The quest for quality: translation of a mythical idea

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Why do some failures of change programs introduced by management seem to touch something more than the object of the initiated change? We have encountered two cases of change programs aimed at quality enhancement that ended up as serious failures even though the initial effects looked promising. Change programs where quality plays a central role have been described as an instance of translation of an idea susceptible to the justification of the new knowledge (Giroux and Taylor, 2002). The introduction of a quality program (TQM) was shown to increase control over work processes, however, there remain some areas where the staff can exercise resistance (Knights and McCabe, 2000). Change processes such as TQM are embedded in power relations within organizations and the relational character of power relations makes it possible for employees to resist (Knights and McCabe, 1999). According to Boje and Winsor (1993) TQM can be seen as the neo-modern kind of Taylorism, offering the employees an illusion of empowerment. Quality programs are based on discursive knowledge that has power effects which are embraced or resisted by employees (Knights and McCabe, 2001). Resistance to such programs through language is particularly effective (Kelemen, 2000)[1].

We would like to explore two cases which are intimately linked, being actually two sub-cases of the same company (different locations, same aim, different instrumentalization). The cases show how the introduced quality programs initially met with acceptance and creative adaptation because the leading value they referred to were already central to the employees. However, as a result of the failure of management to cooperate in the retranslations with the staff, both ended as massive failures, even though for different reasons and on a different scale. We suggest that the consequences of the failure of the translation of a central idea, one that can be described a mythical, are particularly serious for the culture affected and we propose a model explaining the processes of translation of mythical ideas.

When ideas travel, people catch them or encounter them, translate them more or less actively and pass them on (Latour, 1986). This way of looking at the spreading of ideas is replacing the old metaphor of diffusion (Rogers, 1995), based on the belief in an objective reality where objective ideas expand in a medium, that is sometimes blamed for the slowing down of their progress or even of distorting them. This "resistance to change" is a slogan often encountered in management texts and seen there as a negative force, inhibiting progress. With Latour's metaphor resistance becomes something valuable. People resist ideas, because they have their own ideas and experience and they use them to actively translate and transform meaning. Resistance is friction, creating energy necessary for ideas to be able to travel (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994).

Translation is an important concept for understanding organizational change (Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996). The process of translation is quite complex, where a new link and partial modification is created, where both the new and the old play a role (Latour, 1993). The process brings about change, which is, in Czarniawska's and Sevón's (1996, p. 11) words, the "result of a blend of intentions, random events and institutional norms, all processed in a collective apparatus of sense-making."

The process of translation involves processes of disembedding and reembedding an idea in different locations (Figure 1). An idea becomes first disembedded from its cultural context and then is gets transferred as an object to another cultural context. A traveling idea acquires almost physical attributes, even though it never gets objectified in itself. The idea is provided with an image of action, which can be verbal or graphic, which makes it ready to be put into action. This image explains the appearance of objectivity of a traveling idea. The core of the process is the reembedding of the idea in a new context that makes the idea understandable in the new culture.

The values embedded in the contexts come into focus. Some key values are so important for a culture that they help to construct special kind of ideas: mythical ideas (Hatch *et al.*, 2005).

Mythical aspects of organization

Recently, mythical aspects of organization are gaining increasing attention among academics (Boje, 2001; Bowles, 1989; Sievers, 1994; Gherardi, 1995; Hatch *et al.*, 2005; Kostera, 2005). This may be due to the "cultural turn" in organization studies, which has "revived managerial interest in exploring the sacred dimension of organizations and drew attention to the religious potential in management" (Bell and Taylor, 2003, p. 339). Culture management in its various guises has led to the emphasis on values and beliefs in work organizations. Important value systems and crucial beliefs are connected with the mythical dimension of cultures.

Myths origin in the sacred realm of experience many people consider them as belonging to the spiritual sphere of human life[2]. Work organizations are usually seen as profane. However, when referring to key values, people engaging in these organizations often tap into the spiritual realm of shared experience and express them in mythical terms. Such is often the case with stories of creation of a business or about the struggle for central values (Hatch *et al.*, 2005).

Myths communicate on an experience level: they enable people to participate in the narrated events, through a symbolical immobilizing of time (Kolakowski, 1967). Myth provides a set of ideas which enable humans to answer the most vital questions, socializes the individual, and guides him or her towards maturation (Bowles, 1989, after Campbell, 1976). According to Cassirer (1946), people are able to engage with mythological consciousness through myths. Mythological consciousness lies at the core of humanity and offers people another way of being in the world.

