

Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

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*The practice seems to yield at least this hard lesson: a story is not a story until it is told;
it is not told until it is heard,
it changes – and becomes open to the beauties and frailties of more change;
or a story is not a story until it changes.*

Della Pollock¹

Abstract

This paper offers methodological reflection on the process of representing organizations through narration as dialogical storytelling. This is illustrated here as a tale of socio-economic change and struggle for survival in Argentina's *Fábricas Recuperadas*.

Fábricas Recuperadas is an umbrella term that refers to abandoned bankrupt businesses in Argentina. These businesses were initially recovered, at the time of the financial crisis in 2001, by workers themselves. By reclaiming the abandoned businesses, workers promoted alternative organizing practices such as the elimination of operational management and the flattening of organisational hierarchy structures. This paper draws on insight from ethnographic research in Buenos Aires-based *Fábricas Recuperadas*, revealing the self-construction processes of workers' identities in the context of crisis, alongside the accounts of reclaiming their workplaces. Methodological insights emerge with regard to narrating interpretive research in relation to other cultural and language-based contexts.

The story is an attempt to re-territorialise the crisis experience, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's term (1972, 1980), that is, an attempt at restructuring a narrative by bringing local perspective into the text.

Keywords: *Fábricas Recuperadas*, narrative method, organization storytelling

¹Pollock, D. (2006). Performance Trouble. In D.S. Madison & J. Hamera (Eds), *The Sage Book of Performance Studies* (p. 93). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Introduction

The economic debacle of 2001 in Argentina that materialised in the long-term crisis has been represented through macro-economic lenses and political discourses, driven by foreign interest and a grand narrative of market rationale. Such representation reflects the 'global' business sense and dominant corporate strategies that have not addressed the crisis experience from more local perspectives. As a consequence, the processes of constructing meanings about organizational change and working lives in *Fábricas Recuperadas* emerge out of epistemology that so far has prioritised (and legitimised) the supremacy of the market under the socio-political model of Western rational organisation.

The paper challenges representations based on assumptions of making sense of current political and economic equivocal ties in the Western academy with the recent economic crisis of Argentina, by emphasizing a need for hybrid tonality and re-territorialisation of the peripheral in constructing narratives about organizations. Re-territorialisation refers to sense-making processes which are initiated by people within a particular location (such as an organisation), simultaneously producing and reproducing its micro-culture. We also refer to the notion of re-territorialisation of the crisis experience as an outcome of our methodological reflection. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's term, introduced in their philosophical project *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972; 1980), we advocate the need to restructure the narrative by bringing local perspective into the text. We argue that the intersecting of local voices can potentially reverse the ontological control of representing, by weaving a tapestry of meanings about the crisis experiences and making explicit what is unheard, suppressed or silenced. Furthermore, we argue that such an approach facilitates methodological reflections on how we, academics, can narrate and represent, through research, the lives of others; negotiating in this process our own positions and sensibilities associated with our professional roles, positions and localities.

The paper offers methodological reflection on positioning of narratives through interpretive research. This paper posits the process of narrating as a dialogical storytelling, illustrated here as a tale of organizational change and socio-economic survival in *Fábricas Recuperadas*. In particular, we attempt to advance Bakhtin's (1999) dialogical approach to problematise the process of narration and subsequently, construction processes of organizational narratives. We also reflect on possibilities of repositioning the notion of storytelling in organizations more generally; such repositioning reflects methodological hybridisation based on a possible inclusion of poetic methods (Shotter, 1992; Cunliffe, 2002), dialogism (Bakhtin, 1986) and 'story fabric' (Boje 2005; 2008). Such repositioning can result in a representation of reality that evokes openness towards the alternative framing of organizational lives. The story of *Fábricas Recuperadas* is an illustrative attempt towards such repositioning. In the narrative, the examples of actual experiences of crisis can be heard through a hybrid tonality, as a result of blurring what can be perceived as a more 'global' sense of knowledge construction with local accounts, weaving a living story.

Dialogical turn in narrating stories

At the beginning there was a word. When we have words, we need to find ways to weave them together into good stories. Good stories are memorable stories, including good organizational stories. Good stories evoke emotion and fantasy, potentially seen as powerful devices in the management of meaning and the diffusion of organizational knowledge that so far privileged Western rational organization. Management studies discourse represents a set of Western-dominant academic theories that appear to be produced within the context of socially

legitimised public institutions which are themselves effects of primary organising processes of a particular dominant narrative; a socially 'organised' body of knowledge claims (Weiskopf and Willmott, 1997), and a certain repertoire of words. Henceforth, once we accept to follow any of the models in management theory that circulate in the globalised world, we risk simply projecting the discourses generated within the legitimate institutions onto those we observe and analyse (Chia, 1994).

