of their Business Transformation concept (O'Shea & Madigan, 1997). Providing allegedly useful knowledge *per se* is not enough for a consultancy to generate business on a large scale. Management knowledge attains more commercial value when it is *commodified* and thereby allowing it to be sold on the market for management solutions (Fincham, 1995; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001). Here new management ideas are 'productivized' (Huczynski, 1993: 217) into a saleable form that is expected to meet clients' needs. So organization concepts generally act as an important vehicle for selling a consultant's expertise. Also these concepts play a role in maintaining demand for consulting services and thereby continuing to stimulate sales through 'repeat business'. The commodification of management knowledge inevitably induces the need for new commodities (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001). The ongoing supply of new concepts may permanently feed clients' fear of losing control and becoming unfashionable (Kieser, 2002). They urge clients to remain in tune with the latest management ideas hereby becoming permanently receptive to consultancy services. A constant renewal in the collection of popular concepts increasingly makes consultants indispensable to clients.

A final element of organization concepts in relation to consultancies is that of *reputation*. Building a reputation on the market for management knowledge is regarded an important source of competitive advantage for consultancies (Kaas & Schade, 1995; Glückner & Armbrüster, 2003). Being associated with a fashionable concept as a consultant may not directly lead to client demand but it contributes to their reputation as a leading provider of innovative management knowledge. To gain such a reputation, consultants seek to be active in a variety of relevant arenas for the validation of management knowledge (Faust, 2002). These arenas offer an important opportunity for the consultants to present themselves as skillful and innovative 'thought leaders' (Wright & Kitay, 2001). Grafting their recipes on new concepts supports the impression that a consultancy operates at the forefront of developments in management knowledge. To maintain this innovative reputation, consultancies have to participate in the continuous supply of management problems and solutions and keep their portfolio in line with market demand. The next section discusses how this relates to what is called *new concept development*.

3.1.2 New concept development

While consultants are easily regarded as opportunistic merchants who easily jump on whatever bandwagon they may come across, providing a useful consulting service requires more than referring to a best-selling book. As Huczynski (1993: 238) noted, a publication is only a starting point from which one can create an audience for a concept and establish the author's name as an expert in the field. In practice, consultants have to put forward structured plans for clients while they often know little about the specific problem situation within an organization (Visscher, 2001). The translation of a general concept into articulated knowledge elements allows consultants to demonstrate their expertise towards clients (Fincham & Evans, 1999; Morris, 2001). This means that, like all producers involved in renewing their products or services, consultancies require an internal process of *new concept development* (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2003a). This process results in the development of a specific repertoire that supports the commercialization and implementation of a concept. However, moving through these activities inevitably brings specific managerial problems for consultancies.

A first point is that concept development efforts likely result in a specific consulting repertoire. In this light Werr (1999) refers to *methods* as explicit and relatively stable consulting procedures in relation to a specific goal or organizational change process. These consulting methods may take shape as a set of phase models, tools and techniques that are articulated by a particular terminology (1999: 18). Both Visscher (2001) and Werr (1999) stress the role of these methods in reducing uncertainty for both client and consultant. For a client organization a consulting method may increase understanding and justification of the expected advice trajectory. For consultants, a method is regarded as a means to enhance communication with a client organization and offers cognitive support in the advice process. While a structured repertoire may provide guidance during assignments, consultants do not necessarily follow it strictly. Visscher (2001) shows that the way such a repertoire is applied in praxis is related to the specific design strategy deployed by a consultant. In addition, this repertoire not only plays a role in client interaction and problem solving but also in the consultancy's internal knowledge system (Werr, 1999). Here codification is often referred to as the translation of expertise into an explicit form (Morris, 2001; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001). A codified repertoire serves as common denominator for both the storage and exchange of experiences within a consultancy.

Secondly, concept development efforts not only result in a consulting method, but also entail various managerial problems. This may even encourage consultants to play specific socio-political games to establish a concept within a consultancy (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2002b; Heusinkveld & Benders 2003a). Innovation literature suggests that developing new products requires moving through different activities that start with idea generation and con

clude with market release. At the same time, however, innovation theorists emphasize the persistence of managerial tensions inherent in deploying these activities (Dougherty, 1996). Heusinkveld & Benders (2003a) show that consultancies are unavoidably caught between contrasting forms of concept development that cannot easily be reconciled. They are confronted with a tension between the corporate need for a disciplined development approach and individual consultants' needs for professional autonomy. Although these problems cannot be resolved, consultancies deploy various mechanisms that tend to minimize the bases for frictions. In addition, Heusinkveld & Benders (2002b) demonstrate that concept development is located within a politicized context that encourages consultants to play various internal political games. These games not only concentrate on gaining admission and ownership of a concept, but are also to a great extent aimed at a concept's dissemination throughout a consultancy. This means that concept development is not solely about the construction of a repertoire, but is particularly concerned with generating and channeling the interests and interpretations of consultants.

3.2 CONCEPTICIDE WITHIN CONSULTANCIES

As detailed above, management consultancy literature stresses the usefulness of organization concepts to consultancies. Particularly a new concept supports consultants in their client interaction, in generating business and in building up an innovative reputation. In addition, consultancies have a major role in the propagation of these concepts in the market for management knowledge. Here I seek to derive some predictions from the management fashion literature concerning the shape of concepticide in management consultancies. As management fashion accounts tend to suggest, the usefulness of organization concepts to consultancies in the market is only short-lived (Gill & Whittle, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996). After a period of excitement and high enthusiasm, a concept becomes heavily criticized, loses its aura of a rational and progressive idea after which it is replaced by a new appealing vision (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999). This means that strictly maintaining a specific concept that is suffering from a collapse in interest will likely be detrimental to consulting business.

Historical accounts show that too much dependence on one of these concepts proves not to be a viable route for consultants (McKenna, 1997; Kipping, 1999). For instance McKinsey's reputation related to the Multidivisional Model in the 1960s led to serious problems for this consulting firm in the long run when many large business organizations no longer considered this model useful. The attention for the concept witnessed a decline and demand for 'Multidivisionalization' dropped significantly by the early 1970s. As a consequence, at the McKinsey offices: 'somewhere about 1970 the phone stopped ringing' (McKenna, 1997: 230). A lack of market demand induces management consultancies to collectively abandon a concept in favor

of a new idea. The planned obsolescence of concepts makes that consultants constantly urge knowledge consumers to replace the old (Huczynski, 1993). Fashion theorists emphasize that it is in the interest of consultancies to persistently downplay contemporary concepts. They generally attempt to manipulate consumers by the constant commodification of management knowledge (Kieser, 2002). Provoking a collective rejection induces the need for new commodities resulting in cyclical patterns in the attention for management knowledge (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001).

Therefore, the prominent role of consultancies in recurring patterns of short-lived attention to certain concepts easily leads people to view these firms as the highly pragmatic suppliers of fashionable concepts. They constantly abandon organization concepts in favor of new ideas in the hope of rapidly making business out of the managerial issues of the day. This idea suggests that consultants are not only providers of management knowledge, but can in particular be regarded as suppliers of *perishable commodities*. Providing forgetfulness allows consultants to continuously re-invent old knowledge and present it as new. Staute even suggested that: 'Consultants are continuously engaged in rejecting what their colleagues recommended only a few years ago' (1996: 144). Obviously, such practices hardly provide any opportunities that increase the likelihood of entrenchment of management knowledge within consultancies (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999).

The central question in this chapter is how does the process of sedimentation take shape during concepticide within consultancies? Considering management fashion accounts the predominant pattern is one of continuous transience in management knowledge. In the remaining part of this chapter I will trace empirically how organization concepts develop within consultancies. Unlike current accounts of management fashion, I argue that it is at least questionable whether a concept's route of reception in consultancies is as transitory as many bell-shaped fashion curves would suggest. Instead, the next sections seek to demonstrate that a concept leaves different traces which trajectory is still open-ended. The traces that such concepts entail generally become part of an ongoing process of recognition, application and erosion of management knowledge.

3.3 INSIDE CONSULTANCIES

To gain an understanding of the way organization concepts are developed in consultancies I conducted a qualitative survey (Wester, 1995) among 42 consultants from 24 different consultancies (see appendix II for further details). While in contrast to case studies, this approach offers limited opportunities for examining a single situation in its real-life context (Yin, 1994), it nevertheless allows theory generation with respect to patterns of new concept development by comparing a relative large variety of instances in which this occurs (Wester, 1995). We used a theoretical sample (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) that

consisted of consultants in a large variety of different settings who were closely involved in the development process of a concept within their consultancy.

The firms involved varied significantly in origin, size and focus of activities. This allowed me to consider the way that the process of sedimentation took shape in a variety of different settings. While I mainly interviewed Dutch consultants, the headquarters of their firms were located in the Netherlands (14), United States (8), United Kingdom (1) and France (1). The size of the consultancies or their subsidiaries ranged from three to in excess of several thousand consultants. The main practice areas of these informants covered a wide spectrum including Change Management, IT Implementation, IT Strategy, Strategic Management, Personnel Management, Healthcare Management, Financial Management, Performance Management and Industrial Management.

I conducted semi-structured interviews in which respondents were asked to describe the entire process of concept development in relation to a particular case in their consultancy such as Business Process Redesign (BPR), the Balanced Score Card (BSC), E-commerce or Customer Relationship Management (CRM). The interviews covered several key themes: (i) the way their consulting firm encountered a concept or elements associated with it, (ii) how the uptake process took shape, (iii) how the concept developed over time within the firm, and (iv) the perceived residues of a concept in a consultancy. Depending on the experiences of the consultants we were able to ask more detailed questions as interviews progressed. The interviews were held between July 14, 2000 and March 22, 2002 in the consultancies and on average lasted about 90 minutes. Two consultants from the sample (B#2 and Q#1) were invited to a follow-up interview. Except for consultant C#2, with whom we took elaborate notes during the interview, all interviews were recorded on minidisk, transcribed and sent back for comments.

I used an inductive data analysis approach and concentrated on generating a grounded framework by continuous comparison of interview data and relevant theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). After initial coding and ongoing verification, several key phases in relation to the routes of organization concept development in consultancies emerged from the data (see Heusinkveld & Benders 2002). Constant comparison of data and relevant theory with respect to the final phase revealed typical forms of traces and their specific properties within different consultancies. To obtain a richer understanding of the traces' trajectories, I categorized these traces in relation to the discourse and praxis. On the basis of this categorization I systematically compared data to identify factors that are hypothesized to shape abandonment and entrenchment in consultancies.

The next part will show that the loose coupling between discourse and praxis allows for the presence of a variety of different traces during a downturn phase (Røvik, 1996). This relation between discourse and praxis involves

the core of my argument as elaborated in the remainder of this chapter. Here I argue that the specific coupling of discourse and praxis enables these traces to take specific routes within consultancies independent of the concept they were initially associated with. For instance one consultant noted: ‘Over the years, the techniques might change a bit, methods will certainly change and the organization concepts are just a reflection of the management themes that are prevalent at a certain point in time.’ [Q#1] First I will elaborate central elements of a concept’s traces in relation to discourse. Then I will consider the specific traces initially associated with a concept in consulting praxis. This is followed by a section that discusses the central factors that are hypothesized to define the shape of the traces’ journeys.

3.4 CONSULTING DISCOURSE

In this section I will identify various relevant traces related to a concept’s discourse in a consultancy and consider how these are shaped. I refer to discourse as the labels and language system used in association with an organization concept within a consultancy. A main observation from the theoretical discussion is that consultants tend to keep their language in tune with the contemporary rhetoric on the market. Consultants hereby generally seek to take advantage of the terms that are in vogue while at the same time attempting to influence this process by stimulating discourse on specific management solutions. This means that the knowledge market terminology likely influences a consultancy’s language-in-use. However, consultants also seek to manipulate managerial discourse by their presence in various arenas for the validation of management knowledge (Faust, 2002). This also implies that the downturn of a concept has an important influence on a consultancy’s internal language system. Before I discuss this internal language system I use the following section as an essential departure for understanding the development of discourse associated with a concept. First, I will concentrate on the relationship of a consultancy with the general managerial discourse, then I delineate perceived changes in this discourse in relation to concepticide and finally I will elaborate the influences of these changes on the language system within consultancies.

3.4.1 Sensing and shaping

Consultants tend to develop a strong reciprocal relationship with the general managerial discourse (Faust, 2002). This managerial discourse is regarded as an important means for sensing relevant topics in the field, but also as a means to become associated with these topics and influence their popularity. One consultant nicely captured this tension: ‘As an organization you quickly absorb these new emerging things so you can subsequently come out with it.’ [K#1] So presenting appealing service offerings requires that consultancies both sense and shape market needs.

This means that a consultancy has to scan for central issues in the managerial discourse at a particular point in time. As a result, ‘... every consultant is always on the lookout to watch the latest term. [...] We got a job to be aware of what is going around, aware of what our clients are talking about’ [I#2] They sense what is useful for their business and reputation, and try to align themselves with these developments. This implies that: ‘So on the one hand we read management literature and on the other hand we listen very carefully to our clients. We hereby seek to be attuned to the market and new concepts play a role in this.’ [D#1] While in some consultancies this is incorporated into the task of every individual consultant, larger consultancies have specialized departments involved in scanning the management knowledge market: ‘We have a Knowledge Research Center who produce things like a press overview which includes a selection of the latest literature.’ [P#1] So it is regarded essential for every consultant to be aware of the latest concepts and to develop an understanding of the terms in vogue.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that consultants also play an important role in shaping managerial discourse. Consultants seek to take advantage of the attention for a concept and hereby tend to pragmatically ‘hitch’ a ride on a popular concept (Benders et al., 1998). ‘Those questions pertaining to the concept of BPR could quickly be adapted towards the underlying organizational problems in order to sell your specific services.’ [J#1] Consultancy is not simply a matter of sensing the market and being aware of the latest terms, but also of using discourse to the consultancy’s advantage. To come out with appealing services to clients and to convey the impression that you are state of the art involves using the right terms: ‘Every client that called only wanted to hear e-something and of course as a consultancy you will sell e-everything.’ [I#2] When a concept is perceived as becoming popular, consultants seek to contribute to managerial discourse to mark their presence on the market. They present their services in terms of the language in vogue to appeal to clients. By using various marketing tools they seek to relate their specific expertise to legitimate terms in the managerial discourse: ‘People are writing articles every day trying to get terms to catch on because if you can get the latest buzzword you could make a fortune.’ [I#2]

3.4.2 Perceived changes in ‘language of change’

As we have seen in the previous section, consultancies attempt to establish a close relationship between the prevalent language in the market and the language they use. The *linguistic package* (Røvik, 1996: 164) of a fashionable organization concept serves as an important guideline for shaping this relationship. This means that each of these concepts entails its own specific system of idiom to denote certain organizational ideas and practices hereby constructing management reality in a specific way (Jackson, 1996; Clark & Salaman, 1998). The rhetoric associated with a concept can turn into a *language of change* (Werr,

1999). This implies that at a certain point in time, some terms are recognized as innovative and easily generate enthusiasm among a consultancy's clientele that can easily be taken as a starting point for selling consultancy services. However, as patterns in print media traces indicate, the usefulness of this language only tends to be short-lived and unavoidably the initially fashionable terms become *worn out through use* (Benders & van Veen, 2001). A constellation of specific factors related to the demand and supply side of the knowledge market makes consultants experience a downturn in discourse on a concept.

As a first source, consultants point to a dominant connotation of a concept on the demand side. Here the process of social construction around a concept may reach a stage of stabilization and closure (Bijker, 1990) in which the intensity decreases and one specific interpretation of a concept becomes prevalent. This means that a concept becomes strongly related to one specific meaning: 'The term BPR is generally equated with large-scale restructuring. That is what reached the press and what governors and managers tell each other.' [N#1] Such a dominant interpretation limits a concept's interpretative space and hereby the initial possibility of different usage. As a result, a reduction in interpretative space means that the language is no longer widely applicable. In addition, due to extensive discourse, a concept becomes widely known to people in the market. However, after a while the same people no longer consider a concept as new: 'By 1998 we simply found that public interest in coming to seminars on BPR dropped off. Everybody thought they knew what it was [...]' [I#2]

A dominant connotation may also be reinforced by *ex ante* results in the way a concept is put into practice. Following Brunsson & Olsen (1997), such concepts are regarded differently before and after their realization. The initial major promises and simplicity attributed by consultants are always more difficult to realize in praxis. The difference between the initial promises and their realization affects the meaning and eventually the usage of the language within which a concept has been introduced. So while consultants contribute to establishing utopian expectations (Ten Bos, 2000) which enable a concept to flow, it also becomes one of the determinants of its downturn. 'So when a hype starts you will first be busy putting it in the market and not earlier that after three years the initial results become visible. In this there is a huge slackening what makes that these hypes can occur.' [Q#3] Consultants acknowledge that disappointing cases are inevitably present, however these are not so quickly published in print media discourse because neither the client organization nor the consulting firms nor the professional management magazines are seen to have an interest in disseminating unsuccessful practices under the banner of a concept.

On the supply side a cause for the perceived changes is constituted by the deliberate attempts to induce the obsolescence of discourse on organization concepts. According to marionette theories of fashion, producers seek to manipulate consumers by stimulating demand for new products thereby dis

carding the old (Kieser, 1997). Specialized research agencies play a role in stimulating this process on the market. One consultant noted that: ‘Gartner is a large American research agency who strongly determines the fashion for the business community. The Gartner group continuously produces hype cycles in which they position concepts that are on the market at that moment.’ [J#1] Such reports a priori assume that new concepts move through a short-lived pattern of visibility in the market. This includes that a peak in the attention is quickly followed by a negative surge in which a concept becomes associated with inflated expectations.

This likely implies that when a concept moves into the final stage no supplier is inclined to use its label hereby automatically reinforcing a general downturn. The old language likely becomes replaced by the emergence of a new vocabulary in the managerial discourse: ‘Later, that concept was overtaken qua attention in the market by E-business.’ [Q#2] This inevitably means that some consultants seize the opportunity to portray the present as old while quickly adopting new terms: ‘At the upsurge of all those new concepts a client always expects from a consultant that he has heard about them and knows what they mean.’ [C#3] These changes in the popularity of language also have serious implications for the internal language system within consultancies.

3.4.3 Internal language system

As noted in the previous chapter, concepticide inevitably induces a sharp decline in the usage of specific terminology on the market. This means that within consultancies there is (1) a decreased usage of certain terms but also (2) a changed meaning of terms that result in the establishment of different terminological traces. These traces entail that some terms are considered as outdated while others increasingly become entrenched and regarded as common language.

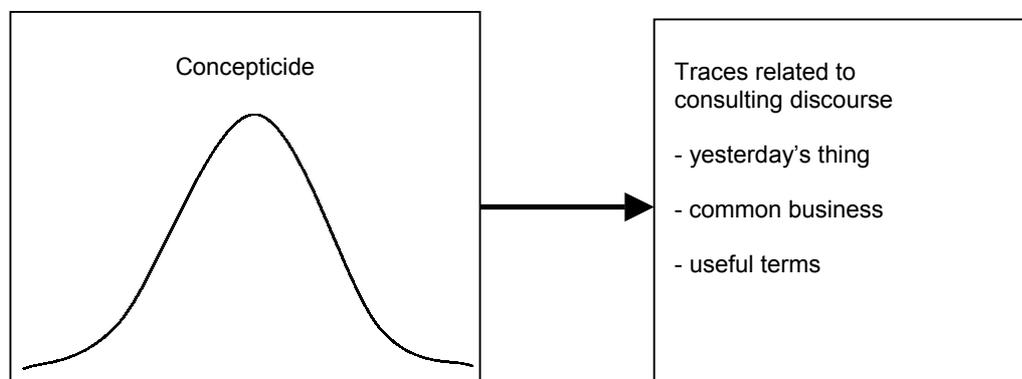


Figure 3.1: Forms of traces related to discourse in management consultancies

A *prima facie* logical element in the internal language system is that consultants automatically tend to use a concept's label less frequently in their interaction with clients. An important point of reference for a consultant is the preferred language of the client. The pragmatism associated with consultancy's work (Benders et al., 1998) means that consultants do not readily have qualms about using certain terms. However, the general trend in the market may mean that certain labels are less used internally: 'In the early 1990s everyone read in the newspapers how important BPR was. The next wave was E-business. Here we abandoned the term BPR because it was out of fashion.' [T#2]

The perceived market developments entail that specific labels get less attention internally. This results in changes in the consultancy's terminology-in-use and stimulates their efforts to employ other labels in the market: 'If you notice that a concept is starting to become popular you focus your marketing on it and make sure that your sales staff use the right terminology because a term that is new just sells well.' [J#1] However, a downturn in the usage of specific terms does not automatically imply that a concept has not left any traces in a consultancy's internal language system. Instead, the use of a concept may lead to the presence of *terminological traces* within consultancies. In contrast to what management fashion theorists suggest, these traces follow highly divergent routes. While some parts of a concept's initial system of idiom are severely rejected or associated with being out of fashion, others are entrenched and become regarded as 'normal' consulting language.

Yesterday's thing

When a concept resonates on the market for a while, it reduces the possibility of being regarded as being at the forefront of management knowledge. This is reinforced by the introduction of newer concepts that draw the attention of knowledge consumers in the market. Such a downturn does not automatically imply that the entire linguistic package associated with an 'old' organization concept is abandoned within a consultancy. Instead, certain terms within a consultancy obtain a specific connotation which is not necessarily negative. As one consultant observed: 'Despite the fact that internally we no longer use the term BPR, there does not rest a curse on.' [T#2] Certain terms in particular become increasingly regarded as old fashioned: 'At the moment E-business is regarded as yesterday's thing.' [T#2] As a result these terms can no longer be used in interaction with clients because they have lost their power as a language of change. Using this language in the market also suggests that a consultancy is no longer at the forefront of management knowledge: 'And don't even start about BPR, that's yesterday's product.' [P#1] So concepticide means that some terms related to a concept are not able to generate assignments any more or become harmful to a consultant's market reputation.

Common business and useful terms

At the same time, certain derivative terms initially associated with a concept may become entrenched in consulting language. After a period of exaggerated attention some terms no longer need to be emphasized quite so strongly because the underlying ideas have become generally accepted. As a result, certain terms become less prominent in discourse and consultants increasingly talk about them in common terms: ‘One of the advantages of a hype like E-business is that everyone now knows what the Internet is. [...] it has become well known so I do not have to emphasize it towards our consultants because it is regarded as something self-evident.’ [T#2] Hence, the phenomena associated with a concept are still talked about but no longer in over-enthusiastic terms. Also elements of the linguistic package become related to ideas that continue to be considered useful and have not become controversial in the market. While a concept’s label may obtain a pejorative connotation in the market, part of a concept’s system of idiom can remain a point of reference to characterize specific professional knowledge and skills: ‘For [consultancy D] Business Process Engineering remains an unambiguous label to denote what we actually do. To associate this professional knowledge with BPR would be unwise for us.’ [D#1]

3.5 CONSULTING PRAXIS

In this section I will distinguish various relevant traces related to a concept’s praxis in a consultancy and consider how these are shaped in time. I refer to consulting praxis as the actions and ideational manifestations induced or associated with a concept within a consultancy. Generally, by performing assignments under the banner of a concept, consultancies are able to generate substantial experiences that allow them to further develop a specific consulting repertoire. Particularly the initial projects provide an opportunity to learn together with a client organization and accumulate experiences. Therefore, in early instances it is important for a consultancy to find a number of early adopters to show the usefulness of a specific approach and to build a reputation as an expert on a specific concept. As a result, consulting approaches have become increasingly explicit and are associated with an increasing number of cases. Hereby consultants seek to ‘prove’ the concept in praxis. This ‘proof’ may not only enhance the performance of future projects, but may also become a means with which to increase legitimacy in the market (see also Morris, 2001). In other words, specific experience with an organization concept’s application may increasingly become a sales argument vis-à-vis new clients. This means that over the course of time: ‘... to the extent that it becomes more commoditized and is also picked up by other agencies, one has to become better documented and has to build up an advanced experience record.’ [Q#1]

Consequently, temporary clusters of consulting repertoire emerge around the exploitation of a concept. Hansen and Haas (2001) talk about practice groups that develop expertise around a specific topic that is considered relevant to the market. As long as clients keep asking for a concept, consultants likely continue to carry out projects under this concept's label. The experiences these projects generate are fed back into the underlying repertoire. As a consequence, the presence of a concept within a consultancy leaves a wide array of different traces in consulting praxis. One consultant commented on this issue by saying that: 'Firstly, the method has survived for a large part. Secondly, the Process idea has been more in the heads of the people.' [I#2] This quote illustrates that during a general downturn phase a concept's traces may take shape in different forms. In particular, these traces become entrenched in more or less formalized knowledge systems. However, relatively independent from the degree of formalization, a concept also leaves different cognitive representations.

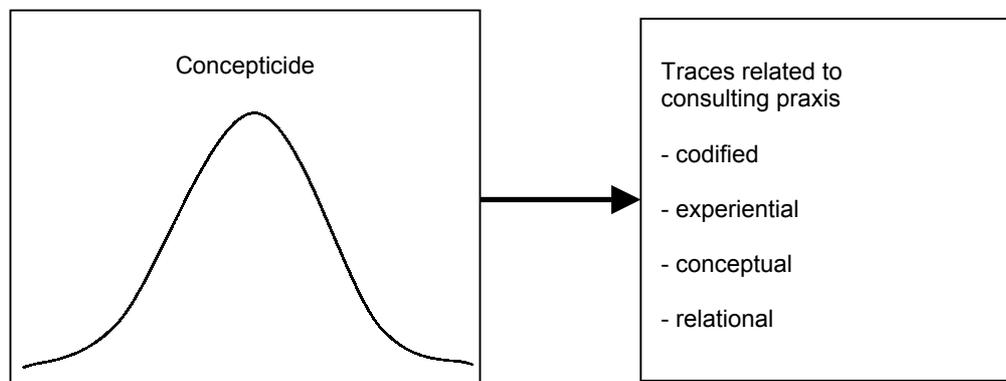


Figure 3.2: Forms of traces related to praxis in management consultancies

3.5.1 Formal knowledge system

In the previous section I argued that a concept may entail a consulting repertoire crystallizing around clusters of problem solving approaches. Here forms of standardization emerge concerning typical ways of working and presenting. So under the banner of a concept one may find a densification of methods and techniques (Fincham & Evans, 1999). As a result, a concept leaves what I shall call *codified traces*. These are knowledge elements that are embodied by written methods, tools and case descriptions. Such traces may become incorporated into the central elements of a consultancy's formal knowledge system (Werr, 1999; Morris, 2001; Morris & Empson, 2000). These elements are stored into different carriers such as manuals and database applications: 'We translated the idea into an approach and wrote it down in a manual including tools and cases.' [D#1] However, the presence of such traces varies considerably between different consultancies.