Some of the values and ideas of the contemporary business organizations have become, or perhaps have always been, of this ontological magnitude for the involved actors. Such is the case

of the idea of leadership in modern management. The interviews with celebrated CEOs published in HBR revealed the complex morality of contemporary business culture, its values, as well as the myths of famous business leaders (Hatch *et al.*, 2005). But there are also local key ideas of this kind. Through a prolonged field study that one of us has conducted in two European locations of a global corporation, Mercury Corporation, we have identified one such mythical value: quality. It is the leitmotif of a modern version of a quest myth, with managers and workers in the place of the traditional warriors and knights searching for the grail[3].

Translating a myth: the story of Gemini Poland and UK

Quality is an idea that has been traveling globally for many years (Deming, 1989; Crosby, 1979). Globalization resulted in the attempts of international companies to transfer quality to different locations and cultures. Car manufacture was one of the leading fields for the international transfer of quality. A quest for quality in car manufacturing has traveled along various management tools and production models since 1911 when Ford attempted to introduce his concepts in the UK (Tolliday, 1998). Despite the failure of this endeavor, Americans pursued the translation of their car manufacturing ideas abroad and succeeded when their concept of quality found its way to Japan in 1930s. Soon, American car producers dominated the Japanese market but local firms, such as Toyota and Nissan, were carefully developing and adapting American methods to the local Japanese conditions (Tolliday, 1998). This led to the development of the concept of the built-in quality by the Japanese, which became a hallmark of the Japanese car industry. By the 1970s, Japanese car manufacturers became highly competitive exporters of their products and introduced their plants in North America (Abo, 1998; Adler *et al.*, 1998). The Japanese concept of quality was then further translated to Western Europe (Dankbar, 1998; Jurgens, 1998). After 1989 the idea of the built-in quality traveled further and arrived in Eastern Europe. This process was particularly interesting and dramatic in car manufacture, which was relatively underdeveloped in quality standards (Kozminski, 1993). The journey of quality in car manufacture continued. We explored two instances of its journey using ethnographic methods.

Methodology

Ethnographic research allows to study phenomena in their "natural" context but requires to "immerse" themselves in culture (Agar, 1996). Directly experienced situations, witnessed interactions, personally made observations and conducted interviews and field notes are subsequently developed "maturing" into theoretical interpretations (Rosen, 2000).

The study we present in the paper was carried out in two places: two divisions of Mercury Corporation Company – at an old plant in England and in a new location, Gemini Poland situated in a small industrial town in Poland. Ethnographic interviews were carried out with 30 key informants (Tremblay, 1982) in order to obtain a description of the ways in which quality ideas in car manufacture came to Poland. The key informants were chosen on the basis of their direct

involvement in the quality transfer from England to Poland. The study lasted from November 2000 to August 2001.

Two locations: Gemini UK and Gemini Poland

After the expansion of Mercury Corporation into Europe, the company experienced rapid development and success on the European market. Mercury Corporation decided to build four new plants in addition to the existing ones, among them several British, in order to keep up with the emerging markets of Eastern and Central Europe. One of them was located in Poland.

The Polish plant is situated in a region where local employment used to be largely dependent on coal mining. It was strongly affected by the mining crisis of the 1990s when the region was left with no alternative industry capable of "absorbing" the ex-miners. As a result of this, the local unemployment rate rose above the national rate (average 11.49 percent) to 26.5 percent in 1997 (GUS, 1998). Gemini Poland was much influenced by the UK plant that we have studied. Most of the expatriate managers it received came from this location. Quality was immediately presented as the crucial organizational value.

The English Gemini plant was founded in 1903 and acquired by Mercury Corporation in 1925. Until 2001 it employed 10,000 people directly and supported about 100,000 further jobs in the UK. It used to be one of the biggest and best employers in the area. It used to be one of the biggest and best employers in the region. In the 1990s a change program was launched, aimed at enforcing the idea of producing quality. This had several consequences for the structure and culture of the organization:

When I first came here [in 1985], it was full of autocratic, dictatorial managers, who dictated the daily events. And it was with people who literally did what they were told to do. Today, it's much more dynamic, it's much faster. It's much more stressful but there is a greater involvement and it's not the arrogant kind of "big boss" syndrome in all environments. The hierarchical structure, if you like, is a kind of plateau, more of a flatter, natural environment where generally people can interact together. And when I started here, you would not talk to your boss unless your boss spoke to you. You just didn't. If you were asked the question and you answered it wrong, it was absolutely career limiting, much more intimidating, much more the fear factor, and stressful for the wrong reasons, it was just stressful for fear whereas now it's faster, it's much more interactive. It's stressful but it's a stress that could be adrenaline. You know, it's a buzz. It's a much more business-orientated place – Works Manager (2000) (Gemini UK).