A process of narrating in such context becomes an act upon those we observe, a reductive process, defining action and behaviour in terms of the particular organisational model selected. Chia (1995) suggests that we can achieve more by understanding these theoretical postures as ontological gestures, in a bringing forth of reality to the exclusion of other possible voices. It is the act of deconstructing organisational discourses that opens up the space of narrative research to render a story more dialogic. Precisely, we argue that such realisation requires a commitment of the researcher, a commitment of making sense of other possible realities, of making our stories - their stories. A story can emerge out of a discursive device that generates and sustains meanings and produces texts, can become a living story composed of here-and-now narratives, as well as emerge out of ante-narratives. Despite the fact that living stories can be told in and about organizations, and despite that these stories may appear as not fitting into the officially prescribed organizational narrative (Boje, 2008), they appear important in disseminating emergent knowledge that challenges dominant established discourse of organizational forms. These living stories that do not fit, form a part of a web of so-called unfolding relationships. We follow on Boje's (2003) insistence that most organizational stories are co-created by many participants and are based on multiple meanings. We argue that for such stories to unfold, commitment is paramount in sense-making of the narrating process. How can we narrate the story that emerges out of commitment of making sense of other possible realities?

It is here that a Bakhtinian reading of dialogism can contribute to advancing a common sense understanding on how commitment of making sense of other possible realities can be created, or to be more specific, co-created. Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin argued that we constitute ourselves in dialogical relationships with others (Bakhtin, 1986; Todorov, 1984), potentially aspiring to an open-ended dialogue (Gardiner, 1992). Words, as Bakhtin (1986) argued, are at the centre of our experiences and existence. We need words for a story to emerge. Words are uttered expressions of meanings in a continuous chain of ceaseless dialogues, feeding their content from our reservoir of behaviours and ideologies (Gardiner, 1992; Dentith, 1996). We envisage narrating as a process that emerges from dialogical instances, shaped in a participative dialogue. It is a process that reflects different ideological forces at work, emerging in spaces between the official and unofficial languages.

Researching organizations and narrating organizational lives is equally part of the never-ending dialogical instance between researchers and organisational actors, and between researchers, who ultimately recreate in their discourses the voices of the organisations and its members. A dialogical sense-making incorporates both a commitment to listening and being heard as well as interpretations that emerge in a dialogue. In other words, the research requires a commitment, contributing to a reflexive understanding of the social world (of the organisational world) and of one's location within it, encouraging to transcend the perceived threat of otherness, the perceived threat of moving beyond the boundaries of the established and the establishment (including the academy).

As researchers we need to recognise being situated and mediated through the operation of dense and conflicting networks of discourses, cultural and social practices, and institutional

structures, bound up in the intricate phenomenology of the *self-other* relationship (Gardiner, 1992). Recognition of such a position opens up a space where commitment and interpretation for making sense of organizations' stories becomes dialogic. We can recognise from such a place that something denoted as an organisation exists through these dense networks of discourses, of cultural and social practices reflected in the relationships of individual members, at the different levels. Henceforth, this process, by its very nature, does not reflect singular events, being fundamentally historical, continuous and mobile, which is why, following Bakhtinian thought, it can be envisaged as always unfinished, and decentred. Communication in the research process thus can be conceptualised as a co-creation process of commune with others. In the case of *Fábricas Recuperadas*, a tale unfolds as a co-authored text with the workers; the self-appointed agents of change.

Methodological reflections on narrating interpretive research: Heteroglossia

Meanings and their significance emerge in the dialogical instance, whereby meaning does not depend on one or the other participant in the dialogue but in what is created *in-between*. It is a shared territory. It is here in this space formed by the two or more participants where dialogue can be pursued at deeper levels (Clark & Holquist, 1984). This means not only that meaning needs to be shared but also the degree in which multiplicity and struggle that characterise this process of negotiation can emerge. Equally, the stratification, diversity and randomness of what Bakhtin (1981; 1986) denominates as *heteroglossia*² can be perceived not only as a static invariant in the life of discourses, but also as what ensures its dynamism. *Heteroglossia*, introduced by Bakhtin, makes reference to simultaneous differences that exist in dialogue. In the context of methodology, it is the situation of a subject surrounded by the myriad responses he or she might make at any particular point, each of which must be framed in a specific discourse selected from the teeming alternatives available. It is a way of conceiving the world as made up of a rolling mass of languages, each of which has its own distinct formal markers for narrating and representing. These features are never purely formal, for each has associated with it a set of distinctive values and presuppositions (Holquist, 1997). Thus, *heteroglossia* governs the operation of meanings.