The extent to which these codified traces are present in a consultancy depends for an important part on the general degree of formalization (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). Related to the specific method making strategy (Visscher, 2001), these traces are stored either in a structured or more uncoordinated manner.

A centralized, technique-oriented strategy will in all probability lead to a coherent arrangement of well-elaborated techniques surrounding a leading knowledge model (Visscher, 2001). This implies that some consultancies may invest considerable effort in writing down ideas and experiences associated with a concept thereby generating a significant collection of codified traces: 'In the following years we translated the ideas into an approach which was written down in a manual including tools and demonstrable cases which concretized it. So the main development is that the concept has been concretized and has proven itself in practice.' [D#1] So-called product managers and central departments act as internal 'gatekeepers' for these techniques (Morris, 2001: 830). Such actors have a central role in the generation, codification and dissemination of a concept's repertoire and provide support in its application. This may also include the translation of the experiences generated in assignments into central methods and providing internal courses to the population of consultants: 'So everything that had to do with BPR such as intakes, client proposals, product development and external marketing efforts had to be coordinated by me.' [N#2] Such entities guard the knowledge and keep an eye on the developments in the market.

A diversified, anticipation-oriented strategy is likely to focus less emphasis on formalized methods (Visscher, 2001). In this case a consultancy builds up a collection of different loosely coupled general approaches that allow for flexible use which hereby support dealing with a large range of different organizational problems. This implies that some consultancies do not extensively and formally codify elements of a concept into an internal knowledge system: 'At consulting firm [E] you will hardly find any method and techniques in a codified form.' [E#1] This may be the result of a deliberate strategy but also consultants may lack the incentives to systematically accumulate experiences: 'We were so busy that none of us took the time to further develop the method. For a new assignment we just combined the knowledge of previous projects.' [V#2] This means that experiences obtained during the application of a concept become very heavily concentrated in the heads of certain individuals. Such traces are easily highly dispersed throughout the consultancy. Approaches around concepts become more application oriented than equipped with elaborate techniques. 'We are busy developing a knowledge base but that is more a collection of articles, opinions and approaches and a manual in any sense. We do not have a manual and we most probably never will.' [U#1]

3.5.2 Cognitive representations

Organization concepts not only leave different traces within formal knowledge systems but also take shape as *cognitive representations* (Røvik, 1996). A concept may leave these representations in a consultancy in a form I call *experiential traces*. This refers to personal learning in the consultancy projects that people underwent. As Visscher (2001) demonstrated, important aspects of consultancy work cannot be captured in codified representations. A consultant illustrated this point: ‘Consultants need to have a considerable amount of capabilities that go beyond the BPR concept...’ [P#2] Experiential traces of a concept support the ability to translate abstract ideas into practice during a project. This can only be generated by repeatedly moving through the realization of different trajectories. Absorption of these traces (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) is closely related to the practical skills of the individual who carries it: ‘At an individual level I continuously take my project experiences with me.’ [P#2] This may also imply that after a while consultants put less emphasis on formal methods because: ‘... at a certain point in time everything is just in your head.’ [V#2] A consultancy may seek to extend these experiential traces ‘on the job’ when new people take part in project teams. Although these experiences can be shared in group sessions or forums (Morris, 2001), these traces cannot easily be systematically codified and stored within a consultancy.

Another form of these cognitive representations can be dubbed *conceptual traces*. This refers to more abstract forms of knowledge related to a concept that has become embedded in a consultant’s mindset. This implies that, on an abstract level a concept leaves a normative perspective on the functioning of organizations. ‘So the way of thinking around processes then just become entrenched, while all the little tricks and small methods for improving processes, which are still at hand, often tend to fade away because they’re less important. So it’s a certain mindset that becomes entrenched while the actual techniques are rapidly forgotten.’ [A#1] These traces offer a point of view from which specific organizational problems can be recognized and understood. Also these traces mean that specific solutions to these problems are more easily accepted. While the ‘linguistic package’ (Røvik, 1996: 164) of a concept may fade into the background, the key message of such a concept may still be considered useful. ‘The term BPR has gone out of fashion, but everyone then knew they had Processes.’ [I#2] The main line of thought is more widely disseminated and strongly entrenched across a population of consultants within a firm. ‘Thanks to a concept such as BPR a large group of consultants have recognized that thinking in terms of processes can help to get a grip on certain problems.’ [U#1] Such conceptual traces may not only influence the consultants’ mindset but also affect consulting practices: ‘Whereas previously consultants started thinking from the present organizational situation and tried to improve that, BPR induced them to think about how it should be.’ [Q#2]

Finally, the temporal presence of a concept may leave various *relational traces*. This refers to the network of professionals with similar interests that has been built up in association with a particular concept. ‘That original BPR network still works and people still find each other despite the fact that it is five years old.’ [P#1] A concept’s traces constitute a common denominator for otherwise dispersed people. This means that those people and their professional field of practice may become more easily recognized, not only within a consultancy but also in relation to the market. In addition, adhering to a popular concept may support the search for identity and added value as a starting consultant. It offers an opportunity to build up a reputation and network of client relationships. Drawing on your experience base that has been generated under a concept may enhance trust and a networked reputation (Glückler & Armbrüster, 2003) in new assignments: ‘... as I really liked the consulting profession, and I also had built up my own client base, for the most part by using my own method, it was only a small step towards establishing my own agency.’ [Q#3] The following section will deal with the various factors that are hypothesized to shape the journeys of these traces, which were introduced to consultancies under the banner of a concept.

3.6 VIABILITY OF REPERTOIRE

As explained in the previous section, an organization concept may leave various traces in consultancies. These traces need not necessarily continue to be used. Accounts on consultant knowledge systems tend to concentrate solely on formalized storage. Hereby they easily ignore important discursive traces and often show a lack of attention to the process of routinization (Zaltman, 1973; Yin, 1979; Nelson and Winter, 1982). This notion of routinization accounts for the possibility that traces might become part of repetitive patterns of activity in a consultancy. As Starbuck (1992) observed, simply collecting knowledge in these firms provides only short-term continuity. In the long run, however, entrenchment requires traces to be associated with temporal problems and to actually be applied in daily praxis. Nelson and Winter even argued that while knowledge can be stored extensively, organizations only remember by application (1982: 99). However, in the case of concepticide, the initial clusters of consulting repertoire around a concepts exploitations tend to disintegrate which may cause substantial *erosion*. At this point, traces associated with a concept turn into sources and rudiments that may or may not be re-considered and reconfigured. This means that the long-term viability of traces requires a process of constant recognition, application and preservation.

I argue that the long-term viability of a concept’s traces is for an important part triggered by the occurrence of *market windows* (Kingdon, 1984) which may offer opportunities for consultants to continue bringing their specific solutions onto the market. These activating mechanisms are influenced by the specific consulting strategy as well as the extent to which members of

consultancy organizations recognize these opportunities and enact upon them. The previous sections demonstrated that traces of a concept may be codified in a knowledge system or become stored as cognitive elements in the heads of consultants. Though without the market windows and in absence of consultants that recognize these opportunities and are able to translate them, it is less likely for these traces to remain viable within consultancies. In the following sections I seek to examine the key elements that play a role in the routes of the above mentioned traces of a concept within consultancies. I will first discuss the way market windows affect internal sedimentation and then I will elaborate on the influence of professional aspects. Finally I will consider the relevant notion of internal transferability in relation to the viability of traces.

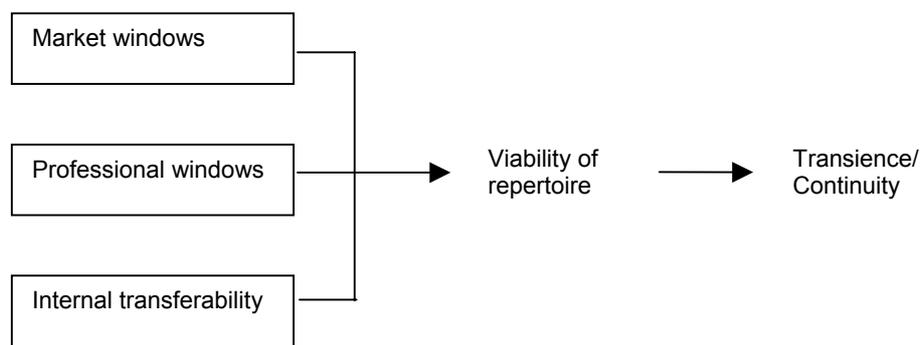


Figure 3.3: Elements shaping viability of consulting repertoire

3.6.1 Market windows

If the tenor for a concept on the market becomes less favorable, it not only has a negative effect on a consultancy's marketing effort in that field. The decrease in popularity also has important consequences for the process of knowledge accumulation surrounding a concept within a consultancy. Specifically, a decrease in the market demand for a concept may easily lead to a disintegration of the cluster of experiences around a concept. To be precise, the initial consulting repertoire related to a specific concept is no longer considered a coherent and useful entity. This leads to different responses that each affect the route a concept's traces take.

An obvious response involves abandonment of the concept and the repertoire that has been built up. However, consultancies may also deploy various strategies that extend the viability of the traces initially associated with a concept thereby increasing retentive capacity (Szulanski, 1996). Paradoxically, creating long term viability for traces of old concepts is considered hardly possible without adhering to new concepts. Only abandoning the initial concept and its language system allows consultants to legitimate further usage of a concept's traces. I shall argue that new concept development plays an important role in creating bases for the entrenchment for old knowledge (Zeititz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). However, a major problem is that rejection also

causes abandonment of the associated repertoire and urges consultants to start from scratch.

Discontinuation

The market situation is regarded one of the major arguments for the disintegration and abandonment of a concept's repertoire within the consulting organization. This not only implies a discontinuation in the usage of a label but also a decline in the praxis that has been built up around an organization concept. Consultancies hereby tend to close their market entry for a specific concept: 'If you were now to go to [consultancy P] with a BPR question, their first reaction would be to rummage around in their drawers, and I wonder whether they would come up with an answer, as they no longer have any ready knowledge of it. Like myself, most of the people I've trained have already left [consultancy P], which shows how transient the consultancy business is.' [P#2] Market demand does not necessarily allow the inclusion of the traces associated with a concept: 'Despite my interest in the concept and the experiences with its application the assignments do not clearly include BPR questions.' [C#3] A concept's lack of application may hamper increased routinization (Nelson & Winter, 1982) and easily cause the erosion of management knowledge.

When the number of assignments decreases and the projects that could add something new to the stock of formalized knowledge drop off, the amount of changes to the concept's repertoire decrease rapidly. This continues until nobody makes the effort to adapt the specific cluster of problem-solving approaches under a label. A decrease in the managerial discourse on a concept and a decline in the number of assignments may entail unfavorable prospects for the demand for a concept and thereby the viability of a concept's repertoire. Consequently, a consultancy may make hardly any effort to upgrade a concept's repertoire, and may reallocate the flow of resources within the business. In this case the market provides no perceived opportunities for using a concept or referring to a specific folder within which its traces are stored. This may actually imply that efforts to apply and preserve the repertoire in that specific form come to an end. The initial point of accumulation becomes regarded a closed case which reduces the chance of resources being allocated to preserve it: 'Over the years probably no one has made the effort to adapt the BPR manual.' [T#1] This easily causes disintegration of elements initially associated with a repertoire that has been built up around an organization concept.

Another barrier may be caused by the situation in which the association with an outdated label hampers the process of recognition thereby limiting the further usage of a concept's traces: 'The issues around E-commerce are quite new and for that we have to create new examples and develop new ways of thinking. So elements from older concepts will not necessarily be applicable here.' [T#1] Also present methods are simply no longer available because the

old is often viewed from the usefulness of the new (Ortmann, 1995). 'From BPR we have kept a consistent set of tools, the rest I threw away. This I did early this year when we clearly got involved in another fashion and we saw other waves to surf.' [P#1] So various market-related factors make that 'old' traces do not necessarily flow into the 'new' concepts. Current traces are not easily reconsidered in the light of the new which easily causes erosion. In the next part I shall discuss some bases for continued viability of traces formerly associated with a concept.

New markets

A consultancy may extend the viability of a concept's traces by introducing it into *new markets*. This involves maintaining a similar label and continuing to deploy the current repertoire but now in a specific context within which a concept has no particular connotation yet and is therefore still uncontroversial (Brunsson, 1997). Such a context may be found in a different market segment: 'Traditional BPR is something we can still do very well, so we will use it in emerging markets for this approach like Healthcare and Education.' [V#2] Consultancies may seek to shift the application of a concept to other branches in which it is still regarded as new and unrealized. This requires starting promotional efforts to make a concept interesting for a new group of organizations. 'Together with a colleague I have written a book about BPR in local government offices [...] and did some research to consider whether it would work there. [W#1]

However, quickly exploiting new market segments requires drawing on market related expertise and a specific network of relations: 'Our consultancy group Finance & Costmanagement has more contacts in the Banking and Insurance world than we have, but they know that the competence for BPR is located here so we will seek to generate combined projects.' [C#1] When a consultancy observes that a concept has become a major issue in a different market segment, they may run into a problem that: '... they were not able to exploit this market because they did not have the right networks and did not speak its language.' [V#3] This may necessitate recruiting sector specialists as a consultant to promote their knowledge on such a new market. Understanding a market segment is essential as are enthusiastic consultants who are eager to take up the concept and possess knowledge concerning the service. Within large consultancies this may trigger the transfer of methods and people from one unit to another: '... involve people experienced in BPR to create a specific education program and educate our consultants for this project.' [K#4]

Relabelling

Consultancy firms seek to increase the longevity of their approaches by developing a neutral vocabulary around them. This results in changes at a nominal level i.e. the *relabelling* of services, departments or even the company. Using uncontaminated terms while deploying a similar repertoire allows consultants

to dissociate themselves from the fashionable concept that was embraced only a short time before: ‘In earlier times a concept such as BPR was called *processtroomlijning* within [consultancy X]. Then it became BPR and once we saw that BPR had acquired a bad connotation it was called *processtroomlijning* again. So you can come a long way by relabelling concepts.’ [X#1, emphasis added] ‘I have the impression that BPR has a negative connotation to the public. That’s why we want to call our concept Change Management and do not longer see BPR as a separate concept.’ [M#2] As a result, a declining attention for a concept may significantly influence the language-in-use while it has little effect on related consulting praxis: ‘The term BPR is not used so often any more, but regarding the work we do on the subject of process improvement, process design and the design of new ventures it is exactly the same as five years ago.’ [F#2] This means that the elements formerly associated with a concept are still considered useful, only at a certain point in time those elements are re-named on the market. While clients may pose their questions in different terms, consultants offer similar service components and draw on old professional knowledge and experiences. So, using different language allows consultancies to maintain a similar underlying approach and this contributes to the preservation of a concept’s traces.

On the demand side, the market tends to provide room to reiterate old knowledge. ‘For a lot of projects you don’t need to make up new things if you just know the trick and are flexible enough to apply it in those circumstances. That is also what the client asks for.’ [X#1] In addition, by using neutral terms or abandoning over-enthusiastic terms, different traces will probably remain uncontroversial: ‘If you look at it solely from a commercial point of view, compared to three years ago when we spoke only of a Balanced Scorecard, we now speak somewhat more soberly in terms of improving management information, and we no longer use just one popular term to cover it all. But you keep using certain elements from these organizational concepts in your consultancy work, so I don’t see them as something transient.’ [T#1]

New Concepts

In response to changing management agendas and changing dominant language on the market, consultancies may concentrate on *new concepts* that are expected to become prevalent. When consulting firms increase their efforts in the development and marketing of new ‘leading concepts’ this has important consequences for the internal trajectory of traces. Concept development allows consultants to uncouple their expertise from the concepts it was initially associated with. This may not only involve changes at a nominal level but also a *reconfiguration* of the concept’s consulting repertoire. New concepts bring opportunities for different traces to be re-activated while at the same time there is no guarantee that consultants will not reinvent the wheel. The remaining part this section seeks to demonstrate the implications of concept development for the trajectory of a concept’s traces.

New concept development implies translating general concepts into a consulting repertoire to support the propagation and implementation within a firm (Heusinkveld & Benders, 2003a). As we have seen, consultants tend to accumulate related experiences around a new concept. Current ideas and experiences may flow into these new configurations of expertise. This probably initiates a process of cropping-up (Brunsson, 1997) which means that consultants refer to similar concepts while drawing on their own specific ideas and experiences. Existing tools and approaches can be considered as important rudiments for a new repertoire. Also the majority of the ideas that become associated with a new concept may have originated in more indirect sources such as a consultant's formal education or their general project experiences. To a certain extent traces of prior concepts prepare consultancies to become easily fashionable again with a new concept: 'Certain things I had not used for years while I applied it again in the E-business hype. I used the same slides only now under the label of E-business. You show your clients what E-business is, you present the different steps and indicate how we will do things. [...] That is not new, it is all BPR.' [T#2]

At the same time, new concepts do not necessarily cause continuity in the usage of management knowledge. Firstly, the hastiness with which new concepts have to be brought to the market often does not allow the extensive research of present knowledge: 'Yet unexpectedly a demand emerges and it suddenly becomes topical. Because of this, we've gained some experience and knowledge of that concept, not by doing elaborate research or developing certain methods, but more or less the hard way, that is, in actual practice.' [Q#1] Consultancies run the risk of demand for a concept waning within a short period of time and this urges them to take up new concepts quickly and pragmatically (Benders et al., 1998). This easily leads to the development of concepts in close collaboration with client organizations instead of drawing on existing knowledge.

A second barrier in the accumulation process is that rudiments from previous concepts are no longer considered useful or state-of-the-art. New concepts do not build on present traces because they are carried by different generations of consultants. As a result, new concepts increase barriers for learning from previous concepts. A new concept even provides a new group of consultants with an opportunity to strongly dissociate themselves from established consulting practices. 'In a sense the Information Planning hype was the logical predecessor of the BPR hype, but we did not want to have anything to do with the group of people associated with it.' [Q#3] Explicitly distancing oneself from the old fits with the need to be new. However, this often limits learning from the experiences obtained under earlier concepts.

However in one of the previous parts I demonstrated that the presence of different traces is not enough to become re-used in a next cycle, it also has to be recognized as useful. Concept development involves a selection process in which a constellation of different traces is identified as efficient at a certain

point in time. Seen from within a new concept, consultants view the usefulness of traces associated with old concepts (Ortmann, 1995): ‘The basic components from which you build new themes are not new in themselves but it is particularly the combination of things that is regarded as new.’ [Q#1] These traces become regarded as rudiments and form a basis for a new cluster of consulting repertoire. So, in spite of the fact that the dominant rhetoric on the market has changed, a concept’s traces may continue to be applied as part of new consultancy services. The fading of the initial concept allows more selective usage of its traces. ‘In parts of assignments I still use the things I learned at [firm] and with the application of BPR. [...] In fact you use many things you’ve learned there, only then specifically applied to the subject of Mergers.’ [Q#3]

3.6.2 Professional windows

Fashion literature often emphasizes market forces as main determinants in shaping consultant behavior. However, this thesis suggests that the presence of market opportunities is not sufficient to maintain the viability of a concept’s traces. Routinization of traces requires the constant translation and enaction by people involved within a consultancy. This section demonstrates how a constellation of different professionally related elements within a consultancy shapes the usage of a concept’s traces. It elaborates the notion of *souls of fire* (Sjernberg & Phillips, 1993) in a consultancy and shows that it is a crucial determinant not only in the emergence but also in the establishment of a concept. Also Morris & Empson (2001) stress that a consulting knowledge base is to a great extent carried by professional staff which, at the same time, makes it highly vulnerable. Consequently, I argue that sedimentation is not only about the systematic generation and storage of various traces, as often is suggested, but particularly about constantly generating enthusiasm for ideas and approaches among consultants. This enthusiasm to use certain traces is not solely shaped by market forces but also by (1) personnel movements and (2) personal motives. Both these factors play also a role in the transferability of various traces in a consultancy.

Personnel movements

Erosion in the traces initially associated with a concept is strongly tied to personnel movements. Particularly personnel turnover has considerable consequences for the viability of traces within a consultancy. The exit of consultants involved in development and usage of a concept’s repertoire easily leads to a lack of people who are able to apply relevant traces.

First, people involved in a concept’s marketing and application can be regarded as important carriers of a concept’s traces (Morris & Empson, 2001). As shown in one of the previous sections, some of these traces cannot even exist without the presence of these carriers. This means that when people be

come employed at other consultancies or within business organizations, traces may be more widely disseminated but also cause serious problems in the accumulation and viability of knowledge in a consultancy. Despite the fact that a large variety of codified traces may remain present in different knowledge bases, these traces may not be easily applicable by other members: 'I had written the BPR approach, but none of the remaining people at [consultancy N] was able to apply it.' [N#2] This may lead to the situation in which the remaining staff cannot but reinvent the wheel: '...last year there were several BPR assignments, but when I looked around me most people had never done such a trajectory, so I had to start from scratch.' [W#1] While traces can be available in codified form and client demands may significantly trigger a repertoire's re-use, the viability can be hampered by the absence of experienced people causing revitalization to become reinvention.

Secondly, consultants can also be regarded as important souls of fire within a consulting firm. The presence of such a *concept champion* is crucial not only in the early development phases (Chakrabarti, 1974; Clark & Fujimoto, 1991) but also for the long-term viability of a concept's traces. 'Often within a consultancy a concept champion emerges and it depends on his formal position, his charisma, the extent this person is able to inspire other consultants and his commercial successes whether a concept may expand within a consulting firm.' [K#3]. The concept's traces may lose priority status in the absence of a champion that feels responsible for it. Also such key persons are often able to acquire specific assignments through which knowledge keeps up to a viable level. The exit of a concept's initiators may lead to a situation in which a consultancy becomes unable to acquire projects in a particular field. This also leads to a downturn in the systematic generation of experiences and a decreased enthusiasm for a specific approach: 'In a sense I was the clergyman who preached BPR and thereby enthused people. However when I left the firm, a number of these things were strongly reduced.' [Q#2]

Also changes in consultants' *career paths* may affect the sedimentation process. 'When I started my own consultancy in 1996, I threw the entire BPR heritage overboard to begin with a blank sheet of paper myself. In addition, I have made an evaluation of the entire BPR trajectory for myself in which I began to consider the phenomenon rather critically.' [Q#3] Also a higher level of seniority may bring changes in consultant's interests in particular subjects. 'As one grows older and has seen more, you increasingly want to do strategic projects instead of only regarding business operations.' [U#1] Promotion in rank involves different tasks that hamper people from being closely involved in the application and preservation of a concept's traces: '... as a partner you just have to sell jobs and set people to work. It isn't your task any more to develop things, you're much too expensive for that.' [X#1]

Personal motives

Whereas turnover may cause a lack of staff that are able to exploit traces associated with a concept, different *personal motives* easily lead to a lack of interest amongst the population of remaining members of a consultancy to apply these traces. As one consultant succinctly put it: 'Large consultancies have that knowledge on intranet, but it is not likely that it will be applied if people do not feel any enthusiasm for it.' [N#2] As a result, storage in knowledge systems cannot be regarded as the equivalent of viability: 'So the accumulation of knowledge you certainly won't see within consultancies, particularly if it's dependent upon individual persons. Eventually it's only about making money.' [X#1] Instead, the long-term viability of a concept's traces is shaped by the continuous generation of interest among consultants. Here I explain how this interest is weakened by two main motives which are related to (1) perceived career opportunities and (2) professed work variety.

Firstly, like individual managers (Huczynski, 1993), consultants also consider new concepts as a possible *career enhancer*. Adhering to a successful concept provides an opportunity to become respected as an expert in the field and contributes to career opportunities within consulting firms. For instance one consultant stated that: 'At that moment I was considered as one of the gurus in that field and within one year went from manager to partner.' [T#2] To enhance their career, consultants feel urged to learn about the newest terms and buzzwords in order to become regarded as fashionable. So developing and adhering to new concepts can be very beneficial to a consultant's career. This means that being associated with an obsolete or unsuccessful concept is detrimental in building a reputation as an innovative consultant. A consultant's interest in maintaining particular traces is therefore related to their perceived business opportunities. The interest of consultants is not coincidental but is influenced by signals from the market and the colleagues he talks to. A lack of perceived market opportunities make consultants to reduce their interest in using or even associating themselves with specific traces: 'The enthusiasm for a concept has to be fed, your energy as a consultant is not infinite. You can be very enthusiastic about a concept but if you don't have any success after a while then it just stops. The bottom-line is we have to make ends meet.' [P#3]

When a concept does not generate enthusiasm in their network of clients this probably reduces the consultants' efforts to promote and apply the repertoire associated with it at their clients. In such a case they become urged to pick up a different subject. A lack of attention also constitutes a discontinuity in a concept's underlying repertoire. When the market makes certain knowledge manifestations less appealing this probably reduces the intensity of consultants' efforts in developing a repertoire and promoting certain ideas and approaches on the management knowledge market: 'Because it is no longer fashionable, people within [consultancy T] don't invest their time in further developing the concept.' [T#3] So a decrease in a concept's chances for suc

cess on the market also induces a decrease in internal propagation. As a consequence at a certain point in time, the knowledge on a specific issue simply no longer exists within a consultancy.

Secondly, new concepts not only offer status to consultants but may also *reduce boredom* (Huckzynski, 1993). New concepts encourage consultants to hook up their present knowledge and experiences to contemporary movements and provides a drive for updating them: ‘Personally, it is incredibly exciting to continuously think up new things and work on new things.’ [J#1] The professional interest is provided with new impulses by introducing new ideas. ‘At [consultancy T] I was the partner for E-business and that was exciting and incredibly fun despite the fact that you know it’s a hype which is untenable in the long run.’ [T#2] At the same time, consultants may not like constantly reiterating similar projects. In other words, the possibility of doing something new keeps consultants interested. ‘So if certain consultants have done something three times they want to do something different ...’ [C#3] Another aspect in this rationale is that a concept can become regarded too common. ‘Once a concept has entered the public domain everybody can do it and we don’t like it so much.’ [Q#1] When a concept becomes disseminated across the knowledge market a larger part of a population knows about a concept. This means that consultants cannot differentiate their expertise as easily. It does not necessarily imply that consultants completely reject the traces associated with a concept. Rather, when the novelty fades away, consultants tend to apply such traces differently, selectively or in a different context.