Initially, many managers in the Polish plant were imported from the UK. Since, 2002 Polish employees have started to travel as expatriate managers to the company's plants in the UK and Germany. The process was inspired and initialized by the Gemini Poland's Plant Director of that time (Mr Confident). There was also an exchange of experts serving as a medium for further translation of the idea of quality.

Recruitment and training

When an appointed group of expatriate managers arrived in Poland, their goal was to build a plant that would operate according to Western standards. Quality being the main value, it all began with the search for "quality people" and their morality became an important dimension in this search. In the first stage, only three people were employed. They would become the "right hand" of the foreign managers in the actual recruitment process and in setting up the plant. They were also there to support the cultural transition, to make sure that things were set up and ready to receive newly appointed staff.

The desired candidate was specified as a young person "untainted with bad habits." They did not have to be already trained in the job they were applying for. Instead, they had to be obedient, willing to change and learn new ideas. The ideal was close to *tabula rasa*. However, in practice the plant recruited young people with high professional standards and professional pride.

The recruitment process in Gemini UK even though procedurally identical resulted in slightly different workforce. People who work in the plant have been recruited over many years of the company's existence in the area. Some of them started as apprentices and worked for Gemini UK for their whole working life:

I started here when I was 16 years old. It is what we called an apprenticeship. In the old days, it's the way you learned your trade so, for example, if someone wanted to learn how to make watches, they would be an apprentice to a watchmaker … And we used to be big - in the year that I started, I think we had 125 people who started in this factory as apprentices – General Assembly Manager (Gemini UK and Poland).

Another factor differing Gemini UK's workforce from the Polish plant is people's cultural background, age and previous experience:

[In Gemini UK] you have people who are from all different kind of age groups, backgrounds and experience and they're all very different in the way they think. We haven't been able to give them a common way of thinking, which we were able to do because we had a completely new workforce in Gemini Poland – Human Resources Manager (Japanese company, UK, then Gemini Poland).

Both in Poland and in the UK training was to play a fundamental role in the change process aimed at the enforcement of quality as the main value. In Poland it was more pronounced, as the company was built from scratch:

I think, I'll use the word indoctrination level, the training level of all of the employees of Gemini Poland, was very strong … Every employee that starts at Gemini Poland has a week, the first thing they do is they attend a week of induction programme. And that program teaches them all of our visions and values that the company is based upon, one of which is [built-in] quality – Quality Manager (Japanese company in the UK, later Gemini UK, then Gemini Poland).

A part of the training consists of visits to other Gemini plants and personal coaching. A large part of the initial training is on-site training, which takes place in the established plants, which in the Polish case meant travels to Germany. Trainees continuously compared each other and learn what is called "best practice exercises." This included solutions for organizing systems of quality assurance (taken from Japanese manufacturers in the UK), quality standards for a particular model of the car, management procedures, management problem solving and organizational structure, for example, how many workers should be in a team. Gemini Poland applied the concepts derived from those practices but improved and pushed them even further. The process of continuous improvement had been put into practice when building the plant and in bringing expertise from abroad. Thus, many people said in 2001 that Gemini Poland had become the model for other Mercury Corporation plants.

Quality training in Gemini UK was carried out using similar principles, however, the local conditions were different. As the plant existed for so many years and had the workforce often employed before the beginning of the change process, quality training was introduced as a development programme. In order to improve quality results as well as plant's culture, various training programmes were implemented using the cascade approach, that is, beginning from the top. There have also been some major changes to the organizational structure. An early retirement scheme was introduced in order to create positions for new people. The new managers were ambitious, well-educated and hard working people who "injected this new blood." However, many of these efforts were welcomed in a very negative way or rejected completely, for example, the introduction of Andon training:

Antwerp is a Mercury Corporation's operation that's building in a process that we are trying to get to. We sent our team to go and look at their operation and give us feedback on what they saw. They came back with a presentation of what's good and what's bad about Antwerp and then what's good and what's bad about our plant. When I sat through that presentation this week, it really concerned me that people had taken the opportunity of picking up all the legacy of the history of problems that we've had in this plant and used like ten years worth of historical problems. […] We invited people from outside our organisation to sit in and people used it as an opportunity to exploit their own personal complaints. […] They have missed the business issue and the platform, which we gave them to be honest and open and they exploited it to try to sell a message of how unfairly they have been treated in the past, and they have missed the message. I felt very uncomfortable because they damaged our plant's reputation for their own personal gain or motivation – Works Manager (Gemini UK).