Embracing the heteroglotic dynamism of narrating, we illustrate the story of *Fábricas Recuperadas*, recovered enterprises based in Buenos Aires, using as a point of departure, ideas by Bakhtin (1981; 1986; 1999) and Boje's adoption of Bakhtin (2005; 2008) to engage with organisation discourse and sense-making. We have mentioned that the dynamic forces that constitute organisations are a reflection of *heteroglossia*. These forces are produced by socio-ideological and historical forces (Dentith, 1996) and the cultural context. This, in turn, refers to the organisational discourses and activities retained by collective memory with political and moral-end objectives (Bakhtin, 1986). For instance, at any given moment of an organisation's historical existence, organisational discourses represent the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions of the past, different socio-ideological groups in the present, and different tendencies, all of which intersect in a variety of ways forming new typifying discourses (Bakhtin, 1981:291).

²Heteroglossia is defined by Bakhtin as simultaneous differences (i.e., several/diverse voices) that are found in dialogue, each associated with a set of distinctive values and presuppositions that govern the operation of meaning (Holquist, 1997).

Together, the forces of *heteroglossia* and organisational ideology provide the conditions in which dialogue and so called ‘story-sation’, or in other words, the ways in which a particular story unfolds, are fought and constituted. In this dense and conflicting network of discourses for a denominated organisation it is essentially possible to distinguish two organisational forces actively at work: centripetal and centrifugal forces (Clark & Holquist, 1984; Gardiner, 1992; Dentith, 1996; Burkitt, 1998). On the one hand, centripetal forces (established ideology or official language) reflect the socio-political project of centralisation or hegemony (Dentith, 1996). For example, when Donalson and Lorsch (1983) point out that ideology helps to simplify and schematise the system of managerial practice, the system of norms and regulation that defines managers’ competence, managers’ corporate risk, and managers’ decisions (p. 99), they are reflecting on the ‘official’ or ‘established’ social structural arrangements of the organisation. These are, in effect, the powerful bureaucratic hierarchical forces that are established not only in organisations but also in the market, which suggests that the correct way to proceed is by explicitly codifying the language and practice of individuals and recreating such sense through narration. These are the forces of centralisation and unification; of control and power in organisations. On the other hand, centrifugal forces (behavioural/unofficial ideology) perform their uninterrupted opposite work of decentralisation and dis-unification (Clark & Holquist, 1984; Dentith, 1996) in organisations. These are the everyday language and practices that reflect people’s own form of representing culture, the local way of expressing, in which discourses are as much as possible free from the established repression (Burkitt, 1998: 172). Centrifugal forces manifest themselves as *heteroglossia*, and, reveal the gaps that exist within the official codes, the norms, the hierarchies of an organisation. This process is helping us as researchers to reveal that the relation of representation can be reconstituted as a relation of participation, or at the very least that the specular basis of representation can be transformed into one which implies an involvement with representation, its objects and its recipients.

Research Design: Contextualising the Storytelling of Buenos Aires’ *Fábricas Recuperadas*

This paper posits the study of *Fábricas Recuperadas* as a dialogical *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin, 1986) that reflects the living story process of organising (Boje, 2003; 2008). In the process of narrating, we acknowledge that the semantic space that exists in the activity of authoring an organisation is not a deconstructionist approach but an approach that we refer to as ‘in-between’, that is, relaying on spaces where we found the representations for the *Fábricas Recuperadas*’ story unfolding.

Boje described a living story as a space of ‘in-between’, between narratives and ante-narratives which encompasses many modes of expression as well as different trajectories or directions for a story to unfold. Living stories are part of a collective tale that coalesces to give coherence to the fragmentation, invisibility and interweaving that reflect an unfolding construction of reality of individuals (Boje, 2003). The disruption of the coherent storyline lived in Argentina during the crisis and the emergence of different ante-stories to explain what was taking place *ex ante* make this method the most appropriate to explore the issue associated with the organizational processes of change in local recovered enterprises. *Heteroglossia* results in the plurality in the continuous transformation of organisational dialogues. The paper builds on the example of living stories of *Fábricas Recuperadas* collected from ethnographic work and interviews conducted in Argentina during the time of the crisis and after, and more specifically over the years 2004 to 2006.

Boje (2005) emphasises that in the fabric of stories at least four dimensions can be appreciated. The first dimension is associated with the simultaneity of stories, taking place in different geographical locations, spaces and temporalities. The second dimension, of the story's fabric and raised by Boje, is the fragmentation of tales. People do not tell full blown and well-rehearsed tales. They always leave room for imaginations, and gaps in their stories for the audiences. We only read part of something and not the full account. Only in journalism and when we narrate our research do we try to contrive this impression of fullness. Trajectory is the third dimension in the story's fabric, raised by Boje. Trajectory refers to the emergence of coherence in narrative, not as a single tale but as part of a collective ante-narrative as he argues that it can pick up meaning across different temporalities and fragments of texts (Boje, 2005). Finally, morphing of living story-elements makes the fourth dimension (this includes choice of incidents, characterisations, implications). This morphing takes place as a part of the 're-historisation' process and happens in order to highlight alternative values, persons or episodes. This makes the process of living story transformative to a context or indeed what transforms the context itself.