Common professional competencies

In this part I consider the professional related elements that affect the process of entrenchment. In the absence of market-related incentives to maintain the point of accumulation around a concept it increasingly comes into a state where viability becomes highly dependent upon recognition by the remaining staff: ‘At the moment, nobody considers it his task to upgrade the BPR folder, but the remaining staff ensures that this knowledge will be transferred to the next cycle.’ [T#1] Although traces are available in codified form, new concepts only include these traces if the remaining staff continues to be able to recognize their value. This implies that increasingly the remaining staff becomes key elements in maintaining the viability of ideas: ‘As long as I work at [consultancy C] the basic philosophy won’t change. Only in the methods approaches and techniques there is a certain development...’ [C#1] This recognition is shaped by several important factors.

Individual consultants may continue to apply these traces if they are increasingly regarded as a vital *professional competency* that is considered essential to perform successful consulting assignments. This increases the attractiveness of certain knowledge traces: ‘From certain things we think as consultancy that they have to be carried extensively so that every consultant is able to understand it more or less. Other issues are taken up from the creation of mar

ket demand [...] So for [consultancy Q] the Balanced Scorecard is not interesting anymore as a stand-alone concept, but people here are expected to know how it works.' [Q#1] Although a fashionable label may be discarded, professional interest together with business opportunities may result in situations in which traces are further developed and entrenched in consulting praxis: 'It continued to be popular and will remain a vital competence that many of our consultants use on a daily basis. It has become a permanent element of our education program.' [F#2] When people extensively apply these ideas to their projects and are able to achieve commercial successes, some traces may be further disseminated. In this way knowledge of a concept remains viable, grows and become re-used in new projects under a new banner. 'A number of things from BPR are widely used by everyone. The new generation already does not know that certain knowledge came from BPR.' [P#2]

3.6.3 Internal transferability

A final element in the exploitation of traces I shall discuss here is the *internal transferability* of traces within a consultancy. This refers to the extent a consultancy is able to continuously bring present traces of a concept to the attention of their population of consultants hereby maintaining their interest. The main point here is that concepticide not only affects the pattern of usage but also the pattern of internal knowledge dissemination. Generally, a market downturn tends to decrease the internal circulation of traces. As demonstrated in the previous sections, the perceived possibility of generating business and career opportunities may offer various windows (Kingdon, 1984) for the viability of a concept's traces.

However, these traces may still remain relatively inert (Szulanski, 1996) which influences its ability to be transferred throughout a consultancy. Hansen and Haas (2001) consider the internal dissemination process in terms of a knowledge market. Here *internal suppliers* engage in collecting and processing knowledge while they compete for the restricted attention of users. These *internal users* basically search for knowledge that supports them in completing their assignments. The outcome of these market forces determines which knowledge becomes disseminated within a consultancy. In the light of long-term viability, this emphasizes the importance and problematic nature of internal dissemination within professional service firms

Internal supply

In an ideal case, a concept's traces may be transferred by the remaining souls of fire to new people in a consultancy. For instance, a consultant stressed: 'The turnover is quite large at consultancies, so it remains in the heads of the people who make a career, the rest leaves which means that the knowledge has to be constantly re-propagated.' [X#1] Consultants may use various mechanisms that continue to circulate different traces within their organiza

tion. Traces can for instance be transferred through courses: 'If you would start-up an E-business trajectory you automatically have to complete several optimization questions surrounding their processes. At [consultancy J] this is just standard intellectual substance for our business consultants and if they don't know about it they have to follow a course.' [J#1] However, such courses are often restricted to the exchange of formal knowledge. This means that consultancies also keep the traces alive by letting juniors work with more experienced people: 'As a consultancy you seek to expand that knowledge by getting new staff to work in teams so that they can get on the job training. [...] And, of course, there are also standard study programs, but those merely involve the transfer of knowledge and don't teach you any skills. There are also various systems for storing knowledge and information, but here too, you don't learn anything by merely browsing through them. The transfer of knowledge and the teaching of skills should go hand in hand.' [Q#1] A final form that contributes to ensuring long term viability is the transfer of experiences in forums (Morris, 2001). 'You exchange knowledge as consultants by presenting assignments to each other and extracting the lessons learned.' [Q#2] This entails a form of knowledge exchange on the basis of concrete cases.

Unlike what would be expected within a consultancy, the dissemination of a concept's traces is often an intricate process: 'In any case knowledge management in consultancies is not writing down a method but making people understand references, standards and approaches.' [P#1], or: '... it is two minutes work to put a method into a database but it is much more difficult to get it into people's heads.' [I#2] Although the remaining staff is considered important in the preservation of traces, a concept's discontinuance makes consultants become increasingly unwilling and unable to further disseminate these traces internally. In addition, consultants may even contest the legitimacy of established concepts. This can become a basis for political games surrounding the entrenchment and abandonment of related traces (Oliver, 1991). As a result, people involved in the internal supply, reduce their efforts in the transfer of knowledge. This involves the initiatives supporting the internal promotion and dissemination of a concept's traces within a consultancy: 'If there is less interest in a concept like BPR, there will be less propagation and people won't provide internal training. If in addition no more projects are executed, the knowledge in that field no longer exists within a consultancy.' [X#1] So because a concept is no longer fashionable, the remaining staff in a consultancy tend to adopt different concepts which entails the end of dissemination efforts of certain traces. So long-term viability requires motivated people to circulate various traces internally, but these people will probably encounter significant difficulties trying to attract the attention of users.

Internal demand

A consultancy may not only experience a reduction in energy for the promotion of traces internally but can also encounter significant difficulties at the receiving end. Szulanski (1996) recognized that a recipient's motivation and its absorptive capacity are important barriers for the transfer of knowledge in an organization. Due to turnover and decreased interest, people may no longer recognize traces as useful. The specific connotation and lack of attention in the knowledge market makes certain knowledge manifestations less appealing on the recipient side: 'Early this year I have thrown away large files of BPR examples. I am unable to pass it on to other people. I haven't got time for it nor does it appeal to young people who have recently joined our firm.' [P#1] This means that consultancies may not only face a lack of dissemination efforts but are also confronted with recipients who are unable or unwilling to adopt various traces in their practice. 'Only people now graduating from universities probably don't know what BPR is or associate it with something like information systems.' [V#2] In spite of commercial successes and sufficient assignments, a lack of recognition causes a barrier in a continuous usage of ideas. So while a concept may be commercially attractive, it may not necessarily be comprehended by possible recipients. When, in addition, the traces are only concentrated in the heads of few individuals in a consultancy, the risk of erosion increases significantly.

Also a lack of application of traces by knowledge users obstruct the long-term viability. A deficiency in continuous usage easily leads to an inability of application (Nelson & Winter, 1982). The applicability of knowledge is determined by the fact whether it is still kept alive by different people in a consultancy. If these people cannot understand it, traces once related to a concept become a *dead letter* rather than a viable slice of knowledge. This means that knowledge is easily lost in praxis when concepts obtain another connotation. Discontinuity in the dissemination and application of knowledge traces tends to cause erosion. The next quote is illustrative for this situation: 'We started at [consultancy I] with a subject like Data Management. Such a subject is still valid and highly relevant to present organizations, for instance for sharing client data across different channels. However, the knowledge on approaching the issue of Data Management has eroded over the years and acquired a rather modest position within [consultancy I]. Consequently, there is of course a risk that consultants could apply these techniques to a specific project, but cannot as they have simply been forgotten. Data Management was a trendy subject in the early 1980s and ideas and experiences have been written down extensively in course materials and different books. So if you really want to, it is not too hard to find out about it. Yet, because of the dynamics around the latest hypes this *old* knowledge does not get much attention anymore. Currently there is a great deal of attention for XML as a concept, but this brings along a lot of issues related to Data Management especially in the exchange of data. So certain issues remain relevant, but there is a major risk that people are going to

re-invent the wheel because although the *old* knowledge might be present it is not *alive* enough.' [I#1, emphasis added] Hence, once traces have been discarded it is very hard to reactivate them. Instead, consultancies easily start from scratch and hereby reinvent already existing insights.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the process of sedimentation in consultancies. Theorists emphasize their increased influence on the market for management knowledge (Faust, 1999; Kieser, 2002). A previous chapter stressed their prominent role in general managerial discourse propagating new organization concepts. By promoting concepts in this arena consultancies seek to stimulate demand, espouse their recipes and build a reputation as experts. The transient patterns hypothesized by management fashion theorists easily suggest that consultants are unable to develop strong bases for the entrenchment of management knowledge. Whereas managerial discourse may instigate a swing in attention for a concept, a concept's discourse and praxis within a consultancy does not follow a similar route. This chapter demonstrates that allegedly short-lived fashions leave a wide array of traces that take different journeys that are loosely coupled to the concept they were initially associated with.

First, this study offers an alternative view on transience and continuity that often is asserted in management fashion literature. I have demonstrated that organization concepts in consultancies may turn into temporary clusters of repertoire. When a topic becomes popular in the market, consultancies tend to construct a specific underlying repertoire. This involves the generation and often codification of expertise articulated in a specific language (Werr, 1999) to support a concept's propagation and implementation. During a downturn phase, a concept leaves various traces related to discourse. This means that terms associated with a concept obtain a specific connotation in a consultancy's language system. In this some terms are increasingly seen as old fashioned while others become regarded as normal or useful parts of their language. Also a concept leaves various traces related to consulting praxis. Here I distinguished between codified and cognitive traces. Whereas the former are often included in a formal knowledge system, the latter are more fluid traces and strongly related to individual consultants.

Secondly, this chapter not only stressed more continuity than management fashion literature would suggest, but also emphasized the different journeys taken by a concept's traces. I identified several factors that are hypothesized to define the shape of these journeys. This implies that concepticide in consultancies is not a single story of continuous transience but that one should distinguish between various forms and trajectories. In other words, the long-term viability of traces likely varies considerably between different consulting firms. I distinguished market related and professional windows as major factors influencing the long-term viability of traces. Although there is no

general line of transience in consultancies, I argue that traces are highly fragile and there are major barriers in accumulation. The initial 'language of change' (Werr, 1999) as a powerful rhetoric for the legitimation and exchange of experiences very easily turns into the 'language of forgetfulness'. A general downturn in the managerial discourse can easily cause discontinuity in consulting praxis. If a concept is no longer in vogue it quickly halts the further development of the repertoire that occurs under that banner within a consultancy. This leads to a process of regrouping in which present clusters of insights disintegrate while at the same time many things are lost in this process. So this chapter points to the importance of considering different ways of how sedimentation in consultancies takes shape. I believe this research reflects the need to place greater emphasis on the differences in the actors on the supply side of the management knowledge market.

Thirdly, various theorists emphasize the importance of internal knowledge systems and highlight the technical means by which they become accessible to preserve knowledge in a consultancy (Werr, 2003). In addition, these systems also become a sales argument when they support the impression of experience (Alvesson, 1993). However, I argue that these accounts tend to neglect the process of *internal dissemination*. My point is that the viability of traces is not a matter of building a collection of techniques but is particularly about the propagation of traces within consultancies. The data supports the belief that while knowledge may already be widely dispersed it is still difficult to render it viable. This means that the presence of various codified and cognitive traces does not guarantee that management consultants will not reinvent the wheel. Rather, accumulation requires extensive and persistent dissemination efforts within a consultancy. A concept's downturn easily causes difficulties in the transferability of traces (Szulanski, 1996). Specifically, a source loses its motivation for ongoing dissemination of traces but also the cluster of repertoire that has been built up during a period of popularity is tarred with the connotation of 'old fashioned' and thereby losing its initial appeal. So this study suggests that a concept's traces have to be continuously and extensively marketed internally to inform, train and convince people of their usefulness. Traces can only maintain viable when a soul of fire is able to enthuse other consultants about certain standards and approaches, achieve commercial successes and establish a group with common professional interests.

Fourthly, this study adds another layer to the supply side of fashionable concepts by offering an internal perspective of one of the main actors. Instead of solely viewing consultants as prominent suppliers on the market for management knowledge, this part sought to understand the way concepticide takes shape *within* consultancies. Consultancies cannot only be viewed as a homogeneous group that only opportunistically embraces temporarily popular concepts. Here I emphasized that these are just organizations with their own specific managerial problems particularly in relation to organization concepts. The professional and knowledge intensive work associated with consultancies

(Alvesson, 1993; Morris, 2001) has important implications for the way they deal with concepts internally. This means that developing new concepts as well as ensuring longevity of their traces particularly involves continuously generating and channeling the interests and interpretations of consultants.

A final point exposed by this study is that management consultancies cannot be viewed as separate entities. For instance, management consultants try to shape the market's perceptions through the popular press while at the same time they are often highly influenced by the same media. Management fashion accounts tend to strictly separate management knowledge supply from demand. However, this study shed further light on the boundaries between different channels of communication. Simply isolating these consultants would disregard the reciprocal relationship with other actors involved in the uptake of organization concepts. This means that user-organizations do have an active role to play in the construction and application of organization concepts initially transmitted by management consultants (Sturdy, 1997). The market downturn, as perceived by consultants, also suggests transience within consumers of organization concepts. The next chapter will focus on what I call user-organizations and consider how concepticide takes shape in this specific context.

CHAPTER 4

FORGETFULNESS AS ROUTINE

In the previous chapters I explored the process of sedimentation during concepticide within the systems of print media and consultancies. These management knowledge suppliers mainly aim their efforts to promote and disseminate new organization concepts at user organizations. In this chapter I enter this demand side of the management knowledge market and focus on user organizations. Organizations and their members are considered as the main consumers of management knowledge. Accounts of management fashion easily depict organizations as capricious, constantly jumping on the next management idea in vogue while attempting to discard the old. However, there is still little attention for the internal reception trajectories of such fashionable concepts in organizations in particular during a downturn phase.

The main purpose of this chapter is to enhance understanding about the process of sedimentation in user organizations during an alleged downturn phase. I distinguish different forms of traces and identify key elements that are hypothesized to play a role in shaping their trajectories after a concept's alleged abandonment. However at the same time the chapter indicates that the long-term viability of ideas and practices associated with a concept is not without significant difficulties. In developing the central argument I draw on Heusinkveld & Benders (2002c; 2003). This chapter will proceed by discussing literature of organization concepts in relation to adopting organizations. Then it derives some predictions from management fashion literature about the specific reception trajectory of organization concepts within organizations. Following this I will empirically trace the internal development of concepts and discuss the process of sedimentation herein.

4.1 ORGANIZATIONS AND ORGANIZATION CONCEPTS

4.1.1 Managerial discourse and organizational changes

Organizational changes are an indissoluble part of managerial discourse about a concept among a group of management intellectuals. More than that, or

ganization concepts tend to be explicitly hooked up to prominent companies' discourse and actions. Organizational changes at Ford in the early twentieth century are often used as typical example for the implementation of Scientific Management principles (Guillén, 1994). Early writings about the Multidivisional model related this concept to the experiences of companies such as DuPont and General Motors in restructuring their organizational units at the beginning of the 1920s (Whittington & Mayer, 2000: 6). Also more recently concepts' advocators use organizational changes to legitimate their prescriptions. For instance, BPR was related to the reorganizations and IT implementation efforts at Ford and IBM to illustrate the value of the concept's design principles. In addition, Balanced Scorecard forefathers Kaplan and Norton explicitly draw on cases at AMD and Apple to demonstrate the applicability and successfulness of their management control model.

As Guillén (1994) showed, concepts do not solely remain part of the supply side but management practitioners have adopted concepts and applied the ideas in their companies. Studies showed the influence of supply related factors on a concept's adoption by a population of organizations (e.g. Burns & Wholey, 1993). For instance Scientific Management generated a flood of articles during the early twentieth century (Nelson, 1975; Guillén, 1994; Shenhav, 1999). Particularly the promotional efforts generated considerable attention and interest in the concept among producers and consumers of management knowledge. As a consequence, Scientific Management became a widely debated topic among professional experts and the ideas were diffused across a considerable population of organizations (Guillén, 1994). Historical accounts show that the ideas carried by the concept became a basis for organizational and technical changes among various factories (Nelson, 1975: 70). In a more recent study, Cole (1999) shows that the concept of TQM was extensively debated in the print-media. At the same time he reported large-scale adoption of TQM programs by organizations and managers resulting in considerable Quality Management initiatives in companies during the 1980s and 1990s. Cole argues that the concept's applications allowed firms to learn and constitute an important basis for new change initiatives (1999: 234).

A widespread dissemination of some of these concepts easily suggests that organizational practices tend to homogenize. Large-scale efforts on the supply side of the management knowledge market may urge managerial discourse and praxis to converge. For example Whittington & Mayer (2000) show that large corporations located in various countries converged increasingly on the Multidivisional model. The extensive transfer of the US based concept experienced little spatial barriers and allowed it to become a lasting structural form among a large population of companies. However, in spite of their acceptance in the managerial discourse, the implementation of organization concepts in organizations is not a straightforward matter. As an example I take several accounts about the reception of Scientific Management. A first notable aspect is that though the concept is regarded as a basis for a large

management movement, the reception of this concept within adopting firms was not uncontested. Various accounts show that the application of these prescriptions often induced heavy dissensions and struggles. The experts promoting Scientific Management encountered significant opposition from supervisors and foremen in the firms (Nelson, 1975: 75). Guillén (1994: 50) showed that also many employers had a rather anxious attitude to the ideas introduced and propagated by engineers. Particularly, they were reluctant to fully implement the concept because of the costs and uncertainties associated with it. Secondly, historians report a highly selective and interpretative usage of the initial principles in organizations (Nelson, 1975; Bloemen, 1988). In other words, while the concept advocated a coherent approach for reorganization, the actual application of this approach in praxis varied considerably and did not necessarily become a radical break with a company's past. It often resulted in a piecemeal realization of several organizational and technical improvements as well as some changes in employee activities. So although organization concepts tend to be widely associated with organizational changes, their implementation is not without complications and varies significantly across different organizational contexts. In the next section I will further discuss how concepts are received within organizations.

4.1.2 Internal reception

Innovation theorists distinguish between two major stages in the internal reception trajectory i.e. activities related to initiation and implementation (Zaltman et al., 1973; Kimberly, 1981; Rogers, 1995). An initiation phase involves efforts aimed at convincing people of the value of a new idea. This process is characterized by shaping the corporate agenda and thereby linking the innovation to specific organizational problems. Key element in this process is the notion of perceived *relative advantage* (Rogers, 1995). Specifically, an idea must be regarded as more efficient than current organizational practices to enhance the possibility to become adopted. An innovation's relative advantage may create the awareness of a performance gap among organizational members. As a result, the present course of action may become regarded as unsatisfactory in relation to what the organization could attain. While diffusion perspectives tend to emphasize *efficiency gains*, institutional accounts stress the importance of *legitimacy* in initiating adoption (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Staw & Epstein, 2000). It is assumed that organizations seek to be in line with what generally is regarded as rational and innovative. As a result the adoption of popular concepts does not necessarily lead to enhanced performance but contributes to a favorable reputation. For instance Westphal, Gulati & Shortell (1997) showed that early adopters of TQM programs were motivated by performance enhancements while later adopters in the network were mainly driven by bandwagon pressures to adopt TQM. The decision to adopt

a concept marks the beginning of a series of activities related to its implementation.

A second broad stage involves various attempts that concentrate on getting a new concept implemented. A key element in this stage is the notion of *translation* (Latour, 1987; Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996). This refers to the notion that when a concept travels, it is likely adapted to the local circumstances in which it is received. In other words, a concept becomes contextualized. Unlike substantive innovations, organization concepts do not have a material component. More than that, a concept's ambiguity is even a vital aspect to become widely accepted among a large group of different organizations (Kelemen, 2000; Benders & van Veen, 2001). This interpretative viability makes a concept easily applicable in different situations and allows for the possibility to be interpreted in different ways. Organization scholars point to the relatively open ended relationship between discourse on a concept and practices associated with this discourse (DeCock & Hipkin, 1997; Zbaracki, 1998; Kelemen, 2000; Benders & Verlaar, 2003). While a concept may reduce the variety of available solutions, it cannot determine a priori how practices are shaped in organizations during an implementation phase (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997: 37). For instance, studies on the implementation of BPR and TQM show that these concepts urged organizations to concentrate on several key managerial issues (Watts van Veen, 1999; Easton & Jarrell, 2000). At the same time, the concepts allowed for the possibility to address these key issues in a large variety of different ways.

4.2 CONCEPTICIDE WITHIN USER ORGANIZATIONS

In this section I will apply some key ideas from management fashion literature to the demand side of the management knowledge market. The previous section elaborated several bases for organizations to adopt new concepts and discussed key elements that play a role in the way these concepts are put to practice. In this process, the interpretative space allows a concept to be translated in different ways (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996). However, current accounts hardly addressed the trajectories of a concept in organizations during a post-implementation phase. Diffusion theorists suggest that, once adopted, innovations likely proceed through a process of routinization in which they become absorbed into the organization's daily practices (Zaltman et al., 1973; Rogers, 1995). However, recurring short-lived patterns of management fashions makes it at least problematic to maintain the notion that concepts a priori become entrenched in organizations.

Organizations and their members are considered important consumers of management knowledge (Huczynski, 1993: 278; Abrahamson, 1996). Particularly the persistence of organizational problems and the fear of competition provide a fertile soil for introducing allegedly new concepts in organizations. Organization concepts are perceived as novel solutions to intricate

managerial problems and important instrument in guiding organizational changes (Huczynski, 1993; Visscher, 2001). A serious complication in the reception of concepts is that after their realizations they are perceived differently than before (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). Initially, managerial discourse may report successful implementations of organization concepts in well-known organizations. The over-sold promises of performance improvement and the simplicity of the solutions (Kieser, 1997) increases a concept's attractiveness thereby enhancing their ability to flow in a community (Røvik, 2002). This can increasingly catch the interest of organizations and encourage the number of adoptions. If the popularity increases, bandwagon effects stimulate that a large group of other organizations feel urged to go along with the prevailing prescriptions to be in line with what is regarded as innovative and rational (Westphal et al., 1997).

However, translating these apparently beneficial ideas into practice is often not without significant problems. The initial promises cannot be easily realized and the process of introduction and implementation generates new, unanticipated problems (Lawler & Mohrman, 1985; DeCock & Hipkin, 1997; Zbaracki, 1998). As Brunsson & Olson argued: 'making them practicable also makes them much less beautiful' (1997: 43). Being widely associated with difficulties and practical problems inevitably leads to a collapse in the credibility of a concept's claims causing a concept to become 'worn out through use' (Benders & Van Veen, 2001). So while the utopian promises (Ten Bos, 2000) are important elements for a concept's widespread acceptance, they also lay the foundation for their collective downturn. Management fashion accounts present this process as the basis of a concept's downswing across population of companies. For instance Abrahamson & Fairchild (1999) report that the increase in articles on QC in the US during the early 1980s coincided with the adoption of the concept among a large number of US firms. In the same way they suggest that the downswing in discourse during the mid-1980s was paralleled by the firms' collective rejection of QC. As a result this account hypothesized that discourse reinforced large-scale rejection across populations of companies (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999: 732).

The inadequacies emerging from a concept's realization provide a fertile soil for the introduction of new promising solutions (Jönsson & Lendin, 1977). The introduction of new concepts may persuade organizations to replicate a similar trajectory. In addition, *organizational forgetfulness* ensures that earlier experiences do not obstruct the introduction of new concepts carrying similar problems (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). This allows members to continuously re-polish old knowledge and present it as new. In this, organizations tend to continuously reproduce old debates (Huczynski, 1993; Noon, Jenkins & Martinez Lucio, 2000). Hence, the collective rejection of concepts easily invites organizations to start from scratch and continuously reinvent the wheel. Such a collective rejection in organizational praxis makes it at least

doubtful that organizations are able to learn during a new concept's adoption and implementation.

In sum, management fashion theorists suggest that organization concepts are adopted as a quick and legitimate solution to insoluble problems. However, when a concept loses its innovative image and suffers from a collapse of interest in the market, organizations feel urged to reject such a concept and replace it by the next fashionable idea (Huczynski, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996). These patterns easily lead one to see organizational members as gullible and capricious, eagerly embracing new concepts in the hope of quickly solving persistent managerial problems. The problems emerging from the introduction and implementation of organization concepts inevitably generate a need for new concepts. Organizational forgetfulness creates an endless space for the introduction of allegedly new ideas. Management fashion accounts suggest that within organizations concepticide implies rejecting the 'old' thereby encouraging *forgetfulness as routine*.

The remainder of this chapter concentrates on the process of sedimentation in user-organizations. After a methodological section, the chapter continues with an empirical examination of the way organization concepts develop in organizations after their implementation phase. While management fashion accounts emphasize the reciprocal relation between downturn in discourse and widespread rejection across companies, I stress the role of loose coupling between the systems of discourse and praxis (Brunsson, 1989). Particularly, I argue that this loose coupling provides room in which traces can remain despite the concept receiving less attention. In a first part I discuss several central elements in relation to a concept's discourse in organizations. In a following section, I analyze the practices that are induced under the banner of a concept. Then I distinguish relevant barriers related to the long-term viability of a concept's traces.

4.3 INSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

In the following section I discuss how the process of sedimentation takes shape within organizations that are involved in the initiation and implementation of organization concepts. This will be illustrated by drawing on a *qualitative survey* among twenty-seven informants from twenty different organizations (see Appendix III for further details). The sample organizations analyzed include Banks, Insurance companies, Healthcare organizations, a Construction company, an Energy supplier and a Government department. The headquarters of these organizations were all located in The Netherlands. These research sites were chosen because they were involved in a BPR or BSC trajectory. Most of the cases involved were part of Dutch discourse in professional magazines during the 1990s.

I generated relevant data by conducting semi-structured interviews with informants who were closely involved in the concept's trajectory in their or

ganization. Their formal positions include internal consultant, staff employee/member, manager of department and member of board of directors. The questions asked during the interviews covered four broad themes including (1) how the organization encountered the concept, (2) how the concept was initiated, (3) the implementation phase and (4) the perceived residues of a concept in an organization as well as how these are maintained. These interviews were held between 25 October 2000 and 12 June 2003 on the research sites and lasted at least 60 minutes. The transcriptions were fed back to each of these informants which allowed them to verify and correct the researchers' interpretation. Data from the interviews were supplemented by internal reports and external publications about the concepts' implementation. Following standards of inductive research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Wester, 1995), I analyzed relevant theory about the 'consumption' of management knowledge in relation to the empirical data on a concept's post-implementation phase. Constant comparison of data and relevant theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allowed me to develop a theory of sedimentation in organizations that is constituted by two interrelated perspectives.