Resistance to change

In Poland the resistance to new ideas played a constructive role. Initially, the managers were set on forced change, they intended to:

… break the culture of the local area. And we do things differently, because we have to do it, to avoid a clash of standards. We have to bring the best ideas and working practices to the business

and if that doesn't quite fit into the Polish culture, then we have to furnish a new culture – Plant Director (Japanese company, UK, then Gemini Poland).

However, in practice the process of quality transfer was not an entirely one-way process of imposing ideas onto the local environment. It was often described as mutual learning and sometimes a trial-and-error experience. Room for negotiation varied in different areas of the organization and production process. It was well pictured by Mr Proud who described it as a "formality continuum":

20 percent of the things that came to Gemini Poland were non-negotiable. They concerned the specification, quality requirements and legal considerations of the final product and came mainly from […]Germany. […]

80 percent of things were to a greater or lesser degree negotiable and they consisted of procedures and documentation of various elements of the system, and other employee and manager ideas. Some of the procedures and documentation […] had to be adjusted to the local environment. It was done with the cooperation of the Polish staff on all levels of the company – Paint Shop Manager (Gemini Poland).

New values embedded in Western ideas turned out to be meaningful to the employees. Quality was the most important among these values and it fell on fertile ground, as the employees' professional standards were coincidentally based on this value:

Gemini Poland is almost a bit evangelical [about quality]. Do you know what I mean when I say that? It's almost like a religion. You know, our management team tends to be a fairly outgoing, passionate group of people that strongly believe in what they are trying to do. We have a lot of team and leadership-type activities. […] And it's tooling mechanisms like this that drive the culture of Gemini Poland, which is really very strong – Quality Manager (Japanese company in the UK, later Gemini UK, then Gemini Poland).

In the UK plant, people resisted the change program by not putting in as much effort as before. The main problem was the fact that they were used to their traditional work teams and conditions and saw many of the introduced changes as unwelcome and counterproductive. Quality was something produced in the traditional way, with the old workmates and the reorganizations were perceived as unfavorable for creation of quality. Morale among the workforce sank and no actions were undertaken by management to adapt the change process to the local expectations. Because of that, instead of enriching the translation process, the local resistance impoverished it:

I think it takes us a long time to get decisions implemented. […] I think we need probably more discipline at times as well here. […] Here, we tend to do things our own way a little bit and we don't always follow standards, you know. Quality standards are very important example. Sometimes that can hinder us. It's not because we don't have the standards, it's just sometimes we tend to ignore them – Human Resources Manager (Japanese company, UK, then Gemini Poland).

The arrival of Mercury Corporation to Poland, among other Western companies on the Polish market after 1989, started a new era; the era of departure from Eastern Europe and a renewal of

one's membership of the West. When Gemini Poland reached its "maturity" and became an equal partner for other European plants, it symbolized the arrival of Poland to the Western world:

I'm basically certain, that here in this plant, all these people working here realise that one has to produce goods to the highest standard, the highest quality. And that's for several reasons. One very relevant factor, quite apart from the awareness that goods which aren't of high quality wouldn't sell, seems to be that here we have a factor which is fundamentally Polish, and that's a factor which I would characterise as aspiration. I mean, and particularly among those Poles who remember the previous system, Poland was always considered as a place whose products were trashy. In this respect, it's a matter of pride for me that anything that carries a Polish brand, or something similar, should be something of the highest quality. And it seems to me that a lot of people here, and especially the younger ones who want to create something good, share this view and this perception… – Paint Shop Manager (Gemini Poland).

The ideas were new and the very symbol of a larger cultural change. Even if they were associated with the West, they were not simply copies of Western ideas.

In Poland the emphasis is on getting quality right as part of the process and could be achieved by the individual. In the UK the new ideas were not seen as revolutionary, and people saw quality as a group dynamics, a virtue of the team. The results were confirmed at the end and could be assessed then. The structural changes introduced by management met with resistance:

I think over here [Gemini UK] it is more difficult to get change because you have to convince people that there's a need for change. And because the organisation's been here for 75 years, people believe it will always be here and there isn't the same sense of urgency within the organisation. And trying to get people moving in the same direction to create change is quite difficult – Human Resources Manager (Japanese company, UK, then Gemini Poland).