One of the authors conducted the series of interviews and was involved in participant observation in Buenos Aires, Argentina during a period of six months, following the crisis, in the years between 2004 and 2006. Together, we conducted a visual ethnography based on a visit to Buenos Aires' *Fábricas* in 2010. All the interviews were conducted in Spanish (one of us is native speaker), and subsequently, the interviews' extracts selected for the use in the story were translated from Spanish into English. Fifteen interviews were conducted with people who work at *Fábricas*; at the working sites in Buenos Aires' locations, and the majority, in the small office at one of the factory premises. The interviews were recorded. They took approximately one and one half hours. Equally, documents, media coverage and books published in Argentina on *Fábricas Recuperadas* were collected in order to supplement the localised interviews with other narratives produced nationally. Contextual data helped to re-emphasise the importance of a dialogue for narrating the story and a strategy of heteroglossia in the adopted research design.

The selection of workers as the interview participants was made simply on the basis of location and opportunities that arose at the time, local knowledge and local contacts. Also, the interviewees subsequently suggested and introduced other people within the network and who were part of the *Fábricas Recuperadas* movement. The focus of the interviews was not to form a grand discourse on *Fábricas*, therefore measures of validity and reliability were rejected as part of the construct of this research. Instead, the focus was on an authoring process that accepts the fragments, silences, unexpected comments and individual ante-narrative of what, in a dialogical sense, was unfolding as stories of workers' experiences of reclaiming their organisations.

The way the material was weaved together was based on narrative analysis. In other words, we focused on the individual stories constructed in order to make sense of what was happening to the workers. We also looked at the historical, cultural and social dimensions embedded in their narratives. In the analysis, we considered the ways in which (socially) constructed understandings of the situation were approached, i.e., the economic crisis as a springboard for action to reclaim the factory and re-construct the process of organisation and management in an entirely different way. We examined in what ways individuals narrated their experiences as fragmented texts and whether the analysis showed any collective understanding of their situation. We looked at the chronological aspect of the tale and also reviewed the use of metaphoric language in terms of plotting a tale. Plotting and morphing were main tropes adopted in the process of authoring the stories.

In the next section of the paper we look at examples of the multi-layered fabric of the story that emerged in Argentina during the crisis. It is the interweaving of what, following Bakhtin (1981; 1986), can be represented as the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces, shaping and re-shaping the story fabric of these organisations and disputing the given sense-making of how things should be done and told, or how organizations should run and be managed.

Living Fabrics of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

Occupy, resist, produce

The morphing of *Fábricas Recuperadas* is associated with the collective experiences lived in Argentina during the economic crisis that started to unfold in the local urban communities at the beginning of the new millennium. Argentina, like most economies in the region due, to its foreign debt, was pushed to adopt drastic economic reforms that indebted the country further (Imas, 2010). During the crisis, citizens were not allowed to access their money in banks and large numbers of businesses were declared bankrupt. This prompted the emergence of different narratives to account for a crisis. More fragmented trajectories of individual tales of recovered enterprises made possible the co-authoring of simultaneous narratives that sprang up all over Argentina. The proliferation of these recoveries has led to the formation of a recovered factory movement. Organisationally, this network now includes two major federations of recovered factories, the larger *Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas* (National Movement of Recovered Businesses) more the leftist organization, and the smaller, *Movimiento Nacional de Fábricas Recuperadas* (National Movement of Recovered Factories) more on the right of the political spectrum. During the peak of the crisis, some labour unions as well as unemployed protesters, known as piqueteros, and a range of political groups, provided support for these *Fábricas Recuperadas* take-overs.

In the midst of the socio-economic crisis that reached its peak in 2001 and continued to unfold, thousands of Argentinean workers started to turn around the problem of unemployment by taking over the processes of transition and the means of production into their own hands. This process is referred to as 'recovering' as it implies keeping the businesses running and keeping workers employed by provision of paid jobs, emphasising work commitment. These recovered factories represent different approaches to running organizations with a flat structure and 'the workers control' at the centre. In terms of legal and administrative processes, the most common arrangement was help that was offered from local authorities for a so-called phased transfer. In the phased transfer, the use of the buildings to carry out the work was agreed to for temporary period in the form of a so-called 'comodato', based on a contract in which the city council agreed to cede the factory premises free of charge to workers' co-operative, as a form of a loan. Over the first few years, it was the local government that paid the rent on the premises and met the outstanding debts to the owner. After the initial period, workers were given the option to buy out the business. Yet the harsh realities of the takeover with the unpaid bills resulted in factories having no electricity, running water, or money to acquire raw materials for production of spare parts. Such a disruption to the working life had a major impact on employees' security and paid employment. As a living story unfolded, the legitimate discourse that has become a part of a coherent narrative imposed a sense of perdition and despair among individuals who were not only losing their income but had no access to their money.