In line with my analysis, I structured the argument on sedimentation in two main parts. Unlike what is suggested by management fashion literature I emphasize in the first part that a concept's 'downturn' in the general managerial discourse is not necessarily associated with transience in adopting organizations. I distinguish different traces in which certain continuity becomes manifested and illustrate these by my interview data. Such traces do not constitute the initial concept as it entered the organization, but resides in a translated form (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996). I categorized these traces to organizational discourse and praxis which allowed to explain the key role of loose coupling in shaping a concept's trajectory. In the second part I draw on a perspective of organizational knowing to explore important barriers in the long-term viability of a concept's traces. By comparing data and relevant theory I found that these traces could not be considered as stable entities but were reshaped on a continuous basis. My analysis indicated that traces initially related to a concept remain particularly fragile. On the basis of this notion I focused on problems in maintaining the viability of traces and sought to further densify important elements related to erosion. This allowed to present view in which the long-term viability is not without difficulties and to illustrate how these difficulties are perceived.

4.4 ORGANIZATIONAL DISCOURSE

Language is regarded a central element in the consumption of management knowledge in organizations (Kieser, 1997; Zbaracki, 1998; Kelemen, 2000). The emergence of new concepts in managerial discourse is considered to be particularly fed by management consultants and other actors on supply side. Fashion accounts suggest a strong relationship of the developments in mana

gerial discourse with user organizations (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999). As a result, a period of popularity in managerial discourse easily suggests widespread adoption of a concept by many organizations. In this, organizations become ‘infected’ and produce a variety of organizational changes. After a while, an organization concept inevitably becomes worn out in the management knowledge market (Benders & van Veen, 2001). The ‘old’ concepts become less attractive by their application and managerial discourse likely bring new, more appealing ideas. These are generally considered as main elements in a concept’s downturn within adopting organization (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999).

In this section I identify different traces of concepts related to organizational discourse. I refer to discourse as the distinctive terminology and linguistic patterns used in association with an organization concept. I firstly discuss some relevant aspects of the perceived link with managerial discourse. Following this I show how different elements cause that attention for a concept in an organization tends to move to the background. At the same time the specific meaning that a concept’s terms have obtained during their usage can have a durable influence on an organization’s internal language system. This means that within an organization people end to experience a (1) perceived transience of terms, but also that (2) certain terms acquire a specific connotation (see Figure 4.1).

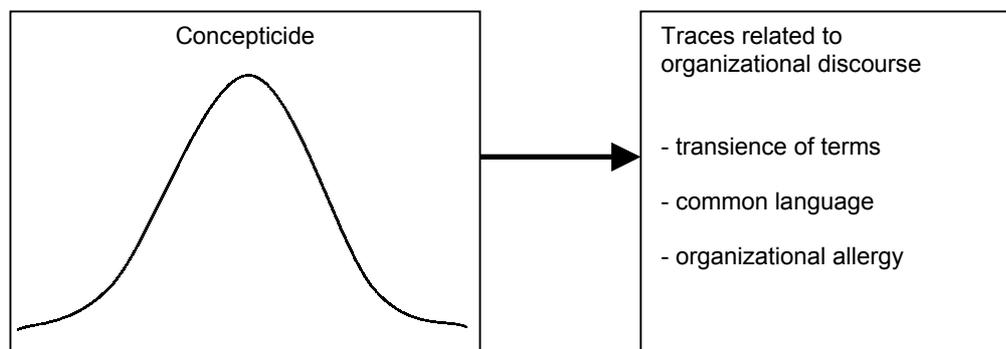


Figure 4.1: *Traces related to organizational discourse*

4.4.1 Perceived relation to managerial discourse

Literature suggests a strong relation between managerial discourse about a concept and the organizational changes associated with it, but sheds little light on how this takes shape. This study shows various ways in which these are linked. First of all, the general managerial discourse is regarded as source of inspiration for organizational members. Discourse about a concept may create certain awareness for specific solutions but also encourages attempts for change. Particularly consultants play a role in drawing attention to discourse but it also has to be actively taken up to become introduced in organizations:

‘The consultant has enthused the chairman for BPR. Managers also read newspapers so the term was not completely unknown. [...] after this, the chairman suggested that we should get to work with BPR.’ [P#1]

Secondly, discourse can be used as ex-post rationalization and labelling of changes that already took place or are in an advanced state. The appearance of similar changes within organizations that lack mutual contact is referred to as a process of *cropping-up* (Brunsson, 1997). As one informant stressed: ‘Within the organization we were already involved with the notion of processes, then the ideas was labeled in the professional literature after which we also called it BPR in the organization. We did not start it as a BPR trajectory.’ [B#3] In this, discourse on a concept is not taken as point of departure for organizational changes but seemingly unrelated developments in an organization are put in the light of a concept afterwards: ‘All those organizational changes we labeled BPR afterwards. Those developments came up to you rather separately and were pragmatically dealt with and not so planned and conceptual as been described in our article about BPR.’ [B#1] Although there is initially no linkage, the changes may be fed back to the general managerial discourse.

A third form is that experiences in organization may be translated into stylized cases in the media (Kieser, 1997). As a result, a concept’s realizations can become part of the general managerial discourse. In such stylized case it is generally indicated how a concept is taken up in an organization and which results have been achieved during its application. Such instances offer an opportunity for organizations to show that they are at the forefront of the latest developments in management knowledge and to increase legitimacy for their actions (Staw & Epstein, 2001). This is often encouraged by consultants: ‘The consultant asked me to write an article about the concept, but initially I did not much like the idea because it would cost me a lot of time.’ [L#1] However, discourse does not necessarily represent organizational practices in an adequate way. These stories are not necessarily consistent with the organizational reality they refer to, but are particularly intended to generate attention to a concept and convince people of its successfulness. ‘Those consultants also had presented BPR there [at another client organization] as a trick for addressing the organizational issues around privatization. Hereby they have called someone from [organization A] at that organization because here they had a BPR project and I was available for that. Of course this was a dilemma for me because in that period there had been a considerable friction around the project in [organization A].’ [A#1]

Unlike what is suggested by fashion accounts, the analysis indicates that the downturn of a concept in print-media is not so strongly considered as an important reason for a possible decrease in attention within organizations. While organizations seek to bring out successful applications of a concept in the media, they seem rather unconcerned about a decreased attention in this media: ‘The large publicity for the concept did not work in the opposite di

rection: despite the fact that other hospitals had less positive experiences with BPR it did not have repercussions on the enthusiasm here.’ [C#1] Another informant commented on this issue: ‘The development of the usage of the term in the media is completely decoupled from the usage within the organization. If at the moment we were working on it the magazines had been abundant with it, it would not have made a difference.’ [F#1]

This process of decoupling is reinforced because organizations tend to be involved with the translation of labels to fit the talk in a local context. This means that when a concept becomes contaminated in the general managerial discourse this does not directly make itself felt within an organization. A popular label may provide an opportunity to talk about a specific set of organizational changes with outside, but the people within organizations tend to create their own version. Creating a certain ownership of the concept is easiest by attaching an organization-specific label to it. Organizational members may find important reasons for de-coupling the internal label from the managerial discourse: ‘We have never used the term BPR because we thought that it would generate considerable resistance from the management. Particularly in the literature, BPR was associated with large savings and this generated an impression that we did not consider it as wise to use the same label internally.’ [G#2] At the same time this confuses the link with the general managerial discourse as for instance in the print-media. ‘The concept is mainly known in the organization under the banner of “Doorstroomtijden”. If you would ask people in the organization about BPR they don’t know what you are taking about.’ [O#1] Because of this, organizations may be less affected by an inevitable downturn of attention for a concept in the media: ‘On the other hand within the design process and external we have positioned the project within [organization I] clearly as a BPR case and the results are as if it has been a BPR case. Only in the communication to the people during the implementation we did not call it BPR beforehand and afterwards we did.’ [I#1]

Hence, unlike what fashion theorists suggest, the data indicate a loose coupling between internal and external use of terms related to a concept. In spite of the fact that managerial discourse in the media is portrayed as an important supplier of concepts and an agenda setter the relation to the internal organization is not so strong as often suggested (see also Kingdon, 1984). This means that the alleged strong link between the lifecycle of discourse in print-media and the diffusion across organizations is at least significantly more obscure than suggested by management fashion accounts. Externally an organization may follow the fashionable norms of discourse (Brunsson, 1997) but this does not necessarily mean that the pattern of talk or the associated practices develops in a similar way within an organization. In the next section I consider the way concepticide affects this internal language system. I argue that conditions leading to a concept’s perceived downturn are mainly internal to organizations.

4.4.2 Transience of terms

Organizational members inevitably experience a decrease in the attention for a concept. This entails that it simply tends to be less intensively discussed after a while in organization. This 'perceived transience' is related to a number of elements. A first element is that the initial rhetoric, intended to generate attention and enthusiasm for specific issues within an organization, loses its strength through its usage (Benders & Van Veen, 2001). For example one informant notes that: 'Labels always have a limited life and it does not matter which of them. By definition a hype can be maintained only for a limited time, you have to exclaim something new some time even if it's the same.' [G#1] Also, concepts increasingly become regarded as something that no longer requires much emphasis as the organizational members have become more and more familiar with its label: 'We no longer use the label of "Procesgericht Werken". I think that this term has become worn out; people heard it enough and know what it is. I do not consider it as a necessity to give the concept much attention per se. The importance is just generally recognized ...' [G#2] This means that at a specific point in time, drawing on a popular label is no longer seen as stimulus for organizational action. As Eccles & Nohria (1992) argue, managing organizations is particularly about using language to get things done. When specific language no longer 'works' it becomes less interesting for managers to use it anew: 'Then we reached the moment you had to put a stop to that concept BPR. If you would like to do something similar you have to think of another label.' [K#3]

A second element is that the initial rhetoric with which a concept enters an organization is increasingly turned into organizational reality (Zbaracki, 1998). As Cole (1999) argued, the decrease in use of TQM language coincided with organizations actually doing it. The set of prescriptions carried by a concept has become translated (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996) into a different form: 'Next to this, the term BPR grows blurred. Initially it is presented as BPR but eventually it becomes an organizational change which means that people see it as a change and not as the concept BPR. The term BPR is hardly used now, people talk about working in teams and processes.' [F#1] In this process, organizational practice increasingly replaces the rhetoric thereby shaping its meaning specific to an organization. As a result, the concept in its original shape is only recognizable for the members who were closely involved in the introduction and translation process: 'BPR was only used as a verb within a small group of adepts, but the organizational change was called Hercules. [...] so it became a meaningless term for many in the organization.' [P#1]

A final element related to the perceived transience of a concept's discourse in organizations is the introduction of new popular labels: 'The new concept "Bereik" prevails at this moment in the organization, it was introduced soon after BPR and is known now on a wider scale.' [L#2] The internal

discourse that unfolded around a concept is easily supplanted by new terms that are in vogue on the management knowledge market: 'At a certain moment it seemed that the concept BPR was swept away within [organization O]. The concept of the Balanced Scorecard was regarded as something completely new.' [O#1] New, uncontaminated labels are generally more attractive than that of a concept in use (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). As a result, different periods in an organization are characterized by the prevalence of a specific terminology (Marchington et al., 1993; DeCock & Hipkin, 1997; Benders, 1999). This does not per se imply that old terms are completely eradicated. The existing concepts may only receive little attention of organizational members when the new are introduced. As explained in the next section, some terms remain regarded as useful by people involved or require too much effort to erase their residues.

4.4.3 Loadedness of terms

The previous section considered various elements that shape a decrease in the usage of and attention for concept's terms in organizations. At the same time, by its usage, certain terms associated with a concept develop a context specific loadedness that now includes a perception about what the organization has done (Zbaracki, 1998; Benders & Verlaar, 2003). In other words, the actions that took place in relation to a concept shape an organization-specific meaning of the terminology. As a result, a concept may leave what I call 'discursive traces' in organizations. This entails that organizations accept certain terms as normal language or consider specific terms as controversial.

First, some terms are increasingly regarded as 'common language'. This means that specific terms, that were part of a concept's linguistic package (Røvik, 1996), may become absorbed into an organization's standard vocabulary. Analogous to technical artifacts (Bijker, 1990), soon after a concept's realization reaches a stage of 'stabilization' and 'closure', some terms are regarded as 'normal' in an organization. This means that elements of the initial linguistic package may be assimilated into the organization's language system (Kelemen, 2000), in spite of the fact that the initial concept may be no longer in vogue. The discursive traces entails that ideas and practices associated with a concept's terms are generally accepted: 'The concept is just common sense in the organization which means that Processes is keynote to everything we do, that is not brought into question any longer. Every manager talks about Processes and recognizes their importance so the awareness on this issue has grown considerably.' [G#2]

Secondly, some terms become considered as 'organizational allergy'. This means that organizational members can no longer use specific language because it has obtained a negative connotation. After their realization, concepts are regarded differently than before. Whereas the initial optimistic discourse is important for a concept to become widely accepted, its realization is

often accompanied by new or unexpected problems (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997; DeCock & Hipkin, 1997). Being associated with heavy difficulties, conflicts or practical concerns undermines the concept's initial attractiveness and inevitably affects the way a concept is talked about in organizations (Zbaracki, 1998; Kelemen, 2000; Benders & Verlaar, 2003). For instance one informant commented: 'BPR is talked about in a negative sense within the organization because people do not directly see the improvements and the Knee Clinic does not exist any more.' [L#2] A concept's realization may contaminate the concept's linguistic package thereby creating an over-sensitivity to specific terms: 'That dissent was expressed in real rows with the works council and resulted in a overstrained situation on the shopfloor [...] Because of this, the term Nova has become taboo in this organization. Members got a large hang-over from the implementation of this project.' [A#1]

4.5 ORGANIZATIONAL PRAXIS

In the previous part I discussed how various discourse-related traces develop during a concept's alleged downturn. This section examines relevant traces of a concept in relation to organizational praxis. As Zbaracki (1998) argues, the rhetorical aspects of a concept's implementation cannot be seen apart from its manifestations related to praxis. In this view a concept enters an organization via rhetoric and gives rise to or becomes associated with a variety of initiatives. In this the organization constructs its own specific version of a concept (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996).

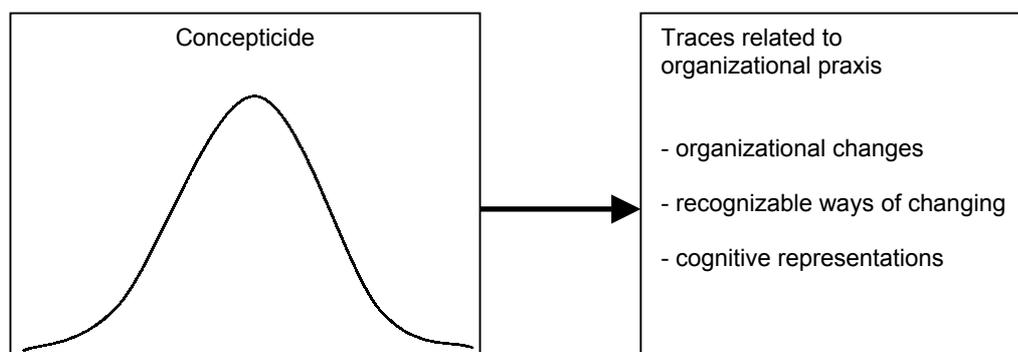


Figure 4.2: Forms of praxis related traces in user organizations

Here I consider organizational praxis as the actions induced by or associated with a concept's realization within an organization. However, organizational praxis tends to be loosely coupled to the system of discourse (Brunsson, 1989; Zbaracki, 1998; Benders & Van Veen, 2001) thereby allowing for the possibility that a concept's traces related to the system of praxis may follow a different trajectory than the discourse-related traces. This means that traces manifest as (1) organizational changes, (2) recognizable ways of changing, and (3) cognitive representations (see Figure 4.2). At the same time these traces tend

to become less recognizable as part of the initial concept by which they were introduced.

4.5.1 Organizational changes

Organizational changes, both intended and unintended, are the *prima facie* logical result of a concept's implementation (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997) and are generally regarded as the most visible traces related to organizational praxis. These changes become manifest in elements such as adaptations of organizational working procedures, the establishment of new organizational systems or in the form of standardized tools (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997; DeCock & Hipkin, 1997; Cole, 1999; Easton & Jarrell, 1999; Noon, Jenkins & Martinez Lucio, 2000). As one informant indicated: 'Also during the project of "Diabetic Foot" a number of things have changed which resulted in completely new multidisciplinary surgery for this specific category of patients. So in view of this concept a number of organizational changes have been realized: work processes have become different and routes have changed.' [E#1] Soon after their realization, these changes induced or associated by a concept easily become regarded as routines (Yin, 1979; Nelson & Winter, 1982). 'So the structural intervention, the reorganization of [organization P] from the five sectors model into the three divisions model, has been realized and has become entrenched.' [P#1] This implies that the translated ideas are assimilated by an organization and embedded in daily organizational practices.

In line with theorists of innovation (Zaltman et al., 1973; Rogers, 1995), concepts that are no longer regarded as something new tend to lose their distinctiveness. Being considered as 'normal' practices entails that people no longer associate specific organizational changes with a concept under which they were initially introduced. So routinization implies that practices become entrenched, but at same time entails a forgetfulness process. In this process traces are easily reinterpreted in retrospect (Bijker, 1990; Shenhav, 1999) and taken for granted while neglecting the process of introduction and construction. As a result, changes are regarded differently after their realization. Old initiatives can be repackaged and become known under another label or become viewed as part of a new concept (Cole, 1999; Noon et al., 2000): 'The current turnaround is typically Nova and if this is realized the spirit of Nova has its way, only five years later. In this way we actually have a successful project, but not under the same label.' [A#1]

4.5.2 Recognizable ways of changing

A concept's traces do not only entail organizational changes, but also specific structured ways of approaching organizational change (Visscher, 2001). This means that people maintain certain systematic and shared ways of approaching change processes in relation to specific organizational problems. Such

'methodical traces' can be preserved in a codified form and documented in manuals, tools and techniques (Werr, 1999), as an informant exemplified: 'The knowledge of the concept has been formalized. [...] Over the years we have written down our approaches and codified them into methods.' [G#2]. These traces also reside in the daily practices (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Tsoukas, 1996) of organizational members: 'The elements from the approach of the first BPR project still exists today. Involving people in redesign projects has only grown in importance here. [...] Those elements in dealing with change trajectories are not part of a manual but is something that is in the heads of the executives.' [Q#1] 'This allows that these traces can be re-used as guide within new attempts of implementing management ideas in the organization. As Visscher (2001: 4) argued, although organizational practice may be messy, practitioners do not randomly muddle through. 'We still perform all projects according to those steps that have been provided by the method of BPR [...] If I regard the way we have approached projects here [in organization J] we all work in the large projects according to the BPR method, I cannot imagine that this suddenly will be abandoned.' [J#1]

Although specific approaches introduced under the banner of a concept may be maintained, they do not necessarily keep the same shape. Rather, they are easily constructed and reconstructed on a continuous basis, a process that weakens their association with the initial concept. As Visscher (2001) observed, while methods offer guidance in the process of organizational problem solving, they are not simply and strictly followed in practice. Rather, in the course of time organizational members tend to use these traces differently. Specifically, accumulated insights from application brings that approaches are used more selectively and interpretatively. 'So we still use the step approach. But in some situations we may change emphases.' [E#1] 'This entails that some elements are excluded or performed more implicitly, while others are preserved and reused in new contexts, addressing new problems. Obviously this reduces the traces' recognizability as distinct concept.

4.5.3 Cognitive representations

Røvik (1996) noted that fashions also leave various cognitive representations in the memory of people who were involved in their introduction and implementation. These accumulated experiences of individuals affect the way organizational members see the world (Tsoukas, 1996) and may take shape in different traces. First, cognitive representation may take shape as *experiential traces*. People take observations and impressions with them that are generated during the realization of a concept: 'If someone wants to do a BPR project I always consider very carefully whether it fits that department and whether the people that come here to abuse the concept to solve figurative problems. That knowledge is fed by the experiences one obtains with the concept throughout the years.' [E#1] 'These practical experiences allow these people to more read

ily consider new trajectories and new concepts that appear in the knowledge market (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). However, such experiences are inherently tacit and therefore only available to members who were closely involved in a concept's application in an organization (Tsoukas, 1996). This implies that these traces cannot easily be disseminated within an organization without people actually participating in a concept's realization.

Secondly, cognitive representations left by a concept can also take a form that I dub *conceptual traces*. Here I refer to the establishment of a specific mindset among organizational members which is stimulated by the temporary prominence of a concept within an organization. For instance, Cole (1999) observed that TQM particularly served as a cognitive tool for practitioners to frame organizational problems. In this view an organization concept creates a framework through which organizational members can recognize repetitive patterns in organizations and more easily understand specific ways of dealing with problems: 'So the BPR project has created awareness among the people involved about the added value of their work activities. The project did not so much resulted in the implementation of procedures but particularly that people take the ideas of BPR into their daily work.' [K#2] Maintaining such a conceptual apparatus among organizational members lays a foundation for an enhanced understanding of the organization but also the appreciation of new ideas (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). As one manager noted: 'In the past people were mainly focused on one organizational department but by BPR they have obtained a much broader horizon which develops every day again and initiates various new changes.' [I#1]

A final form of cognitive representations I denote as *relational traces*. People often have been able to build up personal contacts in relation to a concept's introduction and implementation. These traces easily reinforce the crystallization of an informal and active network which facilitates communication and coordination within the organization (Clark & Fujimoto, 1991). This may entail individual awareness of other members' viewpoints and capabilities. The enhanced personal connections associated with these traces may change the interaction patterns between different organizational members (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Specifically, it conveys an increased ability to establish cross-functional linkages that enables people to get things done in other areas of an organization: 'Although the concept did not bring the desired result in both projects, it caused that those people find each other more easily. In another context they will probably talk to each other more quickly because they know each other and understand how one thinks about specific matters.' [O#1]

4.6 VIABILITY OF TRACES

In previous sections I showed how organizations tend to experience a decrease in attention for a concept while at same time various traces remain.

This ‘perceived transience’ is reinforced when these remaining traces are less associated with their initial concept. As a result, previous fashions may easily be regarded as ‘building blocks’ (Cole, 1999: 235) in the development of organizations. The presence of these traces *prima facie* suggests that organizations generally abandon the terminology related to old concepts but maintain using prior initiatives as a foundation for a next cycle. However, in this section I argue that traces initially associated with concepts are not automatically continued. As theorists of organizational knowledge have stressed, continuity of accumulated expertise is not predetermined but an ongoing achievement (Tsoukas, 1996; Orlikowski, 2002). In line with this notion, I emphasize that the traces left by previous concepts in organizations cannot be regarded as stable and enduring manifestations. Rather, these traces constitute the product of how organizational members enact them.

Such a view implies that a concept’s traces can only survive when they become an inherent part of organizational practice and are thereby constantly shaped and reshaped in the daily activities of organizational members (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Starbuck, 1992). Seeing traces as largely unrealized means that they can never be completely known *ex ante* and constantly have to survive organizational barriers by which their viability may be threatened (Yin, 1979). In the remaining part I further elaborate the notion of long-term viability (Stjernberg & Philips, 1993) thereby concentrating on key elements obstructing the preservation of a concept’s traces. It shows that once adopted, concepts do not simply become entrenched in organizations, but their viability remains highly fragile constantly feeding organizational forgetfulness. I identify and examine central elements that are hypothesized to define the shape of traces’ trajectories. These elements are related to (1) knowledge carriers (2) human agency and (3) organizational windows (see Figure 4.3). Although these are not all-embracing, they seek to give a richer understanding of the specific problems related to organizational sedimentation.

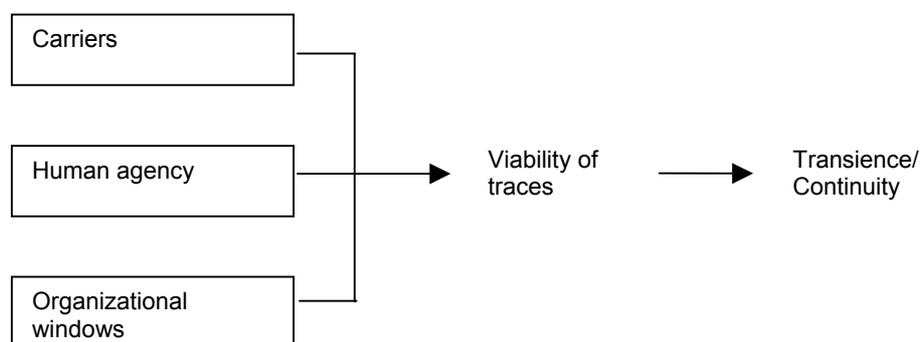


Figure 4.3: Elements shaping traces long-term viability

4.6.1 Carriers

Ongoing changes in knowledge carriers may significantly hamper the viability of traces within an organization. Theorists of organizational knowledge emphasized the important role of the interplay between organizational members and codified knowledge systems (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Olivera, 2000). The experiences acquired in the course of past practices and within previous situations (Tsoukas, 1996) can be made explicit thereby enhancing the possibilities for storage and transfer. In line with this view, the organizational members and codified manifestations can be regarded as main carriers of a concept's traces. However, to be maintained, traces have to become an enduring part of the organizational members' cognitive basis: 'So it should come from some enthusiastic souls who realize that the BPR manual is still on the bookshelf and can be used. In addition one should know somewhat about the concept to judge whether it is applicable in a specific situation.' [O#1] In this way prior traces may retain its basis for future action (Cohen & Levintal, 1990). The continued presence of carriers enhances an organization's ability to remember, recognize and activate a concept's traces in new settings: 'In particular the person who was involved in the BPR project suggested applying the concept in a new project. [...] That person noticed that in organizational changes you should preferably follow a specific systematic approach, recognizes this in a new project and keeps other project members to it.' [E#1]

Attributing a central role to organizational members in carrying and constituting traces implies that the turnover of participants not only directly affects a concept's implementation (Zbaracki, 1998), but particularly its long-term viability (Yin, 1979). As argued, a significant part of the traces tends to be merely available to organizational members involved in a concept's introduction and implementation. These traces carry a risk of erosion when the cluster of knowledgeable people is small and dispersed. Lacking a wide availability in organizations means that minor changes in the organization's population easily result in knowledge on concept and its realizations to erode. 'The BPR method remains in the drawers. The concept has become a piece of history to the organization. [...] Many of the staff members that were involved in the BPR project are no longer employed in this organization. This made the attention for the concept to fade. If these people would still have been employed here, they surely would have used parts of the concept in other projects.' [O#2]

4.6.2 Human agency

Theorists stress the importance of human agency that keep reinvigorating 'old' ideas in organizations (Stjernberg & Philips, 1993; Orlikowski, 2002), thereby suggesting that the viability of traces particularly emerges from the ongoing actions of key organizational members. Easton & Jarrell (2000) even suggest

that a concept such as TQM never becomes self-sustaining in organizations and therefore will erode without constant attention and substantial promotional efforts. A concept's traces tend to fade in importance after departure of its champion (Huczynski, 1993; Marchington et al., 1993). This implies that the long-term viability of traces is closely related to interests and repeated efforts of committed people or 'souls of fire' (Stjernberg & Philips, 1993). I will further elaborate this element in relation to (1) dissemination, (2) legitimation, and (3) organizational maintenance.

