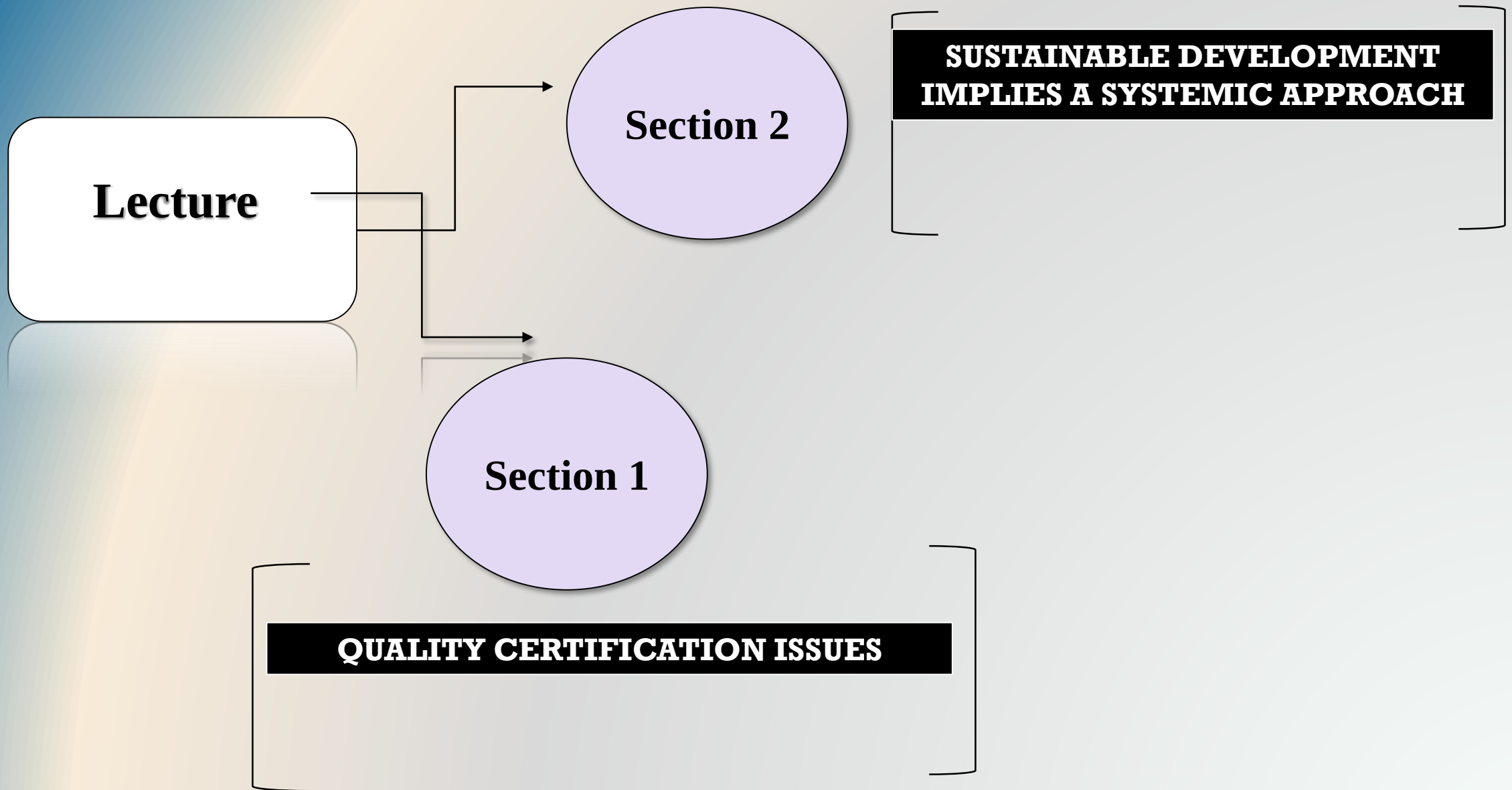


WELCOME



Section 1

QUALITY CERTIFICATION ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

Competitive success depends on the transformation of a company's key processes into strategic capacities that really provide superior value to customer. The last technical and economical evolutions renew the industrial systems' efficiency conditions. The search for «new production rationalization* shows the will to find new consistency between technical, economical and social spheres. As stated in sociotechnical paradigm : an open system adjusts itself while learning new information. It enables actors to find equilibrium between human and technical needs. New information technologies are part of this process. They claim for new organizational modes and ways of working together.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development may be seen as a response beyond others, to these stakes : this concept meets several definitions and dimensions : ecology, health, social impact of technology development, ethics, politics, management, fair trade, etc. If sustainable development is "the management of the human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining the potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations."

INTRODUCTION

as G.H. Bruntland [1987] states it, the issues at stake here are multiple. The Rio Summit identified "Sustainable Development Three Pillars":

- 0 Social progress
Equity, Social cohesion, Social mobility, Participation, Cultural identity;
- 0 Economic growth
Growth, Efficiency, Stability;
- 0 Environmental protection
Healthy environment for humans, Rational use of renewable natural resources, Conservation of non-renewable natural resources, Participation, Cultural identity.

INTRODUCTION

Many companies seem to assimilate environmental protection to sustainable development. They sometimes integrate these constraints from the product conception ("eco conception"). They usually don't really take into account social progress or ethics.

Those questions seem to arise when huge efforts have been made to create an environmental management system. Managers then realise that they just began to think about environmental impacts. They discover the tremendous amount of work needed to be able to keep up with their own requirements, and even more if they want to go further.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental labeling programs and environmental certification schemes are tools that have been used to promote sustainable development within industry. They are voluntary programs, even if a growing pressure may explain the fact that more and more companies decide to step in. They often choose to get the Iso 14001 certification to prove that they do create sustainable development.