“When in 2002 the bankruptcy of the firm was on cards and the owners tried to remove the machinery and equipment, this incident prompted all workers to take some action and occupied the factory” (Marki, employee).

At the outset of the crisis in 2001, 1,800 organisations were declared bankrupt and were abandoned by their owners. Of those, only 180 began a different tale of reclaiming and morphing into more complete and different forms from what the organisation originally was. *Fábricas Recuperadas* had a connection to the Western idea of legitimacy that is given by ownership. Yet, uncertainty was supplanted by the industrialist assumption of working for the management or patron. Workers started to find a common trajectory for constructing a story of continuation, something they felt was lost. Equally, their interpretation of the official events reframed the understanding of what a ‘bankrupt’ business meant before the law. A co-emerging of a new story of legitimacy was told by framing a right to work there and a right to protect income. At the same time, the workers violated the legal rights of the owners to close down the premises.

“In 2002, we occupied the factory to prevent the owners and management from removing the assets and the tools of the factory. This was in the middle of the bankruptcy process. The management put an order of eviction months earlier. With the help of our neighbours we managed to resist for months the police who demanded us to leave as we were told we were occupying a private property” (Marki, employee).

In one case, eight members of the factory occupied the premises in order to preserve their right to work. It was a challenging time, and included confrontations with the police force that came to evict the workers.

“The night they came to evict us, we were printing a book that was going to go out in the next days. We performed a mini assembly and decided to continue with our work. A neighbour helped us to trick the police by taking all the printing books through a hole in the wall and then through his house, which was located next to the factory. In this way we managed to survive the police harassment and uncertainty of losing our jobs and only income” (Marki, employee).

Workers in *Fábricas Recuperadas* found themselves *in-between* the stories. In between those stories that were no longer valid and those stories being born; altered meanings of the crisis experience contested and rearranged the story main fabric that has governed and validated a dominant discourse and general understandings of the economic situation in Argentina. Equally, a sense of in-betweenness facilitated a change of the systemic trajectory and the way the factory was conceived before the crisis, converting it into something different for employees themselves and the community, into a co-operative. It is here where the new stories have been re-authored by simultaneous differences of representing a life condition under a threat.

“The Argentine crisis generated a rupture between what is considered legitimate and legal within a democratic society. It made possible the violation of private property such as in the case of occupying a factory with the support of our people. The capitalist model claims that legitimacy and legality are both the same. The crisis demonstrated that this was not the case. People questioned the system, government, police and media. An occupation was perceived to be legitimate; to imagine that they were to close down so many businesses, knowing that there was already a high level of unemployment was shocking for us” (Marki, employee).

This way of narrating is indeed not the meta narrative-driven. Depending on the ways one can conceptualise the living stories that unfold during so-called the process of ‘ante-storysation’,

that is, as ante-story making, we can posit narrating processes as a consequence of a Bakhtinian sense-making, whereby not retrospectively but in the moment, in situ, multiple realities are contested and reproduced. As a result of such process, the unfolding accounts of multiple realities are interwoven in the construction of the now. For instance, understandings of what the concept of closure meant were associated with *'something that is working, selling and functioning; where all the employees are working and it is about to close'*. Work has been carried out on the premises, despite the repeated orders to vacate the site. During that time, a reorganisation of the structure was taking place; a transformation into a different model of managing and organising based on participative decision-making. The factory has opened its doors to the community and it was the community that eventually declared the factory theirs:

"We decided that the factory should have a 'social' meaning. Therefore, we founded a cultural centre with activities of all kind in which volunteers and local neighbours participate" (Marki, employee).

Everyone in the factory became a participant in decision making; creating a polysemous reading of the factory's activities and practices. Everyone also was made a partner, with a accountable voice at the assembly.

"When we had a problem we helped each other. For example, when once one of our mates broke his leg and could not work for months, we all supported him, maintaining his salary and position" (Marki, employee).

The factory downsized over the years to thirteen employees. The process of professionalization also took place once the enterprise lost its management. *"We had jobs but salaries were low and we were trying to 'dignify' work; we could have union recognition. Work consciousness as a social good emerges from the crisis"* (Marki, employee).

The most difficult part of dealing with the subjectivities of managing daily operations without the formal management structure was the notion of a discipline. The employees explained that they did not have a manager or anyone to decide on their behalf with regard to the work schedules or particular working conditions they wanted to implement.

"What came out of this process was the total level of participation. People did not want to accept that a director or union directive could make decisions on their behalf. It was our right, a right that individuals have to consult each other; it is an acquired value" (Marki, employee).

On the factory premises, the equipment dated from the 1950s and 1970s, although old and unreliable, was perceived as one of the key signifiers for narrating the success. The ownership of premises was emphasised as shared, based on participation in labour process and claimed shared values, traditions and beliefs.

"Working together, sharing and enjoying our presence are central to the way we are now organised. Our problems are associated with the economic growth. As we produce enough to keep going, we are still unable to offer more jobs to unemployed workers. This affects our morale" (Marki, employee).