Dissemination

A first element obstructing long-term viability is related to a lack of repeated *dissemination* efforts. To enhance the likelihood of entrenchment it is not enough to briefly expose people to traces of prior concepts (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). Rather, maintaining or expanding the population of carriers that recognizes a concept's traces requires continuous dissemination efforts: 'The project is not widely communicated in the organization. [...] Because of this, the BPR projects are only known to the people who were involved, outside this group nobody knows about it.' [O#2] For instance, the inclusion in established training programs may lay the foundation for future application by a larger group of organizational members (Yin, 1979; Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). A lack of dissemination efforts is related to the motivation of concept's carriers and the absence of fertile linkages of a source with would-be recipients in other parts of an organization (Szulanski, 1996). This constitutes an important barrier in knowledge exchange and increases the possibility that new change initiatives in organizations do not build on present traces. As one CEO asserted: 'Possibly the difficult start of the Balanced Scorecard here can be explained because initially, existing experiences in dealing with change processes were not drawn upon.' [Q#1]

Legitimation

Secondly, traces will likely erode in the absence of continuous *legitimation* efforts. As Stjernberg & Philips (1993) stress, the power and attention of organizational members to support and maintain a concept's traces is often limited in time, particularly when a concept suffers from the exit of its initial sponsors: 'The major problem of the BPR project within the organization was that the person who hired me [at organization K] left after two months. The next person in charge promised cooperation to the BPR project only by the skin of his teeth. However this head of the department only stayed for two months.' [K#2] Therefore, increasing the longevity of traces entails continuously regenerating legitimacy for 'old' ideas and practices. An enduring legitimacy of these traces is related to the degree of formalization. The formal recognition of these traces as part of an organizational repertoire is a key factor in their visibility and organizational wide appreciation (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay 1999). It likely brings traces permanently under the attention of organiza

tional members. Formalization enhances ongoing recognition by organizational members and encourages linking traces to perceived organizational problems. ‘The concept has become part of the strategic policy plan where BPR is called as method for redesign of healthcare processes. [...] So everyone in the organization knows what BPR is and uses it.’ [C#1]

Maintaining legitimacy for a concept’s traces is also related to the credibility of the champion associated with it (Chakrabarti, 1974; Szulanski, 1996). A member who is too much associated with a concept’s downturn risks a lack of personal legitimacy, thereby hampering the viability of traces: ‘In the corridors people see Nova quickly as another failed reorganization. Also a lot of good people within [organization A] left because of the cancellation of the project. They were too much a personification of Nova and were no longer accepted by the colleagues in their team.’ [A#1]

The risk of credibility loss may cause people to become involved in a process of *legitimation by manipulation*. This implies that people systematically over-emphasize successful aspects of a concept’s realization only to maintain a favorable impression of its traces: ‘Among us the impression was that BPR did not get the organization anywhere, it had occupied people for a year and resulted in a variety of problems. Then we met the difficulty that we were already too far with the BPR project, we would lose our face if we went back.’ [P#1] When a lot of people and interests are involved in a concept’s implementation, a soul of fire may be compelled by necessity to maintain a Janus face to continuously gaining legitimacy for a concept’s traces.

Organizational maintenance

Finally, a concept’s traces tend to fade away in the absence of *organizational maintenance*. Although traces may be regarded as routinized, they do not necessarily remain part of the daily organizational activities: ‘Now one of the medical specialists who was involved in the BPR project has left and you observe that it is not taken over. Because of this, there has to be done some restoration work to maintain this of that surgeon.’ [C#1] As a concept can only be remembered by continuous application (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Starbuck, 1992), long-term viability requires continuously following and maintaining its realizations: ‘During a BPR project you seek to anchor the issues well in your organization, but you still have to keep an eye on the changes. [...] By following the realizations you will quickly find out that things do not work as expected.’ [E#1]

For instance, the formation of a project group creates an enabling environment for a concept’s initiation and implementation (Clark & Fujimoto, 1991; Rogers, 1995), but also constitutes a major base of discontinuity. As one informant stressed: ‘A large pitfall for a concept lies at its realization, particularly at the moment that the project is brought to an end and the project members spread out.’ [E#1] The dissolution of a project group easily results in a gradual revert to the situation prior to realization. Otherwise, when a

group continues to exist there is a danger of being regarded as ‘special project’ (Yin, 1979: 18) which hampers entrenchment in daily practice. Maintenance does not entail preserving traces in their initial form, but also involves continuous adapting traces to changed requirements: ‘That first BPR trajectory was nine years ago. In the meantime a lot of trajectories took place to further improve work processes by means of new work methods and herewith adapt it to the present times. [Q#1] Without following a concept’s traces after their realization there is a tendency to fall back to the old situation thereby reducing the traces’ viability.

4.6.3 Organizational windows

In the previous sections I stressed that the absence of carriers and a lack of human agency reduces a concept’s long-term viability in organizations. In this section I focus on the context-related barriers in the ongoing realization of traces. The specific interactive situation plays an essential role in the activation of traces (Tsoukas, 1996) as it may trigger their ongoing application in daily practice. In other words, although some traces may still be considered useful, the seed constantly requires a fertile breeding ground to grow. In line with Kingdon (1984), a fertile context for ongoing realization of traces is particularly shaped by the occurrence of ‘organizational windows’. This involves the presence of opportunities to introduce a solution in an organization and getting it accepted. Key element in the emergence of windows is the coupling of solutions to perceived problems. This means that the environment for ongoing activation of existing traces is hypothesized to be shaped by the interplay of (1) perceived organizational problems and (2) the opportunities to attach specific solutions to it (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997).

Perceived organizational problems

Organizations are confronted with an inexhaustible supply of insoluble problems (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). The changes in the perceived problems easily become a barrier in the continuity of a concept’s traces. An important element shaping the viability of traces is that the perception of problems tends to fade (Kingdon, 1984). Concepts generally do not completely solve the initial problem that created the opportunity for their introduction (DeCock & Hipkin, 1997). A lack of satisfying results may entail that members stop to investing time in addressing specific problems. This constitutes an important base for being abandoned as prominent issue on the managerial agenda: ‘Also there were considerable uncertainties in decision making in the Board of Directors what made BPR to experience considerable delays and resulted in large frustration in the levels below. All those processes are perhaps inherent to growing organizations. Only it played a large role in the fading of BPR in the organization.’ [K#3]

The supply of problems in relation to a concept may lack *stabilization* which easily encourages members to cease their efforts in addressing problems. This involves an ongoing inclusion of organizational problems under the concept's banner. Such a lack of problem stabilization in relation to the implementation of concepts hampers its realization and affects the viability of a concept's traces. A concept provides an interpretative space to include different problems which increases the political support of different parties involved. This also allows for constantly enlarging the existing stock of problems. However, a concept likely cannot meet a large variety of different expectations. The ambiguity and lack of opportunities for completion have repercussions for the organizational receptiveness to concept's traces. As a result, a concept may lose its distinctive character and time may work against it: 'Firstly they wanted to standardize the processes with BPR, then the project Kobas was included, then there had to be found a relation between staff and processes, then the costs had to be reduced. So the basic assumptions for application of the concept were constantly adapted.' [K#3]

When problems are no longer urgent or perceived as 'solved' they tend to be considered as 'closed case' thereby reducing the attention to the traces of the initial solution. When a 'closed' problem drops from the agenda, it provides room for new problems to emerge. 'Eventually the organization made a step forwards on the basis of such a BPR project. [...] The organizational problems as formulated in the initial BPR project are not there any more.' [Q#1] A similar process applies to the fulfillment of the initial problems. Often promises of problems are used as threat which makes the organization receptive for new ideas. However, if certain problems that are taken as starting point to a concept's implementation prove not so urgent after a while, it strongly reduces receptivity of organizational members to a concept's traces. 'We have used the danger of privatization as trigger to change. Only at a certain moment nobody believed that this would be reality. If then the threat of market forces does not come it is turned against you.' [A#1]

Also the emergence of new problems tend to distract attention from current traces: 'New issues will likely absorb time from people which means that we will do less BPR-like things.' [E#1] Such new problems easily emerge by addressing current problems. The implementation of previous concepts or the traces they left is often a source of new problems (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). For instance, the duration of an implementation stage may create several basic problems. Responses to inadequacies of previous concepts may even result in reversion of these attempts (DeCock & Hipkin, 1997). The urgency of new problems means that current solutions are quickly forgotten. This could easily mean that organizations constantly reiterate old problems under a new banner (Noon et al., 2000).

Although problems may be regarded as new, they also include the old. In spite of previous realizations, old problems remain present in organizations and become regarded as new. For instance fulfilling client demands constantly

is a source of concern to an organization: ‘So the BPR way of thinking has been placed in a broader framework here. Shaping the services from the customer has only grown stronger since. [...] The problem of tuning to the customer is still relevant for the organization, but has changed in character considerably. [Q#1] One aspect is that the presence of a concept’s sediments enhance recognition of old problems. Recognizing old problems leads to the application of earlier experiences in other situations. The persistence of old problems may draw attention to traces from prior concepts but also cause organizations to reiterate old debates. Due to a concept’s traces, new problems include similar issues but considered from a ‘novel’ perspective. Traces from previous concept are taken as a new starting point for formulating the same problems in a different light: ‘Transfers between departments and between organizations are still a problem today. So the issues relevant to process redesign are still the same, only continuously things are added to it. Was it previously within dealing with a product, it became dealing with a client. Was it previously within one service concept now it is multi-channel. Was it previously optimizing within the own organization, now it is virtually. Those new things still have to be brought under the attention anew.’ [G#1] However, traces may bring that old problems are not recognized as such. Also while the same problems are present they are not necessarily taken as a foundation for new attempts.

Legitimate solutions

The previous part emphasized the role of perceived problems in shaping opportunities for continued exploitation of traces. However, both problems and solutions are needed to create organizational windows in favor of a concept’s traces (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). Unlike what is suggested by management fashion theorists, the introduction of new solutions does not necessarily result in the eradication of the old. Rather, new solutions are regarded important windows to reinvigorate ‘old’ traces. New concepts tend to be more attractive than the old although they carry the same ideas. The presence of these traces increases organizational preparedness to apply similar solutions under a new banner (Benders, 1999; DeCock & Hipkin, 1997). For example: ‘I was project leader Intranet, but did fall back on the steps that were provided during the [earlier] BPR project.’ [J#1] So previous realizations may cause that a concept’s traces are more easily recognized as a relevant idea to address other problem situations. The ongoing application of specific solutions may increase their dissemination within an organization.

One important strategy in maintaining the viability of traces is *relabelling*. Relabelling increases the receptiveness in organizations to ‘old’ traces and provides an important opportunity for reuse: ‘I was educated in BPR and did projects with it when suddenly from the field of Healthcare the concept of “Clinical Pathways” emerged. The label did not say me anything but after someone had given a presentation about it I recognized it directly because

concerning the content it was exactly the same as BPR.’ [L#1] New labels even allow old traces to become realized in spite of unfavorable associations. Rather than using concept as source of inspiration, a new label contributes to regaining legitimacy for specific ways to address organizational problems. ‘That’s why it was remarkable that at a certain moment they started with the concept “Programma Management”, it was something different than BPR but partly told the same.’ [K#3]

Another strategy is what I call *refilling*. While relabelling entails using new labels for old solutions, refilling concerns using ‘old’, legitimate labels as a window to introduce new solutions or maintain attention to existing ideas and practices. So gradually different ideas may be taken up in organizations but placed under the label of an ‘old’ concept. This may distract the attention from the unsuccessfulness of an initial project. It is likely detrimental for organizational members’ motivation to realize that their efforts put in the implementation of a concept are eventually of little value. As a result unrelated developments may be placed under the banner of an ‘old’ label to reinforce the perception of successfulness: ‘The BPR project is not necessarily regarded as a success, but the label is now more a legitimation of different steps that are placed in the framework.’ [P#1]

However, while new solutions offer important opportunities to increase longevity of the old, transferring old traces to a new cycle is easily obstructed in different ways (Yin, 1979). The introduction and realization of previous concepts may cause what I call *organizational immunization* to old solutions. When specific traces have become controversial or are regarded unproven (Szulanski, 1996) it affects their future reputation in an organization and hampers the transfer of these traces to new solutions: ‘People have become a bit reserved with regard to the concept BPR because they think that it is complicated and takes a long time before one sees any result. Probably the realization of the BPR project [at organization L] took a long time and a lot of problems emerged during this process.’ [L#2] Also a concepts realization may be too much associated with a specific group of people which reduce a basis for effective dissemination (Yin, 1979: 132). So a concept’s unsuccessful realization may block further application and herewith becomes an important barrier in the viability of traces associated with it. In such a case, people easily seize the opportunity to reverse organizational manifestations that occurred under that banner.

At the same time, the introduction of new concepts constitutes a window to eradicate the old. It is not only questionable whether current traces are perceived as compatible to new concepts but also doubtful whether these are even remembered. This means that ongoing activities are not necessarily absorbed in the implementation trajectory of a new popular concept. New and promising solutions easily distract attention from current traces thereby creating a constant opportunity for organizational forgetfulness. As Brunsson and Olsen (1997) suggest, organizational forgetfulness enhances making the

same mistakes, but now under a new label. Illustrative for this is a quote from a manager of a large insurance company: 'The Balanced Scorecard was considered as something completely new while it was in fact a possibility to realize parts of the old BPR. [...] It is not the case that the experience-curve has raised by BPR because people have learned about how processes work and how you can change them.' [P#1]

4.7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the process of sedimentation in user organizations. Unlike previous chapters, I concentrated on the demand side of the knowledge market. In this, organizations are generally seen as important consumers of short-lived knowledge commodities. Management fashion theorists suggest that a concept's downturn in the general managerial discourse coincides with a collective rejection of ideas and practices within adopting firms (Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999). In addition a previous chapter presented a downturn in market demand for a concept as key element in the supply of knowledge commodities by consultants. As a result, organizations are easily regarded as capricious, constantly abandoning organization concepts in favor of new and more promising ones. Such patterns suggest little bases for entrenchment within organizations. Unlike current accounts, I presented sedimentation as key element in understanding transient patterns in the reception of organization concepts within organizations. In this study I found more continuity during a concept's downturn than management fashion theorists would suggest.

First, in contrast to what is suggested by management fashion literature, this study found that concepts leave a variety of different traces in organizations during a concept's alleged downturn phase. This exploration allowed identifying various forms of traces thereby showing the importance of loose coupling between traces related to organizational discourse and related to praxis. Specifically, although a concept's discourse-intensity tends to decrease, some terms introduced in association with concept may become absorbed in the 'normal' language or become regarded as 'organizational allergy'. This implies that part of a concept's rhetoric may become common language and included in an organization's everyday vocabulary while organizational members may avoid using other terms and create functional equivalent but uncontaminated alternatives. Also a concept may leave various traces related to praxis such as organizational changes, recognizable ways of changing and cognitive representations. At the same time, however, traces become less recognizable as part of the initial concept by which they were introduced.

A second main point is that the traces follow different trajectories independent from the concept they were initially associated with. This study demonstrated that the lifecycle of discourse does not coincide with a concept's evolution within an organization, but this relationship is much more

complicated. I hypothesized several important elements shaping a concept's traces during an alleged downturn. The barriers related to the long-term viability show that the traces left by a concept remain highly vulnerable and continuously tend to become a 'dead letter'. Specifically the absence of knowledge carriers, human agency and a fertile context for application play an important role in this. Therefore sedimentation should be viewed as ongoing social enterprise that is shaped and reshaped in daily practice. As a result, a single bell-shaped curve is inadequate to describe a concept's reception pattern (Clark, 2004) as its traces are largely unrealized and therefore its trajectory still open-ended. Paradoxically, new concepts may increase the viability of old traces while at the same time they increase the likelihood of organizational forgetfulness.

I believe that there is still a lack of attention to a concept's post-implementation phase in current literature on knowledge consumption. The adoption and implementation of organization concepts are no guarantees for their long-term viability in organizations (Zeitlitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). Rather, the translation of concepts into discourse and action specific to organizations only constitutes a first step in their preservation. In this paper I sought to understand how ideas are translated in time and which key factors play a role in this process thereby revealing a persistent struggle against forgetfulness. This study moved beyond a concept's closure stage (Bijker, 1990) in organizations. It shows how elements from 'old' and 'closed' concepts may become part of a next configuration and are socially constructed anew. Therefore I believe that future research should consider a new concept's implementation as a starting point, not as a closing stage in tracing the odyssey of management ideas.

Finally, this chapter sheds additional light on the relationships between different actors on the management knowledge market. It offered an internal view of demand side actors instead of solely focusing on their external behavior or short stylized descriptions in the print-media. This also gives an additional pretext that furthers insight into the dissemination of organization concepts between different actors on the market. It illustrates how these relationships play a role in an alleged downturn phase and emphasizes that it is more diffuse than suggested by management fashion accounts. These accounts mainly use print-media traces as 'leitbild' for considering patterns of management fashions. However, I stressed the importance of regarding the loose coupling between general discourse in the media and internal discourse and practices in user organizations. While media discourse is suggested to be a prominent factor in a concept's popularization among firms, this is not necessarily influential during a downturn phase. In other words, the transient patterns in print-media discourse should not be regarded as representing the internal trajectories of a concept's traces.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSIENT CONTINUITY

The observations of the commentators at the beginning of this thesis indicated a persistent concern about the continuous and collective rejection of organization concepts that have been widely embraced only a short time before. Such patterns of *concepticide* suggest a *continuous transience* of management knowledge. However, in this study I started from the assumption that the relation between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ is open-ended and sought to develop a theory of *sedimentation*. I entered these typical short-lived developments in the knowledge market and examined from the inside how concepticide is shaped. This implied following concepts in their journey across various actors on the management knowledge market.

This concluding chapter reports the main findings of my empirical odyssey into the wilderness of concepticide thereby drawing on Benders & Heusinkveld (2003) and Heusinkveld (2002). It discusses the approach that was followed and considers the most important results of this study in different lights. The thesis presents sedimentation as a key element in understanding the journey of organization concepts in the management knowledge market during an alleged downturn phase. Hereby it will elaborate on the implications of ‘new’ findings for ‘old’ discussions and theorizing. In a final section I develop some critical notes on the initial yardstick with which I started this study.

5.1 ENTERING A SOURCE OF PROBLEMS

This thesis started with introducing a puzzle about transience and continuity during concepticide. I took the preliminary expectations of management fashion theorists as a starting point to consider how the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ are shaped during a concept’s alleged downturn phase. As maintained by these generally prevailing accounts, the dominant pattern in the production and consumption of management knowledge is one of continuous transience. This implies that ‘old’ concepts in use are persistently and collectively rejected in favor of the ‘new’. Such patterns are highly problematic in the light of accumulation since they cause important impediments in building on existing in

sights and experiences. This means that people are widely encouraged to start from scratch and reinvent the wheel. The often-referred-to 'bell-shaped curve' has become an icon to portray this pattern. This notion is easily applied as universal to any popular management idea. However, in this thesis the conception of management fashions as short-lived swings is considered not taken for granted but constitutes a starting point for a new journey into the process of sedimentation.

This study is not about replicating management fashion analyses which habitually suggest a process of continuous transience in management knowledge. Instead, I started from the premise that during concepticide the relation between 'old' and 'new' is not predetermined per se. This creates a need to empirically explore how the process of sedimentation takes shape during concepticide. However, as explained in the introductory chapter, studying this phenomenon is not particularly a straightforward effort. The approach I set out in the introductory chapter was used as a preliminary guide to develop a theory of sedimentation but at the same time such roads inevitably include important and sometimes unanticipated problems (Ten Bos, 2003). Unlike other studies that are still largely conceptual or draw on print media traces as illustrative material, I stressed the importance of viewing my object of study from different angles. Obviously, this is at the cost of taking a longer and more uncertain journey than solely drawing on article counts. As Ten Bos (2003) stressed, moving outside the borders of a dominant perspective unavoidably implies traveling unbeaten tracks. Next, I will elaborate how this study moved beyond current approaches of management fashion studies.

5.1.1 Translation

This study sought to account for the notion of interpretative viability (Benders & van Veen, 2001). Whereas most studies of management fashion are concerned with tracing the intensity in the use of popular labels, I tried to understand these labels in relation to the context-specific praxis associated with them. This unavoidably implied struggling through a *prima facie* muddle of terms, ideas and practices that are selectively used in relation to each other (Brunsson, 1989). To address this, I took a 'verstehende' attitude (Wester, 1995) to understand what people mean when they talk in terms of old and new. Unlike management fashion accounts that tend to define reality in terms of a single bell-shaped curve, my approach allows to see a heterogeneous movement and distinguish a large variety of different trajectories of management knowledge.

5.1.2 Tracing

While most fashion research examines organization concepts during their period of popularity, this study particularly concentrated on the trajectories of

concepts during their alleged downturn phase. So by seeking to trace changes in discourse and practices in time I did not only take a longitudinal perspective, but considered popular concepts after their disappearance from public display. To trace concepts beyond their alleged downturn unavoidably required 'reopening' ideas that already have passed their 'closure' phase (Bijker, 1990). Although tracer studies are not without difficulties (Rogers, 1995), this approach allowed me to follow the transformations of formerly popular ideas and practices that are now considered 'normal' or 'unfashionable'.

5.1.3 Knowledge market

This study sought to combine a variety of fundamentally different sources and viewpoints to understand typical patterns on the management knowledge market. Unlike current accounts that mainly focused on one 'carrier' or put their analyses only in conceptual terms, I employed three relevant and inter-related windows to observe sedimentation during concepticide. A first window to understand the sedimentation process was constituted by print media. Media theorists see this carrier not only as channel to transfer management knowledge to a large audience but also as important medium for legitimating and contesting organization concepts. The intensive media coverage of some concepts induced debates on cognitive and behavioral impact on management praxis. Fashion theorists emphasize that within print media, new concepts induce recurring sinusoid waves of publications implying a lack of accumulation in management knowledge. This has led theorists to consider media as central carrier of *swinging discourse* involved in constantly introducing and boosting new ideas at the cost of the 'old'.

In the second window, the main focus was on the praxis of management consultancies. Current literature considers these carriers as important supplier of management knowledge. They are generally described as 'systems of persuasion' seeking to support their claims of expertise at knowledge consumers. In this, consultants are involved in constant commodification, i.e. translating management knowledge into a form that can be easily sold on the knowledge market. The ongoing supply of new concepts plays an important role in selling their services. Their prominent role in patterns of management fashion easily leads one to see consultants as pragmatic suppliers of short-lived concepts. Fashion theorists suggest that in this process consultants follow a strategy of planned obsolescence. Specifically, they constantly seek to urge knowledge consumers to replace the old in favor of new management ideas to increase their business. Such merchants of *perishable commodities* stimulate demand for novelty and systematically encourage an aversion to the old.

The third viewpoint moved the focus of this study to the demand side of the management knowledge market. Various accounts identified organizations and their members as main consumers of management knowledge commodities. Discourse on new organization concepts is regarded to be a

source of inspiration for management practitioners and is generally associated with organizational changes. However, research showed that introducing concepts in management praxis is often not without complications. Management fashion theorists suggest that organization concepts are often adopted as quick and legitimate solutions to insoluble organization problems. However as the bell-shaped popularity curves suggest, organizations easily feel urged to abandon a concept while replacing it by a new promising management idea. These patterns easily lead one to see organizations as gullible and capricious, developing *forgetfulness into a routine*.

5.2 SURGES AND SEDIMENTS

As argued in the above section, I choose to enter a terrain that was demanding but also created an opportunity to develop an alternative view on the process of concepticide in the management knowledge market. I presented concepticide as open-ended, instead of *a priori* assuming a single bell-shaped curve. Herewith this thesis adopts a *ghostrider's* perspective (Ten Bos, 2003) in relation to many management fashion accounts. I seek to challenge a dominant and simplistic conception that considers popular organization concepts solely in terms of continuous transience. This is not to reject the presence of swings in intensity of management topics that particularly appear in print-media. Rather, this thesis points to the dangers of uncritically applying the impression that can be drawn from it. Recurring patterns of concepticide in the management knowledge market are conceived as a single, bell-shaped line, while elements of concepts go many other ways than management fashion accounts predict.

Regarding concepticide solely in terms of a single line has major drawbacks because this deliberately neglects relevant aspects related to *sedimentation* (Røvik, 1996). Of course, making models always implies making concessions to the *prima facie* chaos of reality, but I argue that the current conceptions easily constitute a pitfall in understanding concepticide. The analysis in this thesis shows that using this notion as a 'leitbild' for describing and explaining concepticide seemingly gives a foothold but at same time easily blinds people for understanding some key characteristics of this phenomenon. Currently it often serves as clear and uncontested outline of the dominant view about management fashion. However from a *ghostrider's* perspective (Ten Bos, 2003) this dominant view is not considered as a boundary but as a starting point for developing new insights. So again I want to emphasize that one should not *a priori* reject present conception in favor of a new one, but by generating alternative insights, put the 'old' in a more appropriate perspective.