The attempts to make people cooperate across their old teams and departments created a lot of antagonism inside the plant as the different shops often blamed each other for faults found during audits, or tried to push problems out of their shop and pass it onto other groups. The employees in Gemini UK were concerned about quality but only if they could continue to work in their old ways and with their old mates.

The finale

The end of the tale was dramatic and came very unexpectedly. On December 12, 2000, the plant was operating in the usual way and nothing denoted the tragic turn that this day would take. On this day, those who happened to be listening to the radio heard the news: the Gemini UK plant will be closed on March 21, 2001. The decision was made by the company's headquarters in Chicago and came as a shock to everybody, including Gemini UK's managers. The fact that people found out about it from the news on the national radio and TV only added to the bitterness. Production was stopped immediately. The plant became surrounded by journalists and the offices were invaded by outraged employees. But none of the protests and strikes of the local

people could change the inevitable. The decision was final. To some people in Gemini UK the decision did come as a surprise: they considered the change program a failure. But even those who agreed with the decision were absolutely infuriated by the way the company treated them in this crucial moment. They felt degraded and betrayed by the company they once considered as caring. People left the company they once thought they would work at for the rest of their lives. The whole region began to undergo a process of degradation.

The events in Gemini UK were echoed in the Polish plant. It came as a shock to Poland and made people reflect on their own future in the company. Being aware of how things have changed since they began working there, they noticed that the first signs of what they had always criticized the old brown field sites for had already started occurring in their own plant. About 200 people were made redundant in Gemini Poland, when one of its production models came to an end and the plant did not receive another model as a replacement. The situation is now seen as stable and no further cuts as seen as imminent. Nonetheless, people feel betrayed:

And we are reaching the stage that I saw in Gemini UK, the stage which one could describe as "you do your job and go home". It wasn't here for a long time, and it's beginning to appear only now – Paint Shop Manager (Gemini Poland).

People describe the atmosphere in Gemini Poland as challenging. As the company employed young and eager to learn people it must now cope with their high expectations for personal growth:

There is a climate beginning to form that these people, who gained a lot of knowledge and experience, got these standards and are now ready to fly away like the birds from the nest. And we have to create conditions now so that they will love this nest as much as they loved it before they could fly – Central Engineering Manager (Gemini Poland).

The region also suffers but less than the UK home region of Gemini. People who work for Gemini Poland sometimes spoke of their wish to further translate their knowledge they gained in the plant. Time will show how many of them will stay loyal to their nest in Gemini Poland.

How myths travel: translation in mythical realms

The idea of quality was in both locations one of utmost importance for the employees. The interviewees use terms such as "evangelical" to describe the approach to the value system and quality occupies a central role throughout the entire field study. Quality was also the main value in the change program introduced at both locations. It was an idea of mythical proportions in the plants. Management believed in it and pointed to it as to a guiding vision and mission. Yet no one seemed to be able to define it. Instead, people told us stories to illustrate it. Myth holds a narrative potential (more on myths as narratives in Boje, 2001). The narrative structure[4] underpinning can be, according to Gabriel's (2000) typology, best described as the epic story: the protagonist is heroic, he or she sets out for a quest to achieve success or victory. The reader feels nostalgia, admiration or jealousy. The story narrates the road to reach the desired end, the trials

and tribulations faced by the protagonist. In stories where the end is impossible to reach, the questing becomes the main theme, even though the unreachable end remains the guiding light or the vision bringing together all similarly minded heroes. The knights of the round table and the quest for the holy grail is an excellent example of a questing story that at the same time is a well-known myth[5]. Empirical data collected in both Gemini locations of the Mercury Corporation strongly suggest that the quest for quality served as a myth, which also provided a narrative framework for "quality management" as an organizational quest, and that a sudden change announced by top management had been perceived by the employees as a betrayal of co-questing employees.

The quest can be carried out differently by different people in different places. The Polish knights were used to lonely questing and wanted to establish which paths and roads were most suited for travel. The quality built in the processes in the Polish plant reminds of such a questing road. By following the path, you are a questing quality knight. In the UK people strived to achieve the desired end by working in their old teams which they trusted. The British quality knights were working together and in the team's loyalty able to approach the final goal.

After the failure of the program morale fell in both plants and loyalty towards the plant was eroded. According to a management consultant we spoke to, the situation in the Polish plant caused ripples in the region and perhaps the whole country, contributing to a deterioration of trust in Western values. The decline of the British plant's culture is an illustration of what happens when an important myth is betrayed: the old teams were eroded by management[6] and this caused a deterioration of output, which is understandable, as the old teams were important for the local translation of the myth of quality. A burnout of the employees followed. Finally, after the closure of the plant the whole region began to deteriorate.