The coherent narrative of globalised capitalist success, dependent upon the efficient management structure was shattered in the tale of *Fábricas Recuperadas*. The illegal and illegitimate occupation of the premises, defined within legal discursive sense collapsed. It is

what Boje described as a dead narrative. The workers, and their communities interrupted and deconstructed this meta-narrative of crisis in order to co-create their own one.

“Public rationality is understood as intelligence, power and efficiency. In contrast, the rationality of domestic life is sustained by women and family. My wife came to support us here. Not only that, whole families came here to support us when we needed them” (Marki, employee).

More fragmented and loose narratives unfold around the themes of the community, its livelihood and continuity. These maintain a sense of trajectory, not of unifying one voice, but of separate voices in the understanding of the now. It was the involved and committed narration process of co-dependence that constructed the context. Indeed, we argue that it is the polyphony itself that can be appreciated in these dialogical discursive readings and authoring of the *Fábricas’* tales.

“It is a direct democracy. People talk about a participative democracy. They do so often. But it is a different thing to participate than to decide. It is very important that we develop a different kind of society whereby instances of direct democracy throughout what we experience with leaders, standards, ideological positions, ideas of different kinds and so on, do not become in the traditional sense, framed” (Marki, employee).

It is a re-writing a history for a particular group in the crisis context that has suffered and continues to struggle:

“We are historical subjects. We stop being inactive which is what voting and elections offered us; what the system offered us. We stop being marginal, unemployed, excluded, to become historical subjects, participant subjects. Authors of our own lives” (FRs, employee).

Discussion and conclusions

The story of *Fábricas Recuperadas* illustrates a strategy for narrating interpretive research that emerges from a heteroglossic perspective, pointing out how dominant discourse as a framing force for a story to unfold, can be altered.

“I believe that being able to communicate and share your ideas is central not for constructing a hegemonic or unified movement, but rather for constructing diversity, and this is what matters most” (FRs, employee).

We have argued that in researching organisational lives, we can only describe the complex, infinitely rich chain of organisational participative discursive acts that take place. We can only describe these discursive acts through the subsequent dialogical transformation that takes place in our own understanding it through the research process. This, in turn, allows us to account for the *heteroglotic* character of organising narrative, for the polyphony of voices, the multiplicity of discourses that populate the chain of dialogical – organisational – relations by different agents [authors] as illustrated in the tale of *Fábricas Recuperadas*. It is precisely this polyphonic dynamism that governs organisational existence. In our view this challenges the still prevalent research paradigm based on dominant management ideology which seeks to represent an organisation as a unified, completed and finalised process. What is assumed as the hegemony of strict accountability between hierarchical levels of control in the organisation design (representing organisations as centralised and unified processes) is here challenged through meaning making. That is, we suggest that the continuous negotiation for meanings between the

various organisational voices (organisational members and their representations) in the transformation of organisational interpretations, always depended on emergent circumstances.

We have proposed narrating as an open dialogical space upon which sense-making emerges, based on a collaborative process with multiple openings and meanings. The dialogical space of narrating of *Fábricas Recuperadas* has been constructed through interweaving of voices. Narrating became here an ensemble of ideas, discourses and narrated actions, a process of co-creation. In a sense, living story of *Fábricas Recuperadas* is based on a complex co-construction that grows without clear scripts, rules or models but comes out of the people themselves. It is the importance of co-creating when narrating accounts of others that transpires from this research. We argued that in a situation such as the one lived in Argentina, people primarily construct a flow of living stories that are created in-between, in that contested space between two or more authors. In this complex and dynamic transaction of meaning-making, ante-narratives and narratives come together to morph into new forms of narration that give life to newer stories. Such a process breaks with hegemonic sense-making and allows for dialogical instances to shape and re-shape the constitution of local meaning into a new form of organisational narrative. We conclude that dialogism in the research process, perceived as the interplay of emotive-ethic forces, can result in an approach to narrating that embraces commitment, and we argue, facilitates openness in research, a space for accepting, being heard, evoking, and being listened to.

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Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *FábricasRecuperadas*

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Abstract

This paper offers methodological reflection on the process of representing organizations through narration as dialogical storytelling. This is illustrated here as a tale of socio-economic change and struggle for survival in Argentina's *FábricasRecuperadas*.

FábricasRecuperadas is an umbrella term that refers to abandoned bankrupt businesses in Argentina. These businesses were initially recovered, at the time of the financial crisis in 2001, by workers themselves. By reclaiming the abandoned businesses, workers promoted alternative organizing practices such as the elimination of operational management and the flattening of organisational hierarchy structures. This paper draws on insight from ethnographic research in Buenos Aires-based *FábricasRecuperadas*, revealing the self-construction processes of workers' identities in the context of crisis, alongside the accounts of reclaiming their workplaces. Methodological insights emerge with regard to narrating interpretive research in relation to other cultural and language-based contexts.