5.2.1 Sedimentation during concepticide

In this study I found more continuity both during the emergence and downturn of an organization concept than management fashion theorists would suggest. Instead of the presupposition of continuous transience, this study draws a picture of *transient continuity*. The analyses demonstrated that a concept leaves a variety of different traces both in discourse and praxis. At the same time, however, this study shows a persistent struggle to prevent these traces from becoming a dead letter. In addition, I identified relevant factors and conditions that play a central role in shaping the traces' long-term viability. This implies that different traces of concepts follow various trajectories independent from the concept they were initially associated with. As a result, a new concept can be both an opportunity to reject the old as well as an occasion to include the old by incorporating it in a novel configuration and by using uncontaminated terms. This should lead one to consider the bell-shaped curve as simplistic and aggregated view of a complex phenomenon. Particularly it neglects sediments (Røvik, 1996) as relevant notion to understand the journey of management ideas. In this it does not account for the loose coupling of talk and content (Brunsson, 1989) which is a key aspect shaping a downturn phase. A final point is that it does not account for important cross-contextual differences. This study indicates the importance of relating the process of sedimentation to distinct actors in the knowledge market. In the remaining part I relate the findings to the literature on specific carriers.

Media

One contribution of the study outlined in Chapter 2 is that it furthers insight into the possibilities and limitations of print-media studies in research on management fashions. In Chapter 2, I showed that analyses of media such as management journals, books and magazines on a specific concept can generate important insights in the process of concepticide but at the same time I emphasized important drawbacks in the research method. Straight counts of media manifestations in bibliographic databases are generally attractive to researchers of management fashion. However, producing a systematic analysis of print media traces is a less straightforward exercise than it seems and involves many pitfalls. In addition, one can say little about the process of concepticide when the content and context of these media traces are neglected. Another contribution to media literature is the notion that simply using a bell shaped curve as proxy for a concept's downturn yields an important danger of reducing a heterogeneous movement into single line. The analysis in Chapter 2 showed that different *communities of discourse* played an important role in shaping the meaning of a concept in the managerial media. These communities translate a concept in their own specific way resulting in a gamut of different interpretations. This implies that one can hardly speak of a collective pattern of downturn in the media. This study also shows that the interests and

context of individual *providers of discourse* constitute a key factor in maintaining the viability of ideas in print media.

Consultancies

As shown in Chapter 3, current consulting literature often emphasizes consultants' 'performance' on public display. Theorists often stress the importance of impression management particularly to convince clients of their expertise, thereby showing that consultants employ specific rhetorical strategies to support their claim of knowledge. However, Chapter 3 argued that consulting literature shows a lack of attention to important internal processes. The analysis in this study indicates that consultants are not particularly a homogeneous group in dealing with organization concepts. Rather, both the development and preservation of concepts may cause significant differences across consultancies. In addition, a number of consultancy theorists emphasized the role of methods and knowledge systems in consulting work. These are easily depicted as key factors in the preservation of management knowledge. However, such accounts easily tend to neglect the significance of internal dissemination processes within consulting organizations. The preservation of ideas related to concepts is not simply a matter of storing knowledge manifestations such as methods, tools and cases into consulting databases but is particularly about constantly generating and channeling the interest of individual consultants.

User organizations

As a first point, Chapter 4 stressed the importance of considering a concept's post-implementation phase. The implementation of an organization concept is easily associated with routinization (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). However, this study shows that the implementation of concepts in organizations does not guarantee long-term viability of the ideas and practices associated with it. Specifically, the persistence of organizational forgetfulness implies that traces are in constant need of attention and promotional efforts. A second point in Chapter 4 is that organizations are predominantly viewed through the lens of a consumer perspective. However these alleged consumers of organization concepts are for a large part involved in co-producing management knowledge. So putting organizations in terms of knowledge consumers tends to neglect that organizations still have a lot to discover when putting their ideas to practice (Hatchuel & Weil, 1995). It also disregards the possibility that management solutions need not necessarily be disseminated in the market but may also crop-up (Brunsson, 1997) independently at different places implying that organizations draw on their own knowledge and experiences. As the study shows in Chapter 4, traces from earlier fashions can play a significant role new fashions' implementation within user organizations.

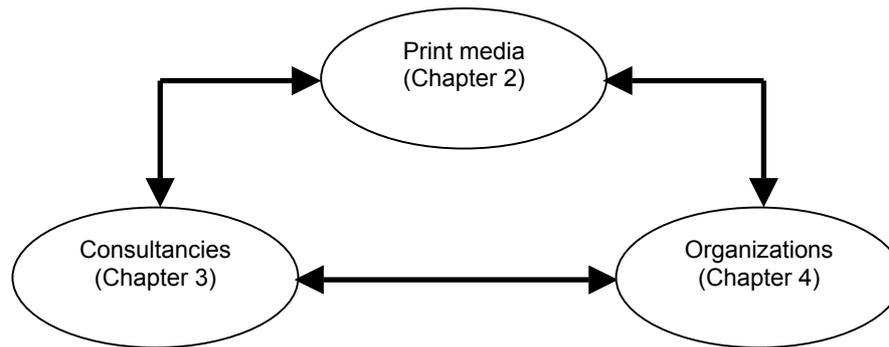


Figure 5.1 Different knowledge market 'carriers' addressed in this thesis

5.2.2 Some notes on interrelations

This study shed further light on relevant interrelations between actors involved in shaping concepticide. These relations tend to be simplified or even neglected by fashion theorists. I believe that considering carriers' mutual influence is essential for understanding and furthering research into typical patterns on the knowledge market. Furusten (1995) already pointed to various interaction effects between different actors involved in shaping managerial discourse, but these are still discussed rather tentatively. The next discussion on interrelations is not meant to be all-embracing since many other actors and factors are involved in shaping the knowledge market. However, I think that these are important indications that concepticide cannot be fully understood without accounting for relations between different actors on the knowledge market. This provides only a small step in further exploring interrelations between different carriers, so this issue clearly requires more detailed study in the future.

First, the study contributes to further insight in interactions between media and consultancies. As shown by analysis of print media traces, consultancies are prominent providers of discourse on organization concepts. The media provide an important outlet for these consultancies to convey an impression of expertise on a specific concept. The dominance of consultancies implies that the capriciousness of print media swings is likely reinforced. In addition, a sudden decrease in print media manifestations on a concept easily suggests a congruent downturn within consultancies. However, the perceived relation of consultancies to managerial discourse is not as straightforward as suggested. A general decrease of a concept in managerial discourse likely causes consultancies to use certain terms less in the market. At the same time it may also leave terminological and practical traces in a consultancy which follow a trajectory independent from the initial concept. Here media plays a role in shaping a market window which affects internal sedimentation. This study pointed out that media patterns are not sufficient to explain the routes of traces. It should take into account the influence of professional aspects and internal transferability.

Secondly, the research allows further discussing the interactions between consultancies and organizations. The data in this study showed various forms of influence. Consultancies often use organizations to legitimate their recipes in the market. This means that organizations are stimulated to bring their experiences in relation to a consultancy in the arenas for validation of knowledge (Faust, 2002). Within organizations, consultants play a role in drawing attention to concepts discussed in general managerial discourse to which organizational members can relate their own specific experiences. Consultants may also be involved in shaping the realization of a concept thereby affecting the way a concept is perceived. Experiences generated within an organization are often fed back to a consultancy knowledge system. However, there are few indications that consultants are involved in a post-implementation phase. Rather they often seek to further shape an organizational climate that is receptive to new solutions.

Thirdly, the study shed further light on the interactions between organizations and media. Fashion literature assumes that a concept's popularity in managerial discourse coincides with its adoption within a population of organizations. Rather the thesis indicated that this relation is much more complicated than suggested. Print media traces often show short descriptions of a concept's successful application in prominent organizations. Further research demonstrated that consultants often stimulate such publications of organizational experiences. However, internal struggles associated with a concept's implementation are often edited out and these descriptions hardly address the post-implementation phase. The attention for a concept in organizations may be stimulated by its prevalence in media, but media manifestations generally also serve as ex-post recognition of internal developments and as means to enhance external communication with other carriers. In contrast to what is put forward by management fashion literature, organizational members are not strongly influenced by a downturn of a concept in the general managerial discourse. This means that a decline in media publications is not regarded as a prominent factor in the traces' trajectories within organizations.

5.3 PRODUCING OLD AND NEW

Studying transience in management thinking is nothing new. Moving from fashion literature to the sociology of management knowledge, this new study revisited some old points but was also able to extend these in various ways. As innovation literature points out, the likelihood of an innovation's acceptance in a population increases when it is able to embody both novelty and familiarity (Rogers, 1995; Hargadon & Douglas, 2001). Lammers (1988) emphasized the importance of adding new insights to the stock of knowledge but considers it also a satisfying idea that different research results constantly point in similar directions. This section partly moves over beaten track and reempha

sizes the importance of these ‘old’ tracks while at the same time it highlights how this study moves beyond prior work.

5.3.1 Reemphasizing the old

First of all, in this thesis I re-emphasized that there is more continuity both at the emergence and downturn of a concept than what is suggested by continuous concepticide. The study demonstrated that a concept leaves different traces during its downturn phase, which can be taken as basis for the introduction and implementation of a next fashion. Hereby it echoes the key message of Lammers (1988) which, I think, cannot be repeated enough. Lammers stressed the importance of looking behind the ‘surface’ of the continuous supply of allegedly new concepts to find that these are largely reiterations of ‘old’ insights. Also Guillén (1994) interprets the history of management knowledge in terms of several basic models and considers new concepts a priori as eclectic approaches. As a result 1990s trends such as LP or TQM are merely seen as recombination of ideas and practices from prior models. So old elements constantly become part of contemporary management knowledge without explicit references.

Secondly, in line with the previous point, my strategy of tracing allowed to reveal the likelihood of collective reinterpretation of the prominent ideas during concepticide. Specifically, many ideas and practices are forgotten or brought under different labels. In this they become part of a ‘new’ history. Concepts may become increasingly accepted as useful and regarded as ‘normal’ within a specific population. Such normalization easily eradicates references to the contested nature of a concept’s propagation and implementation (see for instance Bijker, 1990). Also, a concept may become controversial and turn into an organizational allergy while the initial euphoria with which it was introduced left no traces on the collective knowledge. Such a process of reinterpretation is often only to put current ideas-in-use in a better light, a process which Shenhav (1999) dubbed as *historical reification*. Discontinuity not only causes forgetfulness, it also limits the ability to rate ideas at their true value. This yields the danger that old ideas are edited out or are solely seen through the perspective of the current and temporarily ‘winners’ who seek to emphasize their superiority. Because management intellectuals and practitioners unavoidably fall prey to forgetfulness (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997), previous ideas are discarded as old and obtain a negative connotation in the light of current concepts. This often limits full understanding of the specific context in which ideas crystallized and the contested nature in which these are shaped.

Thirdly, consistent with the work of ‘sociologists of translation’ (Latour, 1987; Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996), I found that concepts are constantly reshaped in different ways when they move across different actors within the knowledge market. This study reemphasized the importance of these accounts in understanding the shape of concepticide. It is unavoidable that concepts are

translated in different and unpredictable ways, which implies that there is no single pattern of downturn. Instead, the occurrence and form of the concept's traces should be considered in the light of the specific social context in which a concept crystallized.

This discussion brings me to a final point that Lammers has put forward i.e. the danger of a lack of accumulation. In spite of the fact that concepts leave various traces behind, I found that concepticide remains an important opportunity for organizations to neglect previous insights and start from scratch. As a result, this study also re-emphasizes the significant underutilization of knowledge from our predecessors. It shows that the presence of a concept's trace is no guarantee that management intellectuals and practitioners will not reinvent the wheel.

5.3.2 Some steps into the new

I believe that an important contribution of this study is that it not only reemphasizes but also furthers current insights in the sociology of management knowledge in different ways. In extension of this field, current study ventured on unbeaten ground. First of all, sociologists of management knowledge often draw on print media manifestations as main source of data for their research. Although Guillén (1994) claims that he addresses not only theoretical discussions by management intellectuals but also the implementation of concepts by organizations, he solely based himself on accounts expressed in print media. The role of professional groups has been theorized only by observing their behavior on 'public display'. Also Shenhav asserts that his study considers both discourse and practices (1999: 36 and 195) although the print-media traces from engineering discourse he draws upon are at least some extent remote from the world of praxis. In contrast, I translated this research to domains other than media like consultancies and organizations. Drawing on primary material from within these carriers enabled me to show how concepticide works in praxis. This study went even further by asserting that studying the loose coupling of discourse in relation to praxis (Brunsson, 1989) in time is an essential element in understanding the process of sedimentation.

Secondly, this study considered not only the continuous emergence of new concepts but particularly focused on their downturn phase as often illustrated by print media traces. Prior accounts consider concepticide more or less as given fact but do not explain how this process takes shape. In other words, theorists point to the danger of underutilization of present insights when people continue to jump on allegedly new concepts. However, they do not sufficiently explain to what extent and how the 'old' is constantly rejected. By concentrating on a concept's post-popularity phase, this study examined key elements that shape a *prima facie* decrease in attention. In this thesis I emphasized the important role of the interplay between discourse and praxis. I found that such a concept's alleged downturn occurs for an important part in the system

of managerial discourse. This implies that the words in which a concept is expressed are used less while elements they refer to may continue to exist.

Thirdly, this study does not simply point to the existence of more continuity in management thinking than concepticide would suggest, but also discerned and described various *forms of traces* in which such continuity becomes manifested. I distinguish between traces related to discourse and to praxis as well as concentrated on their relation. For example in a previous chapter this thesis showed that within user organizations, a concept may leave various discursive sediments. This means that certain terms become considered as part of a 'normal' linguistic package or obtain a specific loadedness which easily cause an allergic reaction when it is used in an organization. Parallel to this discourse I outlined relevant traces related to organizational praxis. This refers to the ideas and initiatives that are induced by and associated with a concept. I defined these traces in terms of organizational changes, recognizable ways of changing and cognitive representations. So in sum I showed that continuity is formed by a large variety of different traces which manifest both in language and practices.

Fourthly, I found that the presence of traces is only part of the story. Present accounts can be criticized for a lack of attention to preservation. Theorists rightly point to the absence of accumulation in management thinking though failed to study how such insights actually can remain viable in a population. This study identified relevant *factors* that play role in long-term viability and explained under which *conditions* discontinuity becomes imminent. It shows that on the one hand there is hope, because the traces left by concepts do not completely become prey to transience. On the other hand the long-term viability of traces, however requires a continuous struggle. For instance, whereas consultancies often use large databases to store their knowledge, traces of prior concepts are not necessarily entrenched in consulting practice and may easily become a 'dead letter'. The continued usage of a concept's traces depends on the extent perceived market windows offer opportunities to sell this knowledge. Also factors such as the strength of professional windows and the ability to bring present traces to the attention of the population of consultants -here dubbed as internal transferability- play a role. This means that traces have to be continuously and extensively marketed and disseminated internally to inform, train and convince consultants of its usefulness. So in sum, only the presence of traces in large consulting databases does not prevent people from reinventing the wheel.

Finally, the notion of translation is often used to explain spatial variations of a management idea across organizational and national contexts (Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996). Here I applied this notion on how ideas are *translated in time* and which key factors play a role in this process. In other words, this study shows how ideas are constantly shaped and reshaped into different forms throughout consecutive periods. I emphasized that traces follow a large variety of different trajectories which are only loosely related to the

trajectory of the concept they were initially associated with. While a concept, as a more or less coherent set of prescriptions, generally experiences a downturn, the meaning of its initial label changes and various traces become part of a subsequent package. As shown, traces of previous concepts even increase organizational preparedness to new fashions (Røvik, 1996). Theorists of social construction argue that the reception of a new artifact is characterized by a period of stabilization and closure (Bijker, 1990). As a result a specific meaning becomes attached to the artifact within a social group. In addition, this study moved beyond such a closure stage within the knowledge market. It shows how elements from old and 'closed' concepts become part of a next configuration and are socially constructed anew. This means that similar management ideas can be socially constructed differently in consecutive periods and may easily obtain a new meaning within the same social group. This puts the notion of closure into perspective because any 'closed' management idea is open to re-construction as part of a new concept.

5.4 PLAYING GAMES

Although academics and practitioners typically play different 'language games' (Astley & Zammuto, 1992) management fashion theorists direct a plea to scholars to intervene in the management knowledge market in various ways. The described magnitude of the management knowledge market is taken as an important argument for the belief that these fashions cannot be neglected by management researchers. In addition, the tardiness with which academics generally appreciate popular organization concepts creates an impression of academia as lagging in the management knowledge production. As a result, management researchers allegedly face the danger of losing credibility because they can easily be dismissed as inhabitants of ivory towers who operate loose from their object of research. Following the suggestions of Abrahamson (1996) and Abrahamson & Eisenman (2001), academics should be more timely aware of new developments in the business world and become more influential in the management knowledge market. Hereby they should increasingly use a different language and should gradually increase their communications in practitioners' outlets. However such a plea has repeatedly emerged in various strands of literature, is not uncontested within academia and is not without further complications in the light of accumulation and the selective and interpretative use of prescriptions in organizational praxis.

5.4.1 Repetitions

A plea to intervene in the management knowledge market touches upon long-standing debates of 'relevance' thereby stirring up old discussions on the dissemination and application of knowledge and the relation between academics and practitioners herein. For many years, scholars have been occupied with

the influence of academic research on management praxis (Havelock, 1969; Duncan, 1974; Pelz, 1978; Kaplan, 1979; Beyer & Trice, 1982; Glaser et al., 1983; Astley & Zammuto, 1992; Kieser, 1995; Kieser, 2002). These studies often share a common concern on the under-utilization of management research in management praxis and point to important problems resulting from this. The limited flow of knowledge is often attributed to fundamental differences between the system of research and praxis. In other words, researchers and practitioners unavoidably live in different worlds. These differences may for instance become manifest in specialized 'language games' (Astley & Zammuto, 1992) engaged by members of each community. Specifically, the main function of language in the academic community is to understand organizational reality while in praxis the main role of language is to induce actions (Eccles & Nohria, 1992). Kieser (1995) stresses that these differences are not only expressed in the specialized rhetoric used in these systems, but particularly becomes manifest in the valued characteristics of theories. For instance, in his study, Duncan (1974) demonstrated that academics generally evaluated empirical validity and precision as valuable while managers considered profitability and possibilities for context specific application as important criteria. Such differences are considered to cause strong communication barriers (Kieser, 2002) between these distinct social systems thereby restricting possibilities for knowledge exchange.

5.4.2 Dispute

While there seems to be ample agreement on the presence of large differences between systems, there are fundamental different opinions in the academic world on how to deal with this situation. Management fashion theorists tend to see academia as a coherent entity while it may represent a house of different opinions. For instance, based on their normative ideas about the relationship between academia and praxis, management scholars employ distinct strategies in dealing with organization concepts (Benders & Heusinkveld, 2003). Scholars employing a *distancing perspective* constantly seek to reinforce the distinctiveness of academia from praxis. They tend to stress the importance of communication barriers because academia loses its distinctiveness and hereby their legitimacy when others may relatively easy participate in it. According to Astley and Zammuto, management scholars should not be involved in 'offering technical advice to managers' (1992: 443) but provide conceptual language to increase mental agility (Kieser, 1995). The role of scholars in praxis is mainly to show the dangers of uncritically applying popular concepts to counterweight over-sold promises by management consultants and management gurus. Critically following societal developments and systematic skepticism towards different knowledge products requires not being involved in the language games of practice (Kieser, 1997). As a result it is regarded as important to accept and maintain differences between the systems.

However, from an *engineering perspective*, academics should intervene in praxis to improve the functioning of organizations (see Romme, 2003). This conceptualization assumes that organizations should be object of instrumental rationality in which they are conceived as means as to enhance managerial control and reduce uncertainty. Shenhav (1995) presents this perspective as an idiosyncratic product of the particular engineering context in which it emerged. This study described engineers in the early twentieth century as breeding ground of a considerable part of contemporary managerial ideology and language. In their contribution Tranfield and Starkey argue that management research should take the 'general engineering problem of design' (1998: 341) as leading principle. They consider relevance to praxis as major concern of management research. Hereby they find their inspiration in the mode 2 system as been proposed by Gibbons (1994) in which knowledge is only produced in the contexts of application.

5.4.3 Accumulation

In their efforts to propose interventions, management fashion theorists tend to neglect the notion of accumulation. A plea for academics to intervene in the management fashion process to regain 'relevance' holds some prima facie attractiveness. However this idea easily loses appeal when it is put in the light of accumulation. Accumulation is regarded as primary directive for management scholars, but also important to management practice (Lammers, 1988). This idea is at odds with uncritically intervening in the management knowledge market as been suggested by fashion accounts. As this study sought to demonstrate, constantly following new concepts under the veil of 'relevance' unavoidably encourages transience in management thinking. Although a concept may leave some traces during its downturn phase, it is intricate to keep long-term viability when people are only involved with practical issues of the day (Watson, 1994) as leading for research. Instead, a central focus on 'old' knowledge is a necessary means in preventing people to reinventing the wheel.

Instead of uncritically going along with trends on knowledge market scholars may use fashions for *relevant repetition* (Benders & Heusinkveld, 2003) and stimulate sedimentation in praxis. Intervening in the knowledge market is not necessarily irreconcilable with academic principles per se. Only I argue that the directive of accumulation should regulate the way in which this happens. Academics can be involved in building organization concepts or addressing contemporary practical issues in organizations. At the same time, the role of academia is to preserve the 'old' and keep it alive. This would unavoidably imply that researchers particularly become involved in 'relevant repetition' (Benders & Heusinkveld, 2003). This is taking new concepts as an opportunity to constantly drawing attention to the 'classics' and increase awareness of already available insights and solutions. This can play an important role in the long-term viability of knowledge as it increases the number of peo

ple who are known with specific insights (Zeitz, Mittal & McAulay, 1999). This means that academics may change their language game but not their principles. As I have argued, uncritically going along with fashions as academics creates a fictitious impression of progress in management knowledge. To become regarded as innovative, people are easily tempted to suppress the work of predecessors (Lammers, 1988). Only letting research guide by what is considered relevant in the knowledge market easily induces continuous transience. Hence, intervening in the knowledge market can only be useful when scholars keep playing their own game without violating the principle of accumulation.

5.4.4 Ideas and actions

Another criticism on the interventions proposed by management fashion accounts is that they tend to overemphasize the role of organization concepts in management praxis. The point is that particularly the recurring large-scale reception of some of these concepts reflects organizational reality, not their content (Ten Bos, 2000). Various theorists emphasized the gap between the content of concepts and actual 'design practice'. For instance Visscher (2001) considers these prescriptions as reductionist representations of practice and shows that they are hardly used by experienced designers (see also Benders & Vermeulen, 2002). In addition, commentators increasingly point to the critical and reflective attitude of organizational members during the introduction of concepts (Watson, 1994; Sturdy, 1997; Benders & Van Veen, 2001). Decoupling ideas from practices can even be considered an indissoluble element of organizations (Brunsson, 1989). By definition, organizations tend to be inconsistent with the prescriptions produced by organization concepts. By following a logic of hypocrisy organizations take the opportunity to generate the desired actions without losing legitimacy. In this light, popular concepts may affect the content of reform proposals, but they are responsible for only a limited part of changes in organizations (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997: 3). As this study shows, the traces related to discourse take a different route during downturn than the traces related to praxis. Ten Bos (2000) even argues that the content of such prescriptions should become more 'fashionable' to more accurately reflect the capriciousness of organizational praxis.

Building an *ideological force* (Lammers & Széll, 1989) that is able to understand patterns in the fashion process increases the ability of management intellectuals and practitioners to critically intervene in praxis. I question the idea to naively follow the knowledge market swings in such a way as fashion theorists suggested. Specifically, the fact that concepts' content do not reflect organizational practice limits the necessity to intervene in the fashion-setting process, but increases the need to intervene in thinking about how fashions are dealt with in praxis. So I would argue that academia's added value particularly lies in conducting research on fashions' reception and providing feedback

to praxis, rather than co-propagate the fashionable rhetoric itself. In other words, scholars may not necessarily be concerned with a specific fashion's content but particularly with elements that shape its reception pattern. These insights can be included in curricula as part of a long-term awareness effort. The population of students that is able to recognize this process may then constitute an *ideological force* (Lammers & Széll, 1989) and play a role in ensuring that the insights on the reception patterns of management fashions to become generally accepted in praxis.

5.4.5 Translation

As a final remark, insights from the previous discussion teach us that knowledge has to be translated in a different form to be widely appropriated among management practitioners. In line with Astley and Zammuto (1992) who conceptualize the academic and practitioners domain as separate language games, this thesis in its current form is not particularly equipped to change management practices in organizations. It requires additional study to translate the learnings from this study to specific implications for praxis. Putting this thesis in another form would likely increase its ability to flow in the managerial language game (Furusten, 1995; Røvik, 1998).

5.5 IN PRAISE OF TRANSIENCE

Here I will put my thesis in a different light by contesting the initial yardstick with which I considered concepticide. Specifically, I took the 'old' academic idea of accumulation (Lammers, 1988) as a normative rationale to assess patterns on the management knowledge market. Concepticide was presented as highly detrimental to our collective knowledge base in itself but also considered as significantly harmful to management practice. However, on reflection, the study also at least suggests certain attractiveness in constantly seeking to put present ideas in the wrong. In addition, it is questionable whether persistence in management knowledge is as advantageous as it seems.

5.5.1 Reinvigorating capability

As this eulogy to the beauty of transience will show, transience can make itself useful in management knowledge dissemination. In other words, I will be ghostriding my own 'measure' by pointing at the *reinvigorating capability* of concepticide and the transience associated with it (see also Heusinkveld, 2002). For instance in response to the 1980s management best seller *In Search of Excellence*, Lammers found that the authors used inadequate research methods and reproduced old knowledge without referring to earlier sources. But at the same time he argues about these authors that: 'In sum, they should not have done it in this way but I am very glad they did it' (1986: 27), hereby pointing at

the fact that the book made no contribution to management knowledge *an sich* but caused that management thinking about the subject received a new impetus. This case shows that sometimes progress in knowledge dissemination can only be achieved by systematically rejecting old ideas. This is not to discard the 'old' ideal of accumulation and replace it by something 'new', but to put this normative interpretation of management knowledge trajectories in a different perspective.

A clean slate

Why not discard a problematic past of specific ideas and enable organizations to start from scratch? Traces of earlier ideas may not necessarily be regarded beneficial. The large promises associated with new ideas cannot be completely realized and generate additional and unanticipated problems (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). New ideas unavoidably become associated with difficulties or even turn out into a source of conflict. As a result, its realization makes an idea to become less appealing compared to a fairly similar, yet new idea that has not yet been applied. Transience enables bringing in ideas anew independent from their past reputation.

