

Review of ReThinking Management:

[4.0 out of 5 stars Stimulating, provocative and motivating.](#)

By [George F. Simons](#) on April 11, 2017

Reflection on the deeper cultural frameworks of human activity has not been a focus of organizations, even of those who have consciously entered into the shaping or reshaping of their culture. Culture in organizations has until recently focused largely on unifying the perspectives and behaviors of their members and taking conscious charge of their self-presentation or branding for their stakeholders, their clientele, and the ambient public.

Given the growing consciousness of and research into cultural turns, important in the realms of social science, this book undertakes to address the deeper frames that shape organizational behavior and management practice. Admittedly, it is being written at a time when long-standing models of management are being challenged and frequently modified or replaced, due to both the rapid progress of technology and generational shifts. Hence, "ReThinking Management".

The volume's language is academically dense and requires slow digestion, often a page at a time. However, intelligibility is increased as the various themes are connected by being related to the "cultural turns", identifiable trends of the evolving Zeitgeist influencing humanistic scholars and social scientists and underlying their work. Appropriately, it leads off with a look at what the various cultural turns are and how they might be relevant to the study and practice of management. This is done by Doris Bachmann-Medick whose recent book provided an in-depth exploration of these turns. Irma Rybnikova follows this with a look at the deep-set mental frame of "purity", which has driven, unconsciously and sometimes very consciously, human behavior throughout history and into the present day. It is about management's mission to develop and execute strategies for eliminating or domesticating what does not fit and hence what is seen as dirty or dangerous in this context to the health of an organization.

Markus Peschl then reflects on the historical evolution of management and its need to rethink itself in the face of the future which is not only unknown but unknowable. The threats and possibilities in this unknowable future are then discussed in the light of a research involving conjectures of that future as it might be seen in the year 2030, and how these may affect longer-range planning already underway. The pervasive commodification of culture and cultural thinking are the concerns of John Kolsteeg, who describes the growing influence of economic discourse in our perception and description of realities, which consequently narrows their range while making them easier to manipulate. Siglinde Lang raises the question, "Are Artists the Better Managers?" If artists are expert at managing the space between fact and fiction, resources and production, perhaps collective and collaborative artistry can best monitor traffic at the intersection of the now and future cultural spaces.

Following these more theoretical essays, the second part of the book discusses applications and activities. Silke Schmidt offers insight into how performative storytelling, the stock in trade of consultants, exploits master narratives such as "economic growth" to shape and manage business culture, while Dirk Nicholas Wagner observes and offers ideas on how to escape the mental degradation caused by the information flood. Björn Bohnenkamp suggests how marketing studies and practice can master the visual image and the temporal story to complement current brand strategies, a rethinking of marketing education and practice. Christian Stiegler uses the Sony hack of 2014 as a setting to explore the lack of transparency in many media enterprises. Manuela Knocker closes the section and the book with a case study and reflection on how narratives can shape the legitimacy of sharing attitudes and behaviors, in short professionalism and belonging, on the part of collaborators in a team or project.

In all of this, the challenge is that of trying to know a future that may be unknowable but can perhaps be created. The methodology involves recognizing, observing, and generating performance from the deeper trends in management and organizations. These are illuminated by the cultural turns reflected in the studies of society over the last five or so decades. Not an easy read nor an easy task, but stimulating, provocative and motivating.

https://www.amazon.com/ReThinking-Management-Perspectives-Cultural-Interpretation/dp/3658169826/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1492448671&sr=8-1&keywords=rethinking+management+cultural