The story is an attempt to re-territorialise the crisis experience, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's term (1972, 1980), that is, an attempt at restructuring a narrative by bringing local perspective into the text.

Key words: *FábricasRecuperadas*, narrative method, organization storytelling

French version*
Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

Raconter une histoire de Buenos Aires *Fábricas Recuperadas*

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Résumé

Cet article propose une réflexion méthodologique sur le processus de représentation des organisations à travers la narration comme une histoire dialogique. Ceci est illustré par une histoire de changement socio-économique et la lutte pour la survie dans le *Fábricas Recuperadas* argentin. *Fábricas Recuperadas* est un terme générique qui fait référence à l'abandon des entreprises en faillite en Argentine. Au moment de la crise financière en 2001, ces entreprises ont d'abord été récupérées par les travailleurs eux-mêmes. En récupérant les entreprises abandonnées, les travailleurs ont promu de nouvelles pratiques d'organisation, telles que l'élimination de la gestion opérationnelle et l'aplatissement des structures hiérarchiques dans l'organisation. Cet article s'appuie sur des résultats d'une recherche ethnographique dans un *Fábricas Recuperadas* à Buenos Aires, révélant les processus d'auto-construction d'identités des travailleurs dans un contexte de crise, alors qu'ils réclament la récupération de leurs lieux de travail. Des résultats méthodologiques émergent lors du processus de recherche interprétative par rapport à d'autres contextes culturels et fondés sur la langue. L'histoire est une tentative de re-territorialiser l'expérience de la crise, en s'appuyant sur la terminologie de Deleuze et Guattari (1972, 1980), qui est une tentative de restructuration d'un récit en apportant une perspective locale dans le texte.

Mots-clés: *Fábricas Recuperadas*, méthode narrative, raconter des histoires, organisation

* Translated by: Johannes Schaaper, Senior professor in International Management, BEM Bordeaux Management School

German version*
Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

Eine Geschichte über die *Fábricas Recuperadas* von Buenos Aires

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Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit liefert eine methodische Reflektion auf den Prozess, Organisationen durch dialogisches Geschichtenerzählen zu repräsentieren. Dies wird hier anhand einer Geschichte über den sozioökonomischen Wandel und den Kampf ums Überleben in den argentinischen *Fábricas Recuperadas* verdeutlicht.

Fábricas Recuperadas ist ein Sammelbegriff, der sich auf verlassene bankrotte Unternehmen in Argentinien bezieht. Diese Unternehmen wurden anfangs, während der Finanzkrise in 2001, von den Arbeitern selber wiederhergestellt. Durch das Wiederverwenden der verlassenen Unternehmen förderten die Arbeiter alternative Organisationspraktiken wie beispielsweise flache hierarchische Strukturen oder die Eliminierung der operativen Führung. Diese Arbeit zieht einen Blick auf die ethnographische Forschung der *Fábricas Recuperadas* von Buenos Aires und zeigt den Selbstkonstruktionsprozess der Arbeiter im Kontext der Krise und die Rückforderung ihrer Arbeitsplätze. Methodologische Einblicke entstehen im Hinblick auf den interpretativen Erzählungsprozess im Verhältnis zu anderen kulturellen und sprachlichen Zusammenhängen.

Die Geschichte ist ein Versuch der Re-Territorialisierung der Krisenerfahrung, basierend auf Deleuzes und Guattari's Begriff (1972, 1980), der den Versuch der Restrukturierung einer Erzählung durch den Einbezug lokaler Perspektiven in den Text beschreibt.

Stichwörter: *Fábricas Recuperadas*, Narrative Methode, Organization Storytelling

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Spanish version*
Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

Narrando una historia sobre las *Fábricas Recuperadas* de Buenos Aires

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Resumen

Este trabajo ofrece una reflexión metodológica sobre el proceso de representación de las organizaciones a través de un tipo de narración: la narración dialógica. Se muestra una historia narrada de cambio socio-económico y de la lucha por la supervivencia en las *Fábricas Recuperadas* de Argentina.

Las *Fábricas Recuperadas* es un término general que se refiere a empresas quebradas y abandonadas en Argentina. Estas empresas fueron recuperadas inicialmente, en el momento de la crisis financiera en 2001, por los propios trabajadores. Al reclamar los negocios abandonados, los trabajadores promovieron prácticas alternativas de organización, tales como la eliminación de la gestión operativa y el aplanamiento de las estructuras de la jerarquía de la organización. Este artículo se basa en una visión de la investigación etnográfica de las *Fábricas Recuperadas* con sede en Buenos Aires, revelando los procesos de autoconstrucción de las identidades de los trabajadores en el contexto de la crisis, junto con las cuentas de la recuperación de sus lugares de trabajo. Surgen cuestiones metodológicas en relación con el proceso de narrar la investigación interpretativa en relación con otros contextos culturales y de lenguaje.