For instance this study showed that terms related to a concept may turn into an *organizational allergy* implying that using these terms in an organization may lead to an overstrained situation. In addition, a concept unavoidably becomes interpreted in different ways and hereby grows more diffuse in meaning and loses its distinctive identity. Another point this study showed was that usage of certain 'old' language can be harmful to an organization's reputation because there is a danger of no longer being regarded on the forefront of management knowledge. For instance, Chapter 4 pointed out that it is likely beneficial for implementing similar organizational changes to explicitly reject specific labels that were used in earlier attempts.

Also in relation to praxis it is not necessarily detrimental to reject 'normal' ways of working and thinking. The study demonstrated that various traces like organizational changes, or consulting approaches may have become routines and at the same time a source of problems. When ideas and practices cannot be disputed or rejected, it may block the introduction of new useful ideas. Transience invites one to constantly shake off the burdens from the past to start with a clean slate. This can help breaking old cognitive and behavioral patterns. Also it can prevent organizations to become stuck in the routines of present ways of thinking. Transience prevents the past to lay a heavy burden on the present. Bringing the same old concepts anew easily leads to critical attitudes because of the past carrying with them. In that case, applying the same concept again would generate resistance and lead to a troubled organizational climate. Transience is essential to accept ideas anew, independent from their past reputation. It leaves space for renewal and brings an opportunity to start with an uncontaminated view. It allows for the possibility

for useful ideas to return in a new package despite the fact that the concept they were part of has been regarded obsolete or even controversial.

Dispose of inertness

Why referring to old writings when new books and articles increase the appeal of the ideas they carry to a larger audience and hereby enhance their ability to flow? This study has indicated that concepticide also plays a role in creating new possibilities for further dissemination of insights. Management knowledge is in essence a sticky substance (Szulanski, 1996). This means that its dissemination is restricted by different kinds of barriers that makes it relatively inert. Presenting certain long standing but collectively overlooked ideas as new can contribute to a further spread across a population. Associating 'old' ideas with novelty makes people more receptive to the underlying message (Røvik, 1998). By creating a veil of novelty, a larger group of people becomes more attracted to long-standing ideas that have fallen into oblivion. Presenting a similar solution under an attractive new label induces knowledge to flow (Røvik, 1998; 2002). At same time the transience carried by concepticide creates learning opportunities for people involved and allows for making mistakes.

For example this study showed that an allegedly transient concept like BPR induced an increased dissemination of specific management knowledge across the IT community. Here various ideas on organizing that have been known for a long time in academic traditions became available to a larger group of intellectuals and practitioners. Perhaps otherwise hidden knowledge now becomes widely discussed and acknowledged as relevant. By inducing transience an old message can enthuse many management intellectuals and practitioners. Such old messages do not have a great power of expression when one would reemphasize the 'dusty writings' in which these ideas were initially explained. That new concepts eventually deteriorate is obviously not necessarily harmful in this perspective. Transience has to take its course to make space for novelty. So one could argue that fashions induce the dissemination of management knowledge that would otherwise be inert.

Endless enthusiasm

Why holding on to the principle of accumulation when continuously allowing for self-discovery increases enthusiasm to apply and propagate management knowledge? Transience leaves an endless space for renewal and shows important mobilizing effects which, in some instances even increase the viability of knowledge. This would result in an endless stream of reincarnations in which old ideas are incessantly seen as new and are considered worth investing in. While lacking fundamental new insight it is not particularly attractive to simply repeat the knowledge of one's predecessors. Constantly dragging up the same concepts under the pretext of accumulation is easily considered a dull affair. New concepts unavoidably become worn out through their use

(Benders & van Veen, 2001). So in achieving continuity, transience may play a notable role. This allows that people in different periods can 'discover' certain ideas by themselves without repeatedly have to fall back on old writings with dated insights. Hereby these people can relate these insights to the present 'zeitgeist' which makes it more appealing to current generations. Transience brings an endless stream of reincarnations which allows old insights to become repeatedly regarded as topical.

Transience taps a new source of enthusiasm for *prima facie* new and unrealized ideas. Characteristic for these ideas is their utopianism (Ten Bos, 2000). The large promises generate momentum to realize these ideas in the future. New and promising ideas are inevitably in sharp contrast with the complexities and inconsistencies of the current, 'old' situation. In spite of the fact that utopian loaded ideas likely cannot be realized, transience easily persuades to undertake new attempts of earlier efforts (Brunsson & Olsen, 1997). For example findings in this study indicate that transience may overcome *organizational immunization* or enhances *transferability* of certain basically useful ideas. A concept's unsuccessful realization or aging may become an important barrier in the long-term viability of traces associated with it. Concepticide constantly creates a climate open to the uptake of management ideas. In this, ideas are endlessly able to regain legitimacy as a useful way of addressing relevant problems. Moreover, such a climate also encourages 'souls of fire' to invest efforts in the dissemination and application of management ideas. Hence, the beauty of transience in management thinking is that it opens the way for novelty which makes that ideas can be endlessly reborn and can draw on an inexhaustible source of renewed enthusiasm. By simply following a rationale of accumulation these insights lack such joys of transience.

5.5.2 Continuous rediscovery

This research gave no reason to doubt the persistence of concepticide. There is probably no change in the continuous supply of new solutions on the knowledge market. Instead, it shows that transience takes many different forms and is very hard to control. New concepts take their rationale of existence to transience, because without decline of existing ideas they hold no added value. Followers of transience have an interest in preserving a constant process of knowledge deterioration. Sedimentation should be regarded as an ongoing accomplishment since any idea is susceptible to replacement (Yin, 1979: 156). I believe that several structural conditions make transience to be indomitable and omnipresent in management research and praxis.

A window to reject the old

Turning to the demand side of the knowledge market, management practitioners likely remain confronted with insoluble organizational problems that constantly feed the need for new management solutions (Brunsson & Olsen,

1997). So the persistence of organizational forgetfulness entails that 'old' ideas are seen as 'new' and easily develops the introduction of allegedly new concepts into a routine. For instance this study indicated the fragility of traces during the introduction and implementation of concepts in organizations. This means that the absence of a soul of fire or a decrease in efforts to disseminate and legitimate specific concepts play an important role. Also the organizational climate is not necessarily supportive to the viability of a concept's traces.

On the supply side of the management knowledge market, consultants unavoidably will take advantage of the uncertainty and needs of management practitioners. They likely continue seeking to increase demand for their services by continuous commodification of management knowledge (Fincham, 1995; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2001), a process which inevitably induces the need for new commodities. By following a strategy of planned obsolescence knowledge becomes manifest in perishable goods and clients are urged to constantly replace current concepts by 'new' ones (Huczynski, 1993). This study not only demonstrated that this strategy particularly becomes apparent in various communicative actions on public display, but also affects internal processes of sedimentation. In spite of the presence of many traces, new concept development decreases a favorable organizational climate and personal incentives to preserve the old. The study also showed that some academics are very willing to go along with the popularity of alleged new concepts and create a misleading impression of continuous renewal in knowledge creation. Not complying to new and fashionable concepts yields for them a danger of being taken as old fashioned. In choosing between accumulation and relevance some scholars are easily seduced to follow the latter (Lammers, 1988; Benders & Heusinkveld, 2003). Together, these actors both on the demand and supply side create important conditions for continuous discontinuity in management knowledge and create important barriers in the long-term viability of management knowledge. So although organization concepts may leave a large variety of different traces, new concepts remain a window for people to eradicate the old.

A world of reiterations

Turning to the outset of this thesis, I showed the opinions of various commentators who observed a continuous stream of short-lived management approaches, indicating that the subject of this thesis is nothing new. However, hopefully by systematic study I can move some steps beyond some simple *prima facie* observations. Ortmann even stressed that many things rest on the foundation of recurrence when he states that: 'in the beginning is the reiteration' (1995: 401). Perhaps ironically this message cannot be repeated enough since many things become prey to transience. The persistence of transience makes that we can endlessly think of 'new rediscoveries' for years to come. Transience criticizes people who remember what has been said and written in

the past and dispose these people of as outdated. What can one learn from the past if one is always confronted with new developments? Transience has many forms and employs different kinds of cunning tactics to seduce people to forget. As been outlined in this thesis, such practices carry certain important dangers. In his novel, van der Heijden even describes repetitions as indissoluble part of hell: 'The hell is as the world of reiterations. Instead of, as the case with heavenians where the life is condensed into a sublime, inseparable moment, the hellenians are hold out a prospect of never ending reiterations' (1988: 28). Seen in this light, followers of transience are condemned to incessant repetition of the 'old' while knowledge accumulators can always draw on a single blissful moment of discovery.

This study on sedimentation shows that the process of accumulation cannot be controlled easily. A concept's traces are no stable entities, but continuously have to be kept 'alive'. This means that the faith of new knowledge is in the hands of the way people deal with it after it has been discovered (Latour, 1987) and to the extent they are seduced to serve transience in their specific situation. Ideas that do not participate in this capricious social game are by definition predestined to never reach the surface. In this thesis I sought to trace the journeys of ideas and tried to enhance understand how transience is able to display remarkable tenacity within concepticide. The possibility of maintaining a concept's traces does not prevent people from reinventing the wheel. Paradoxically, my study shows that the structural conditions for concepticide make that transience easily takes hold with certain routine, constantly swallowing loads of new knowledge into a black hole. As a result we cannot accuse transience of a lack of accumulation.

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SUMMARY IN DUTCH

Vergankelijkheid in het management denken is niets nieuws. Voortdurend worden bestaande organisatieconcepten om zeep geholpen die een tijdje eerder nog massaal als nieuw werden omarmd, een fenomeen dat ik hier *concepticide* noem. Theoretici van management modes verklaren deze stroom vanuit patronen van vraag en aanbod in de markt voor management kennis. Zij suggereren hierbij een *continue vergankelijkheid* van management kennis. Hierbij wordt vaak gerefereerd aan de typische klokvormige curve die het vergankelijke karakter van veel concepten impliceert. Hieruit kan gemakkelijk worden afgeleid dat na een periode van populariteit een concept in een kwaad daglicht komt te staan waardoor onvermijdelijk het collectieve geheugen wordt 'gewist'. Het voortdurend om zeep helpen van 'oude' ideeën ten gunste van 'nieuwe' is niet alleen problematisch in het licht van het academische ideaal van accumulatie, maar ook een slechte zaak voor de organisatiepraktijk. Immers, zoals 'oude' inzichten laten zien, een permanent onvermogen om systematisch te bouwen op bestaande inzichten en ervaringen betekent het continu moeten herontdekken van kennis en het gedoemd zijn om steeds weer dezelfde fouten te maken.

In deze studie ga ik uit van de aanname dat binnen concepticide de relatie tussen het 'oude' en het 'nieuwe' niet vooraf bepaald is. Dit gegeven voedt de noodzaak voor het empirisch verkennen van het proces van *sedimentatie* tijdens de 'neergang' van een concept. Als vertrekpunt voor deze studie stel ik de vraag: Hoe verloopt het proces van sedimentatie binnen de markt van management kennis gedurende concepticide? Echter het beantwoorden van deze vraag is niet zonder verdere complicaties. Het bestuderen van organisatieconcepten is immers een bron van problemen, een gegeven waarmee deze studie zal mee trachten om te gaan. Ten eerste, in tegenstelling tot 'substantieve' innovaties, hebben organisatieconcepten geen materiële component. Dit betekent onvermijdelijk dat een concept op een groot aantal verschillende wijzen wordt 'vertaald' wanneer het zich op de markt begeeft, wat resulteert in een variëteit aan verschillende interpretaties van het oorspronkelijke idee. Op de tweede plaats worden gebeurtenissen geassocieerd met een bepaald concept voortdurend herzien in retrospectief. Dus bij het 'tracen' bestaat het ge

vaar van post-hoc rationalisaties. Ten derde is de management kennis markt geen homogene entiteit, maar kan gezien worden als een arena waar verschillende 'dragere' zoals massa media, consultants, goeroes, business schools, en managers voortdurend over elkaar heen duikelen om maar met de nieuwste concepten aan de haal te kunnen gaan.

De centrale vraag wordt beantwoord door het bestuderen van relevante theorie en data van 'dragere' als print-media, management consultants en wat ik noem gebruikersorganisaties. Ondanks dat de steeds terugkomende en kortdurende managementmodes een persistent gebrek aan accumulatie en de triomf van de vergankelijkheid suggereren, laat de studie zien dat er niet *a priori* sprake is van vergankelijkheid gedurende de neergangsfase van een organisatieconcept. De losse koppeling van discours en achterliggende praxis rondom een concept maakt dat verschillende sedimenten een eigen route volgen onafhankelijk van het organisatieconcept waar het in eerste instantie mee werd geassocieerd. Dit betekent dat er verschillende 'sporen' achterblijven die niet noodzakelijkerwijs meegaan in de onvermijdelijke neergang van concept. De studie identificeert verschillende vormen in relatie tot discours en praxis waarin deze sporen zich manifesteren. Echter de studie laat ook zien dat er belangrijke barrières bestaan in het levend houden van deze sporen. De sporen die een concept achterlaat binnen de 'dragere' dreigen voortdurend te verworden tot een 'dode letter'. Het opslaan hiervan brengt alleen vergankelijke continuïteit. Hierdoor is hun lange termijn levensvatbaarheid niet iets wat gegeven is maar vormt een continue inspanning. Deze studie identificeert relevante factoren en condities die hierin een belangrijke rol spelen. De mogelijkheden van sedimentatie biedt dan ook geen garantie dat men niet opnieuw het wiel uit zal gaan vinden.

Dit betekent dat, ondanks wat de literatuur over management modes suggereert, niet alles noodzakelijkerwijs ten prooi valt aan de vergankelijkheid. Tegelijk kan worden gesteld dat hier sprake is van een duurzaam fenomeen. Gelijksoortige organisatieproblemen zullen blijven opborrelen en in het spoor daarvan blijven oplossingen om met deze problemen om te gaan zich aandienen. Managers zullen altijd gevoelig blijven voor de prestatieverbetering die organisatieconcepten beloven, terwijl aanbieders zullen blijven voldoen aan de permanente vraag naar 'nieuwe' technieken en concepten. De 'productivisatie' van bedrijfskundige kennis in 'nieuwe' concepten voedt na verloop van tijd onvermijdelijk weer de drang om het 'oude' af te zweren. Dit leidt tot de vrees dat de vergankelijkheid zich continu manifesteert met een grote routine. De onzekerheid in de uitkomst wordt gevoed doordat het lot van 'oude' concepten en de sedimenten die zij met zich meebrengen in handen ligt van de manier waarop mensen ermee omspringen en de persistentie waarmee zij de vergankelijkheid dienen. Deze studie trachtte een stapje te maken in het in kaart brengen en begrijpen van dit proces.

APPENDIX I

PRINT-MEDIA TRACES

APPENDIX IA: COMMUNITIES OF DISCOURSE (SECTION 2.5.1)

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Ac		Bedrijfskunde				2	3		2	1	8
2	Ac		Econ & Soc Tijdschr						1			1
3	Ac		Econ-Stat Berichten				1					1
4	Ac		Filosofie in Bedr					1	1			2
5	Ac		Gedrag & Org				1					1
6	Ac		M&O					1				2
7	Ac		Tijdschr. Econ & Mgt							1		1
<i>Total</i>				0	0	0	4	5	2	3	2	16

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Pr	Fin	Acc & Bedrijfsk				1		1			2
2	Pr	Fin	Checkl Fin Mgt						1			1
3	Pr	Fin	Contr Magaz			1		1	1	5		8
4	Pr	Fin	De Accountant					1				1
5	Pr	Fin	Doelm Bedrijfsv					1				1
6	Pr	Fin	FEM				2	2		2		6
7	Pr	Fin	Fin Mgt Select						1			1
8	Pr	Fin	Prakt Fin Mgt					1				1
9	Pr	Fin	TAC				4	3				7
10	Pr	Fin	Tijdschr Fin Mgt				1	1	2	2		6
<i>Total</i>				0	0	1	8	10	6	9	0	34

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Pr	Gen	Bedrijfsk Vakblad				1	3	2	2	1	9
2	Pr	Gen	Checkl Alg Mgt					1				1
3	Pr	Gen	Elan			2		1		2		5
4	Pr	Gen	Holland Mgt Rev	1	1	1	3		1	4		11
5	Pr	Gen	Kwaliteit in Bedr				1	1				2
6	Pr	Gen	M&O Quarterly					1				1
7	Pr	Gen	Mgt Selectuur							1		1
8	Pr	Gen	Mgt Team					2		1		3
9	Pr	Gen	Nijenrode Mgt Rev						2	2		4
10	Pr	Gen	NIVE Mgt Magaz				1		1			2
11	Pr	Gen	Openbaar Best					1				1
12	Pr	Gen	Panta Rhei				1					1
13	Pr	Gen	Quote						1			1
14	Pr	Gen	Repeat					1				1
15	Pr	Gen	Sigma			1		2		1		4
16	Pr	Gen	Tijdschr Bedrijfsadm					1		1	1	3
<i>Total</i>				1	1	4	7	14	7	14	2	50

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Pr	IT	Beleidsinf Tijdschr						1			1
2	Pr	IT	CA Techniek								1	1
3	Pr	IT	CM Corporate				2					2
4	Pr	IT	Compact					2				2
5	Pr	IT	Computable			2		2	2	2	8	16
6	Pr	IT	Database Magaz				1					1
7	Pr	IT	De Autom Gids			2	3		1	1	1	8
8	Pr	IT	Informatie			1	2	2	2	3	5	15
9	Pr	IT	Info & Infobeleid						1	1		2
10	Pr	IT	Info Mgt		1	5	5	2	1	1		15
11	Pr	IT	Info Professional							1		1
12	Pr	IT	IT Monitor								1	1
13	Pr	IT	Mgt & Info			6	6	3	3			18
14	Pr	IT	Mgt & Org Automid				3	5	5	3	2	18
15	Pr	IT	Nieuws BestInfokun						2			2
16	Pr	IT	Open						1			1
17	Pr	IT	PC+				1					1
18	Pr	IT	Samsom Info				1	1				2
19	Pr	IT	Softw Magaz					3				3
20	Pr	IT	Tijdschr Med Info						1			1
21	Pr	IT	VIP				1	1	1	2	1	6
22	Pr	IT	Workflow Magaz							1		1
<i>Total</i>				0	1	16	25	21	21	15	19	118

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Pr	Oth	Catering Magaz				1					1
2	Pr	Oth	Facility Mgt Magaz						1			1
3	Pr	Oth	Tijdschr Pol				2					2
4	Pr	Oth	Inkoop Act					1				1
5	Pr	Oth	Kantoor & Effic						1			1
6	Pr	Oth	Marketing Wise					1				1
7	Pr	Oth	Neth Off Stat								1	1
8	Pr	Oth	Overheidsmgt					1	1			2
9	Pr	Oth	Prakt Medezschap				2					2
10	Pr	Oth	Tijdschr Ink & Log				2	1			1	4
11	Pr	Oth	Tijdschr Marketing				1				1	2
12	Pr	Oth	Tijdschr Bedrcomm							1		1
13	Pr	Oth	Transp & Opslag					1				1
14	Pr	Oth	Woningraad						1	1		2
15	Pr	Oth	Zeno						1			1
<i>Total</i>				0	0	0	8	5	5	2	3	23

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Pr	Per	Gids Persmgt					1		2		3
2	Pr	Per	HRMselect				1	5	1	2		9
3	Pr	Per	Meth Persmgt					1		1		2
4	Pr	Per	Opleid & Ontwik				1	5				6
5	Pr	Per	PEMselect			1		4	2			7
6	Pr	Per	Persbeleid				1			1		2
7	Pr	Per	PW				2					2
<i>Total</i>				0	0	1	5	16	3	6	0	31

No	Ac/Pr	Field	Periodical	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
1	Pr	Non	Medisch Contact							1		1
2	Pr	Non	Pharm Weekblad						1	1		2
3	Pr	Non	Zorgvisie						1			1
4	Pr	Non	ZM Magaz						1			1
5	Pr	Non	De Constructeur				1					1
6	Pr	Non	De Ingenieur					1				1
7	Pr	Non	Geodesia							1		1
8	Pr	Non	Het Ingenieursblad				3	1				4
9	Pr	Non	Ingenieur				1					1
10	Pr	Non	Polytech Tijdschr					1			1	2
<i>Total</i>				0	0	0	5	3	3	3	1	15

APPENDIX IB: SAMPLE OF DUTCH BPR PUBLICATIONS

Academic discourse [A]

A1	J. Boonstra, Herontwerp, reengineering en ontwikkeling, <i>Gedrag en Organisatie</i> 7(6) (1994), pp. 331-351.
A2	R.J. Kusters, F.M. van Eijnatten & H.P.G. van Ooijen, Business Process Redesign: Richtingen voor nieuw onderzoek, <i>Bedrijfskunde</i> 69(1) (1997) pp. 11-17.
A3	B. Prakken, Business process engineering: kan het (nog) beter?, <i>Bedrijfskunde</i> 67(4) (1995), pp. 73-77.
A4	D.S. Tan, Informatiemangementplateaus: Fasen in het management van informatietechnologie, <i>Bedrijfskunde</i> 67(2) (1995), pp. 86-93.
A5	R. Ten Bos, Business process redesign: Het rad van Ixion, <i>Bedrijfskunde</i> 69(1) (1997), pp. 56-66.
A6	W. Van Grembergen, Wat is belangrijk in de bedrijfsinformatica? Een analyse voor managers, <i>Economisch en sociaal tijdschrift</i> 50(4) (1996), pp. 593-616.
A7	W. Van Grembergen & D. Vloeberghs, Business Process Reengineering: Een holistische benadering van processen, strategieën, structuren, mensen en informatietechnologieën, <i>Tijdschrift voor economie en management</i> 42(1) (1997), pp. 99-130.
A8	L.S. Vansina & T.C. Taillieu, Herontwerp van bedrijfsprocessen of sociotechnisch systeemontwerp in een nieuw jasje, <i>M&O</i> 49(4) (1995), pp. 246-268.
A9	K. Van Veen, Een vergelijking tussen BPR en MST: Twee productieconcepten en hun context, <i>Bedrijfskunde</i> 70(2) (1998), pp. 38-45.
A10	S. Verlaar & J. Benders, Over delen en gehelen: Organisatieconcepten invullen en aanvullen, <i>M&O</i> 52(3) (1998), pp. 7-22.

PRAXIS DISCOURSE [P]

FINANCE/ACCOUNTING [Pf]

Pf1	A. Bookelaar, Reorganisatie - Steeds harder werken, <i>Financieel Economisch Magazine</i> 26(25/26) (1995) pp. 34-40.
Pf2	Q. Danko, Management trends, <i>Financieel Economisch Magazine</i> 25(21) (1994), pp. 50-52.
Pf3	L. Dekleermaeker, Nut van bedrijfsproces re-engineering en van het opzetten van interorganisatorische systemen, <i>Accountancy en Bedrijfskunde</i> 14(8) (1994), pp. 15-28.
Pf4	L. Dekleermaeker, Organisatorische aspecten met betrekking tot informatie- en communicatiesystemen, <i>Accountancy & Bedrijfskunde</i> 16(8) (1996), pp. 3-12.
Pf5	R. Dudink & E. Schoemaker, Reengineering van finance, <i>Tijdschrift Financieel Management</i> 15(2) (1995), pp. 32-38.
Pf6	A. Huizing & E.J. de Vries, Business Reengineering: Over en uit?, <i>Tijdschrift voor Bedrijfsadministratie</i> 102(1217) (1998), pp. 425-431.
Pf7	M.C. Kamermans, R.A.G. Klaver & J.A. Man, Herontwerp van informatieverzorgende processen, <i>Tijdschrift Financieel Management</i> 16(2) (1996), pp. 22-28.
Pf8	C. Kharas & S. Ramaekers (1995), Ingrijpende verbeteringen door BPR, <i>Tijdschrift voor Administrateurs en Controllers</i> 10(6) (1995), pp. 14-18.
Pf9	R.W. Loehr & M.J.F. Wouters, Internal Control and Process Reengineering: Looking beyond the numbers to the health of the processes, <i>De Accountant</i> 101(10) (1995), pp. 673-676.
Pf10	G. Noordam & R.A.G. Klaver, Het echte ontwerpen moet nog beginnen: Business Process Redesign meer dan een trendy verschijnsel, <i>Tijdschrift voor Administrateurs en Controllers</i> 9(10) (1994), pp. 52-58.
Pf11	J. Roos, Geen begin bij nul, wel een ommezwaai: BPR bij Geveke, <i>Tijdschrift voor Administrateurs en Controllers</i> 10(6) (1995), pp. 10-13.
Pf12	J.T.M. Van der Zee. & S.L. Graf, De onzichtbaarheid van informatietechnologie, <i>Tijdschrift voor Administrateurs en Controllers</i> 9(11) (1994), pp. 33-36.
Pf13	H.G. Westendorp, O.C. van Leeuwen & R.A.G. Klaver, Controllersfunctie verschuift door business performance improvement: Controller wordt co-regisseur en inspirator van veranderingsprocessen, <i>Tijdschrift voor Bedrijfsadministratie</i> 101(1206) (1997), pp. 355-359.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT [Pg]

Pg1	M.V. Batelaan, Tien manieren om redesign te verknoeien, <i>Holland Management Review</i> (35) (1993), pp. 84-89.
Pg2	M.V. Batelaan & R.F.M. Vrolijk, Bedrijfsprocessen herontwerpen: Een dringende noodzaak, <i>Holland Management Review</i> (29) (1992), pp. 7-17.
Pg3	M.V. Batelaan & E. Wildschut, Bestaat Business Process Redesign?, <i>Holland Management Review</i> (40) (1994), pp. 40-46.
Pg4	J. Blonk, BPR, een verantwoordelijkheid van de werkvloer, <i>Sigma</i> 41(3) (1995), pp. 11-13.
Pg5	M. Boogaard & R. Vermeulen, De levenscyclus van management-buzzwords, <i>Holland Management Review</i> (56) (1997), pp. 71-79.
Pg6	M. Bosma, Groot onderzoek naar Reengineering in Nederland, <i>Management Team</i> 17(11) (1995), pp. 83-85.
Pg7	M. Bosma, Maar wel voorzichtig: Uitslag grootschalig onderzoek naar Reengineering, <i>Management Team</i> 17(16) (1995), pp. 101-104.
Pg8	L. Hartgring, Business Process Redesign voor preventief onderhoud bij de Luchtmacht, <i>NIVE Management Magazine</i> 6(1) (1996), pp. 28-30.
Pg9	P. Hinssen & D. de Wit, Diagnose bij Business Process Redesign, <i>Holland Management Review</i> (55) (1997), pp. 76-84.
Pg10	H. Hofman, Missie en reengineering van het HBO, <i>Bedrijfskundig Vakblad</i> 9(1) (1997), pp. 35-39.
Pg11	T.H.W. Janssen, De kernelementen van BPR, <i>NIVE Management Magazine</i> 4(5) (1994), pp. 16-19.
Pg12	J.A. Jurriëns, Business Process Redesign en Logistiek: Concurrentie tussen logistiek en BPR actueel?, <i>Inkoop & Logistiek</i> (10)(1998), pp. 22-23.
Pg13	F.J.A. Kraus & M.J. de Folter, Business Process Redesign in het ziekenhuis, <i>Sigma</i> 41(3) (1995), pp. 27-31.
Pg14	A.J. Muller-Sloos, Haal meer uit business process re-design, <i>Bedrijfskundig Vakblad</i> 10(7) (1998), pp. 12-18.
Pg15	C. Nijman & W. van Essel, BPR en HRM: Paradox of uitdaging?, <i>Holland Management Review</i> (52) (1997), pp. 47-54.
Pg16	H.W. Schipper, Business process re-engineering biedt perspectief voor inkoop, <i>Tijdschrift voor Inkoop & Logistiek</i> 11(7/8) (1995), pp. 62-63.
Pg17	L. Simonse, Business Process Redesign: Sociotechnisch organisatie-herontwerp in een informatietechnologisch jasje?, <i>Panta Rhei</i> 4(2) (1994), pp. 9-15.
Pg18	H. Van der Sar, Deel II over Business Process Redesign: De rol van het topmanagement bij veranderingen, <i>Kwaliteit in bedrijf</i> 11(1) (1995), pp. 17-19.
Pg19	B. Van 't Hof, BPR, een 'hype' ontluisterd?, <i>Bedrijfskundig Vakblad</i> 7(6) (1995), pp. 14-18.
Pg20	P. Van der Vlist, Business Re-engineering en inkoop, <i>Tijdschrift voor Inkoop & Logistiek</i> 10(3) (1994), pp. 26-3.
Pg21	H.J.M. Van Velthoven, Workflow management en bedrijfsprocessen, <i>Kantoor en Efficiency</i> 35(1) (1996), pp. 62-66.
Pg22	M. Van Zanten, Operatie voorsprong: BPR bij reclamebureau PMS, <i>Elan</i> 12(2) (1997), pp. 45-47.
Pg23	A.M. Veldhorst J. Kooistra-Kats & P.A.G.E. Silverentand, GSD Apeldoorn vernieuwt met BPR, <i>Overheidsmanagement</i> 12(12) (1995), pp. 330-334.