The failure of a change program based on a mythical idea is harder to take than usual. The reasons are due to the fact that myths are related to the spiritual domain. The spiritual side of the human psyche is powerful and transformative, innovative, transgressive, but it is also quite vulnerable (Kostera, 2005). People who feel deceived in their faith can be hurt very badly psychologically. The magnitude of the burnout may be somewhat lesser in business organizations, that are, after all, not directly concerned with the transcendental, but nonetheless a serious matter. It is visible in the studied plants. The other reason why a failed change based on myths can have severe consequences is due to the way that mythical ideas are translated. We would like to propose the following model (Figure 2) of such translation, based on Czarniawska's and Sevón's (1996) original model.

In our model the translated myths are more complex than standard ideas and many actions are required to translate them. They become translated into multiple objects. They included things such as documents outlining quality standards and product specifications, manuals describing procedures for standardized work, prevention of problems through Andon system or continuous improvement and innovation through Kaizen. In addition to this documentation related to the built-in quality, there were also more complex objects such as technical equipment enabling the execution of quality standards and procedures. Here, we can identify objects which were previously unknown in the Polish car manufacture, for example, Andon facilities installed on the production line.

The final product is not a social institution but a value system. For example, in the case of the Polish plant, the process can be described with the model shown in Figure 3.

On the level of artifacts and actions the western myth of quality is translated via procedures, manuals and technology into training and socialization systems, such as hand-on management and continuous improvement. Furthermore, this process reaches the cultural and spiritual level of the organization. It results in a philosophy, an underlying value system, and so a fundamental part of the organization's culture[7]. In the Polish plant it became a no blame culture combined with professional pride, producing intensive energy for aspiration towards what the company considered as excellent quality in order to gain a stronger international position. The idea of quality brought by Mercury Corporation generated new collective sense of purpose, meaning and identity (Knights and McCabe, 2002) in Gemini Poland. In Gemini UK the employees secured their organizational purpose and identity through resisting newly introduced quality ideas rather than adopting them. This should not be surprising, considering that quality programs (such as TQM), are embedded in the organization's power and identity relations. This means that there are constant opportunities for resistance (Knights and McCabe, 1999). Employees respond in ways that cannot be predicted or controlled by management, often using ambiguity as their own instance of translation (Kelemen, 2000). This has not been acknowledged or respected by the Gemini UK management, and neither had the fact that quality had been an important value to the employees even before the planned change program was launched. Also in the Polish plant there was a professional pride among the employees connected to quality. Even though their quality related beliefs were supported by management, who to a certain degree recognized the workers' subjectivity and the own translations which, being acts of resistance, did not pose a challenge to the management (Knights and McCabe, 2000). People were encouraged to be creative and experiment with their previous notions, quality being one of them. However, close involvement of the company's leaders ensured that the final result was that of Gemini's notion of quality enriched by the local input rather than vice-versa. This process was further stimulated by the willingness of the local staff to succeed on the Gemini's international arena and management's rationalization rhetoric used as an ultimate justification for the decisions that could evoke too much resistance, such as redundancy of 200 workers in 2002. This collided with what the employees perceived as their achievements in the area of quality development. Despite a strong quality culture in the plant and a belief in the Gemini as a "caring company," people felt that they were let down and their beliefs were betrayed by the corporation in the end.

The idea of quality that was at the heart of the change program happened to coincide with a mythical idea already existing in the affected organizations, but the corporation failed to sustain the local translations. As Giroux and Taylor (2002) have shown, it is important how new beliefs are justified. The managerial final justifications in the Gemini plants did not reward creative quality quests but invoked poor results to validate downsizing in Poland and liquidation in the UK.

A failed change process based on myth translation touches not one but a whole host of cultural meanings, actions and artifacts – the complex fabric of culture itself. Culture is renewed by the ongoing process of changing ideas. The mythical ideas are more than others directly linked to the cultural context and its potential for renewal. The myth of quality can provide a very powerful but also vulnerable platform for the organizational change program. If translated successfully it

can lead to a cultural renewal in the region[8]. However, if the process fails the devastating implications can reach beyond the organization itself.

Figure 1 The model of travel of ideas

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Figure 2 The travel of mythical ideas

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Figure 3 Myth translation in Gemini Poland

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