La historia es un intento de volver a darle un contexto territorial a la experiencia de la crisis, a partir del plazo de Deleuze y Guattari (1972, 1980), es decir, un intento de reestructuración de una narrativa trayendo la perspectiva local en el texto.

Palabras Clave: *Fábricas recuperadas*, el método narrativo, narrativa organización.

*. Translated by: Francis Blasco. Complutense University. fblasco@emp.ucm.es

Arabic version*

Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *FábricasRecuperadas*

رواية قصة من بوينس آيريس : المصانع المتعافية

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ملخص

تقدم هذه الورقة تفكيراً متعمقاً في منهجية تمثيل المنظمات باستخدام السرد المبني على رواية القصص الحوارية. ويتضح هذا هنا من قصة التغيير الاجتماعي والاقتصادي والصراع من أجل البقاء في المصانع المتعافية المصطلح تعارفها في الأرجنتين ب. *Fábricas Recuperadas*.

Fábricas Recuperadas مصطلح جامع يشير إلى الشركات المفلسة المهجورة في الأرجنتين. في البداية تم انتشار هذه الشركات، في وقت الأزمة المالية في عام 2001، من قبل العمال أنفسهم. هذا الاسترداد شجع العمال على تنظيم ممارسات بديلة مثل القضاء على إدارة العمليات وتسوية الهياكل الهرمية التنظيمية. هذه الورقة تعتمد على بصيرة من البحوث الإثنوغرافية في *Fábricas Recuperadas* القائمة في بوينس آيريس، تتكشف من خلالها عمليات البناء الذاتي لهويات العمال في سياق الأزمة إلى جانب حسابات استرداد أماكن عملهم. وتظهر رؤى منهجية فيما يتعلق بعملية سرد البحوث التفسيرية في سياقات ثقافية ولغوية.

القصة هي محاولة لإعادة تجربة الأزمة، بالاعتماد على (Deleuze and Guattari's (1972, 1980 في محاولة إعادة هيكلة السرد من خلال جلب منظور محلي للنص .

الكلمات الدالة: *Fábricas Recuperadas* (المصانع المتعافية) ، طريقة السرد، رواية القصص المنظمة

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Italian version*
Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

Narrando una storia delle *Fabbriche Recuperate* di Buenos Aires

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Abstract

Questo articolo presenta una riflessione metodologica al processo di rappresentare organizzazioni con il metodo di racconto narrativo dialogico. Questo è illustrato in un racconto di cambiamento e lotta socio-economica riguardante la sopravvivenza delle *Fabbriche Recuperate* in Argentina.

Le *Fabbriche Recuperate* è un termine di integrazione che si riferisce ad aziende fallite e abbandonate in Argentina. Queste aziende inizialmente erano state prese in gestione dai lavoratori stessi al tempo della crisi finanziaria del 2001. Con la volontà di gestire queste aziende abbandonate, i lavoratori promuovevano pratiche organizzative alternative come l'eliminazione del management operativo e l'appiattimento della struttura gerarchica. Questo articolo trae spunto dalla ricerca etnografica delle *Fabbriche Recuperate* di Buenos Aires mettendo in evidenza il processo di auto costruzione di identità da parte dei lavoratori, in un contesto di crisi, e al tempo stesso narrando i racconti del processo di riconquista dei loro posti di lavoro. Ne emergono anche spunti di metodo riguardanti il processo di narrare ricerca interpretativa rapportata a contesti basati su cultura e lingua.

Questa storia rappresenta un tentativo di ri-territorializzare l'esperienza di crisi, traendo spunto dalla terminologia di Deleuze e Guattari (1972, 1980) che rappresenta un tentativo di ristrutturazione narrativa portando una prospettiva locale nel testo.

Keywords: fabbriche recuperate, metodo narrativo, narrazione nelle aziende

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Chinese version*

Narrating a Story of Buenos Aires' *Fábricas Recuperadas*

叙述布宜诺斯艾利斯废弃企业的故事

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摘要

本文以对话讲故事的方式对组织管理过程进行了方法论反思。在此，以阿根廷废弃企业的社会经济变革和拼搏求生的例子作为例证。

“
废弃企业是经济危机中破产企业的遗骸而在经济开始复苏。为挽救这些废弃的企业，这些员工进行了非常规的组织实践，例如撤销业务领导职位、精简组织结构等。本文从人类学的角度研究了阿根廷废弃企业，员工挽救公司的行动揭示了危机情境下员工认同感的自我建构过程。通过叙述性解释性研究与其他文化和语言背景的关系，方法论的洞察力就凸显出来了。

用Deleuze和Guattari的话来讲，这个故事试图对危机经历进行重新划分，也即试图把地方视角带入情境中来重塑故事。

关键词：废弃企业 叙述方法 讲故事

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