Pg24	H.M. Visser, Dynamic Enterprise Modeling als vervolg op BPR, <i>Bedrijfskundig Vakblad</i> 9(6) (1997), pp. 11-16.
Pg25	L. Mesters, A Nieuwenhuis & W. Koot, Fundamentele veranderingen bij Abp Pensioenen met Procesherontwerp, <i>Openbaar Bestuur</i> , 5(8) (1995), pp. 21-26.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY [P]

Pi1	C. Bakker & F. van Leeuwen, Lift-off voor DCC met workflow: BPR, groupware en workflow met 13 systemen en databases voor een 45-voudige verbetering in de procesrespons, <i>Informatie</i> 39(2) (1997), pp. 48-58.
Pi2	J. Bakker, De belastingontwijker te slim af, <i>Automatisering Gids</i> 27(47) (1993), pp. 11-12.
Pi3	M. Buitelaar & U. Groen, Business process redesign: Een nieuwe kijk op automatisering?, <i>Informatie</i> 36(6) (1994), pp. 388-397.
Pi4	J. De Gooijer & M. ten Voorde, Business process reengineering en rapid application development: Doel heiligt de integratie, <i>Computable</i> 29(11) (1996), pp. 33, 35, 37.
Pi5	W. De Kam, Belastingdienst vernieuwt bedrijfsprocessen, <i>Informatie Management</i> (3) (1993), pp. 22-27.
Pi6	D. De Wit, Keuzes in onzekerheid: Organisaties en informatietechnologie, <i>Informatie & informatiebeleid</i> 14(3) (1996), pp. 39-48.
Pi7	C. De Zwart, Bedrijfskundige laat computer zijn waarde bewijzen, <i>Informatie Management</i> (8) (1993), pp. 38-40.
Pi8	C. De Zwart, Het optimaliseren van bedrijfsprocessen, <i>Informatie Management</i> (5) (1993), pp. 8-11.
Pi9	C. De Zwart, Belastingdienst herontwerpt zich: Gebruikersinbreng blijft een heikel punt, <i>Informatie Management</i> (8/9) (1994), pp. 9-11.
Pi10	C. De Zwart, Bij business process reengineering is IT niet slechts hulpmiddel: BPR-rapport gaat meer over case- en workflow-tools, <i>Computable</i> 28(47) (1995), pp. 31, 33.
Pi11	C. De Zwart, Gemeentelijke dienst ontloopt overbodigheid: Dienst Woonruimte zaken gaat nieuwe markten op, <i>Informatie Management</i> (6/7) (1995), pp. 24-27.
Pi12	C. De Zwart, Workflow-automatisering levert meestal geld op: Zelfs zonder aanvullende maatregelen profijtelijk, <i>Informatie Management</i> (1/2) (1996), pp.11-13.
Pi13	J.W.M. Gerrits & R. Toppen, Procesherinrichting bij Robeco Groep, <i>IT Management Select</i> 3(3) (1997), pp. 52-61.
Pi14	J.W.M. Gerrits & R. Toppen, Procesherinrichting bij Robeco Groep, <i>IT-Monitor</i> (2) (1998), pp. 4-6.
Pi15	J. Hosman & G. Verkerk, Electronic commerce: Van optimalisatie tot innovatie, <i>Informatie</i> 40 (1) (1998), pp. 30-35.
Pi16	J. Hospers, Alle neuzen aan dezelfde puzzel: Herontwerp van bedrijfsproces met Gebruikersgericht Procesontwerp, <i>Computable</i> 31(26) (1998), pp. 52-55.
Pi17	A. Huizing & W. Bouman, Business reengineering: Sturen op samenhang, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 4(1) (1996), pp. 4-12.
Pi18	A. Huizing, Transformatie door business process redesign, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 1(4) (1993), pp. 3-13.
Pi19	A. Huizing, A.M. Stolwijk & E.J. de Vries, Accelereren op de infrastructuur, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 2(3) (1994), pp. 75-84.
Pi20	H.P.M. Jägers, W. Jansen & R. Stil, De informatieorganisatie: Blauwdruk voor morgen, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 1(4) (1993), pp. 49-60.
Pi21	S. Joosten, De hype voorbij: Veilig en volt vernieuwen van bedrijfsprocessen, <i>Informatie</i> 40(12) (1998), pp. 8-17.
Pi22	L. Klaver, Simulatie geeft inzicht in bedrijfsprocessen: Structuraanpassingen uitproberen op het droge, <i>Informatie Management</i> (6/7) (1993), pp. 4-7.
Pi23	M. Klein Klouwenberg & A. Huizing, BPR: Hoe doe je het? Het organiseren van resultaatgerichte verandering, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 1(4) (1993), pp. 85-95.
Pi24	E. Koster, I. Regien & M. Mars, Business Reengineering: Het belang van samenhang bij complexe organisatieverandering, <i>Informatie & Informatiebeleid</i> 15(3) (1997), pp. 37-4.
Pi25	I. Mailänder, Een vruchtbare bodem voor BPR en Workflow, <i>Vakblad Image Processing</i> 8(6) (1996), pp. 36-38.
Pi26	B. Molenaar & K.L. Lambooi, Herontwerp van bedrijfsprocessen: Drie praktijkgevallen, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 2(2) (1994), pp. 45-52.
Pi27	A. Notenboom, Holistisch melken: Elektronische handel tussen bedrijven vereist nauwe afstemming bedrijfsprocessen, <i>Computable</i> 31(9) (1998), pp. 52-55.
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Pi29	D.S. Tan, Fasen in informatiemanagement: Evenwichtsdenken vult fasentheorie aan, <i>Informatie Management</i> (6/7) (1994), pp. 28-34.
Pi30	H. Tuten, De groene wei: Herontwerp van een besturingsproces bij Hoogovens Staal, <i>Management & Informatie</i> 4(1) (1996), pp. 13-22.
Pi31	J. Van Berkel, Afscheid van louter op onzekerheidsreductie gericht beleid: Banken op het pad van business re-engineering, <i>Informatie Management</i> (1/2) (1993), pp. 35-39.
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Pi36	R. Van der Wal, Workflow bij Univé: Procesverbetering met werkstroombeheer, <i>Informatie</i> 40(12) (1998), pp. 18-23.
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Pi47	W. Westerveld, ERP-implementatie: Onderschatting is een groot struikelblok, <i>De Automatisering Gids</i> 31(24) (1997), pp. 15-16.
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Pi49	J. Wijkstra, Ingreep in informatiearchitectuur noodzakelijk: Verkokering van de organisatie een rem op slagvaardigheid, <i>Informatie Management</i> (10) (1995), pp. 4-8.
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Pp1	I. Dobben de Bruyn & A. Velstra, Wat betekenen veranderingen in technologie voor opleiden? <i>Opleiding & Ontwikkeling</i> 8(10) (1995), pp. 37-43.
Pp2	T. Hodes & R. Aermoudts, Eerst verbeteren dan vernieuwen: Stappenplan voor procesvernieuwing via mensen, <i>Personeelbeleid</i> 33(3) (1997), pp. 41-44 & 33(5) (1997), pp. 35-37.
Pp3	H. Hofman & C. Huijsmans, BPR en JIT-opleiden in een industriële setting, <i>Opleiding & Ontwikkeling</i> 8(10) (1995), pp. 32-36.
Pp4	C. Huijsmans, Een tevreden werknemer heeft tevreden klanten: P&O speelt innoverende rol bij business process re-engineering, <i>Gids voor Personeelsmanagement</i> 74(5) (1995), pp. 36-39.
Pp5	T. Korver, Herovering van de markt: Personeelsmanagement in theorie en praktijk, <i>Gids voor Personeelsmanagement</i> 76(7/8) (1997) pp. 56-58,61.
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Pp8	J. Lourens, Human Resources Redesign: BPR als uitdaging voor HRM, <i>Opleiding & Ontwikkeling</i> 8(10) (1995), pp. 23-27.
Pp9	P. Penrhyn Lowe, Management games: Niet zo maar 'n spelletje, <i>PW</i> 18(11) (1994), pp. 12-15.
Pp10	P. Schramade, De winst van de BPR-beweging: aandacht voor performance op procesniveau, <i>Opleiding & Ontwikkeling</i> 7(12) (1994), pp. 9-12.
Pp11	P. Schramade, HRM en HRD in het kader van business process re-engineering, <i>Personeelbeleid</i> 30(5) (1994), pp. 31-35, 37.
Pp12	P. Schramade & A.P.C. Geelen, Europese prijs voor het organisatiemodel 'Sociocratie', <i>Opleiding & Ontwikkeling</i> 8(10) (1995), pp. 9-15.
Pp13	R. Vestegaard, Taylor leeft! <i>PW</i> 18(8) (1994), pp. 26-28.

BPM Special

Pib1	F. Noë, Babel voorbij, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 1.
Pib2	M. Creemers, Drie eeuwen business process management, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 46-49.
Pib3	H. Reijers & W. Van der Aalst, Formele methoden in business process management, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 50-53.
Pib4	S. Santema & O. Sijtsma, Succesfactoren voor BPM, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 54-55.
Pib5	R. Schreuder & H. Van den Berg, Processen vertalen uit de strategie, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 57-61.
Pib6	W. Janssen, M. Steen, P. Strating & H. Franken, De organisatie in netwerkperspectief, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 62-67.
Pib7	E. Van Wijngaarden & M. Kiewit-Van Ijzeren, Applicaties integreren in processen, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 68-71.
Pib8	J. Nelis & M. Oosterhout, Rendement uit processen, <i>Informatie</i> 45(5) (2003), pp. 72-76.

APPENDIX IC: PROVIDERS OF DISCOURSE (SECTION 2.5.2)

	Scholar	Consultant	Journalist	Practitioner
A1	1			
A2	3			
A3	1			
A4		1		
A5		1		
A6	1			
A7	2			
A8	2			
A9	1			
A10	1			1
<i>Total</i>	12	2	0	1

	Scholar	Consultant	Journalist	Practitioner
Pf1			1	
Pf2			1	
Pf3	1			
Pf4	1			
Pf5		2		
Pf6	2			
Pf7		3		
Pf8		2		
Pf9		2		
Pf10		2		
Pf11			1	
Pf12		2		
Pf13		3		
<i>Total</i>	4	16	3	0

	Scholar	Consultant	Journalist	Practitioner
Pg1		1		
Pg2		2		
Pg3		2		
Pg4		1		
Pg5	1			
Pg6			1	
Pg7			1	
Pg8			1	
Pg9	1			
Pg10	1			
Pg11		1		
Pg12		1		
Pg13		1		1
Pg14		1		
Pg15		2		
Pg16		1		
Pg17	1			
Pg18		1		
Pg19		1		
Pg20		1		
Pg21		1		
Pg22			1	
Pg23		2		1
Pg24		1		
Pg25		1		2
<i>TOTAL</i>	4	21	4	4

	Scholar	Consultant	Journalist	Practitioner
Pi1		1		1
Pi2			1	
Pi3		2		
Pi4		1		
Pi5				1
Pi6	1			
Pi7			1	
Pi8			1	
Pi9			1	
Pi10			1	
Pi11			1	
Pi12			1	
Pi13	1			1
Pi14	1			1
Pi15		2		
Pi16		1		
Pi17	2			
Pi18	1			
Pi19	2			1
Pi20	3			
Pi21		1		
Pi22			1	
Pi23	1	1		
Pi24	1	1		1
Pi25	1			
Pi26		2		
Pi27		1		
Pi28	1			
Pi29		1		
Pi30				1
Pi31			1	
Pi32	3			
Pi33		2		
Pi34		1		
Pi35	1			
Pi36				1
Pi37	1			
Pi38	1			
Pi39	1			
Pi40		1		
Pi41		1		
Pi42		2		
Pi43		2		1
Pi44		1		
Pi45				1
Pi46				1
Pi47		1		
Pi48			1	
Pi49			1	
Pi50			1	
TOTAL	22	25	12	11

	Scholar	Consultant	Journalist	Practitioner
Pp1		1		1
Pp2		2		
Pp3	2			
Pp4	1			
Pp5	1			
Pp6	1			
Pp7		2		
Pp8		1		
Pp9			1	
Pp10		1		
Pp11		1		
Pp12		1	1	
Pp13			1	
TOTAL	5	9	3	1

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Pi1								
Pi2								
Pi3								
Pi4								
Pi5								
Pi6								
Pi7								
Pi8								
Pi9								
Pi10								
Pi11								
Pi12								
Pi13								
Pi14								
Pi15								
Pi16								
Pi17								
Pi18								
Pi19								
Pi20								
Pi21								
Pi22								
Pi23								
Pi24								
Pi25								
Pi26								
Pi27								
Pi28								
Pi29								
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Pi31								
Pi32								
Pi33								
Pi34								
Pi35								
Pi36								
Pi37								
Pi38								
Pi39								
Pi40								
Pi41								
Pi42								
Pi43								
Pi44								
Pi45								
Pi46								
Pi47								
Pi48								
Pi49								
Pi50								

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Pp1								
Pp2								
Pp3								
Pp4								
Pp5								
Pp6								
Pp7								
Pp8								
Pp9								
Pp10								
Pp11								
Pp12								
Pp13				+				

APPENDIX IE: TOPICS CONCERNING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF BPR IN IT COMMUNITY

	Combine old ideas	Combine old practices	Popular IT topic	Popular IT usage	Incorporate in system devel-opm. methods	Common practice in IT implement. projects
Pi1						+
Pi2						
Pi3	+					
Pi4					+	
Pi5						
Pi6			+			
Pi7						
Pi8	+					
Pi9						
Pi10					+	
Pi11						
Pi12			+		+	+
Pi13						
Pi14						
Pi15						
Pi16					+	
Pi17						
Pi18	+		+			
Pi19						
Pi20			+			
Pi21						
Pi22					+	
Pi23	+					
Pi24			+			
Pi25						+
Pi26						
Pi27						
Pi28						
Pi29			+		+	
Pi30						
Pi31						
Pi32		+			+	
Pi33	+					
Pi34					+	
Pi35					+	
Pi36						+
Pi37						
Pi38	+				+	
Pi39				+		
Pi40						
Pi41					+	
Pi42						+
Pi43						+
Pi44					+	
Pi45						
Pi46						
Pi47						+
Pi48						
Pi49					+	
Pi50					+	

APPENDIX II

CONSULTANCIES

APPENDIX IIA: INTERVIEWED CONSULTANTS

No	Consultancy	Consultant	Date
1	A	A#1	26-04-01
2	B	B#1	05-10-00
3		B#2	20-03-01 31-01-02
4	C	C#1	27-10-00
5		C#2	21-11-00
6		C#3	18-01-02
7	D	D#1	05-10-01
8	E	E#1	11-08-00
9	F	F#1	07-09-00
10		F#2	12-10-00
11	G	G#1	05-10-00
12	H	H#1	15-09-00
13	I	I#1	10-07-01
14		I#2	10-07-01
15	J	J#1	18-07-01
16	K	K#1	04-08-00
17		K#2	04-08-00
18		K#3	02-03-01
19		K#4	06-03-01
20	L	L#1	22-09-00
21	M	M#1	04-08-00
22		M#2	09-10-00
23	N	N#1	12-10-00
24		N#2	02-02-01
25	O	O#1	22-04-02
26	P	P#1	12-11-00
27		P#2	23-03-01
28		P#3	19-03-02
29	Q	Q#1	22-02-01 01-03-02
30		Q#2	22-03-01
31		Q#3	20-02-01
32	R	R#1	01-09-00
33	S	S#1	14-07-00
34	T	T#1	14-08-01
35		T#2	01-02-02
36	U	U#1	09-03-01
37	V	V#1	15-09-00
38		V#2	01-03-01
39		V#3	01-05-01
40	W	W#1	07-09-00
41		W#2	12-01-01
42	X	X#1	24-04-02

APPENDIX IIB: INTERVIEW TOPICS

Traces (section 3.4 & 3.5)

	Scanning discourse	Shaping discourse	Dominant connotation	Replacement	Decreased usage	Yesterday's thing	Common/ useful terms	Codification	Formalization tight	Formalization loose	Experiential	Conceptual	Relational
A#1		+	+				+	+		+	+	+	
B#1	+		+	+	+	+						+	
B#2	+		+				+	+	+		+	+	+
C#1	+	+	+			+	+	+		+	+	+	
C#2										+			
C#3			+	+			+			+	+	+	+
D#1	+	+					+	+	+		+	+	+
E#1	+		+		+	+	+			+		+	
F#1	+		+	+		+	+	+			+	+	
F#2	+		+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	
G#1	+		+		+					+		+	
H#1	+		+		+	+		+	+		+	+	
I#1	+		+	+	+	+				+	+	+	
I#2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+	
J#1	+	+		+	+	+	+	+				+	
K#1	+		+	+	+	+					+	+	
K#2	+		+	+	+	+					+	+	
K#3							+	+	+		+	+	+
K#4		+					+	+	+		+	+	
L#1	+		+		+	+	+			+	+	+	
M#1	+							+				+	
M#2	+		+		+	+		+	+		+	+	
N#1	+		+		+							+	
N#2	+	+	+		+		+	+	+		+	+	
O#1		+					+			+	+	+	+
P#1	+		+	+	+	+					+	+	
P#2	+		+		+	+		+	+		+	+	+
P#3	+		+				+	+			+	+	+
Q#1		+	+		+		+	+			+	+	
Q#2		+	+	+				+	+		+	+	
Q#3		+	+		+	+					+	+	+
R#1	+		+		+		+	+				+	+
S#1			+	+								+	
T#1	+				+	+	+	+			+	+	
T#2	+	+			+	+	+	+	+		+	+	
U#1	+				+		+			+	+	+	
V#1	+				+	+	+	+		+	+	+	
V#2		+	+	+	+		+			+	+	+	
V#3		+									+	+	
W#1	+	+	+		+		+	+		+	+	+	+
W#2								+		+	+	+	
X#1								+			+	+	

Viability of repertoire (section 3.6)

	Abandonment	Upgrading	Recognition	New markets	Relabel	New concepts	Movement carries	Movement sof	Carreer changes	Carreer oportinuties	Work variety	Common repertoire	Internal supply	Internal demand
A#1					+	+					+	+	+	
B#1						+	+					+	+	
B#2		+				+				+		+	+	
C#1		+		+	+	+					+	+	+	
C#2						+	+	+						
C#3	+					+			+	+	+		+	+
D#1		+	+	+		+						+	+	
E#1	+				+	+	+	+	+	+			+	
F#1		+				+	+	+		+			+	+
F#2		+	+	+	+	+						+	+	+
G#1						+								
H#1	+	+	+			+						+	+	
I#1	+	+	+			+	+	+		+				+
I#2						+	+	+			+			+
J#1			+	+		+	+				+	+	+	
K#1	+				+	+		+			+	+		+
K#2	+				+	+		+			+	+		+
K#3		+	+	+		+	+	+	+			+	+	+
K#4		+						+				+	+	+
L#1	+				+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+
M#1						+						+		
M#2		+	+		+	+						+	+	
N#1	+	+					+	+					+	
N#2		+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+		+	+	
O#1						+		+	+		+	+	+	+
P#1	+	+	+		+	+	+						+	+
P#2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	
P#3						+				+			+	
Q#1		+				+		+			+	+	+	
Q#2		+	+			+	+	+	+			+	+	
Q#3	+		+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
R#1		+			+	+						+		
S#1				+										
T#1	+	+				+	+	+		+		+	+	
T#2	+	+			+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	
U#1		+	+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+	+	
V#1			+	+	+							+		+
V#2			+	+	+		+	+	+			+		+
V#3			+	+										
W#1		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	
W#2	+	+		+			+		+		+			
X#1			+		+	+	+	+	+	+			+	

APPENDIX III

USER ORGANIZATIONS

APPENDIX IIIA: INTERVIEWED PRACTITIONERS

No	Organization	Informant	Date
1	A	A#1	30-01-02
2	B	B#1	22-02-02
3		B#2	22-02-02
4		B#3	22-02-02
5	C	C#1	21-02-02
6	D	D#1	30-10-01
7	E	E#1	13-03-02
8	F	F#1	09-11-01
9	G	G#1	25-10-00
10		G#2	18-07-02
11	H	H#1	28-02-02
12	I	I#1	03-10-01
13	J	J#1	07-03-02
14	K	K#1	17-01-02
15		K#2	17-01-02
16		K#3	05-03-02
17	L	L#1	20-03-02
18		L#2	20-03-02
19	M	M#1	04-06-01
20	N	N#1	24-07-02
21	O	O#1	06-11-02
22		O#2	06-11-02
23	P	P#1	26-02-03
24	Q	Q#1	17-03-03
25	R	R#1	12-06-03
26	S	S#1	18-01-02
27	T	T#1	12-08-03

APPENDIX IIIB: INTERVIEW TOPICS

Traces (section 4.4 & 4.5)

	Inspir. in di- course	Ex. post la- belling	Stylized Case	Transla- tion gen label	Downturn mgt disc	Terms wearing out	Familiarity of terms	Translation in reality	New labels	Common language	Org allergy	Org changes	Methods	Experiential	Conceptual	Relational
A#1			+	+				+				+	+	+	+	+
B#1		+	+					+				+	+		+	+
B#2								+				+			+	+
B#3		+	+					+				+			+	+
C#1		+	+		+					+		+	+	+	+	+
D#1	+											+			+	
E#1			+					+		+		+	+	+	+	+
F#1					+	+		+			+	+			+	+
G#1				+		+						+			+	
G#2	+			+		+	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	
H#1		+	+			+			+			+	+	+	+	
I#1	+		+	+	+					+		+	+	+	+	
J#1		+	+									+	+	+	+	
K#1													+	+	+	
K#2	+												+	+	+	
K#3	+	+				+		+	+		+		+	+	+	
L#1			+						+		+	+				
L#2									+		+	+				
M#1		+		+											+	
N#1		+	+						+			+			+	+
O#1		+		+					+			+	+		+	+
O#2		+		+					+			+	+		+	+
P#1	+			+				+				+	+			
Q#1		+	+	+						+		+	+	+	+	
R#1	+		+	+				+				+	+	+	+	
S#1	+			+				+						+	+	
T#1		+	+	+			+	+			+		+	+	+	+

Viability of traces (section 4.6)

	Carriers	Staff turn- over	Soul of fire	Dissemina- tion	Legitimation	Mainte- nance	Problem stabilization	Problem ful- fillment	New prob- lems	Immuni- zation	Reincar- nation	Relabelling	Refilling	Forgetful- ness
A#1	+	+			+		+	+	+	+	+			
B#1									+					
B#2									+		+	+		
B#3									+					
C#1	+	+	+	+	+				+		+		+	
D#1	+	+	+	+		+			+		+	+		
E#1	+	+	+		+	+		+	+	+			+	+
F#1	+	+			+	+				+	+	+		+
G#1			+						+					
G#2	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+		+	
H#1	+	+	+		+		+		+		+	+		+
I#1	+	+	+	+	+	+			+				+	
J#1	+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+	
K#1		+	+		+			+	+					+
K#2		+	+		+			+	+					+
K#3	+			+	+		+		+	+	+	+		+
L#1	+			+				+	+	+	+	+		+
L#2	+	+		+				+	+	+	+	+		+
M#1					+				+					
N#1	+	+	+	+	+	+			+					+
O#1	+									+	+			
O#2	+			+		+				+	+			+
P#1	+	+			+	+	+		+		+		+	+
Q#1	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+			+
R#1		+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+			+
S#1	+	+		+	+				+		+	+		+
T#1	+	+	+		+			+	+	+				+