These certifications assess the global environmental policy and management of a company. The aim is to give information about process and production methods, that is the environmental impacts of the company's resource use, production techniques, emissions, etc... They don't intend to assess whether the company is creating sustainable development; neither if it does reduce its pollution. They might give a target to reach, but as programs are voluntary, there is no obligation to do more than what government's environmental protection policies request.

INTRODUCTION

If certifications can be part of the necessary conditions to really produce sustainable development, one may doubt that they are sufficient. Some companies, as we will show, can improve their action to contribute to sustainable development without certifications.

We carried a six months survey within seven French companies, including participative observation and managers' interviews. We picked enterprises interested in sustainable development, which officially claimed they were advancing in this field.

Some were already iso 14001 certified, others not, but willing, and others chose a different approach.

INTRODUCTION

This study focused on two main objectives : understand how sustainable development was handled within those enterprises and explore how the organizational structure and power relationships evolved to meet sustainable development requirements.

What are the main topics handled by the French managers we met, those fields which are therefore defined as top priorities ? Is there a global overview and knowledge about the firms production techniques and of their environmental impacts ?

What are the main motives to adopt a sustainable development policy within companies ?
What are the main stumbling blocks, are stakeholders easily motivated and participative in a sustainable development policy ?

INTRODUCTION

We'll show how these issues require to study the way company create and diffuse knowledge, build new competencies and try to develop empowerment or at least local responsibility under certain conditions. As quality certifications are seen as organizational techniques, the company's global managerial system is rarely reviewed or changed. CEO's often decide to add a new department to their existing structure, as if promoting sustainable development did not need to change internal power relationships.

First we will wonder if an Iso 14 001 certified company would be more willing to make progress in sustainable development than one which is not. Then we'll explore a systemic approach of sustainable development. The role of management and coordination will be highlighted. Finally the results are discussed in the last section.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What's the iso 14001 certification?

The Iso 14001 certification is a management tool which helps companies to track, understand and sometimes reduce their environmental impacts. There are no specific production procedures or methods to adopt. Companies that voluntarily certify to this standard simply have to demonstrate that they are aware of their environmental impact, are trying to control them, step by step, are monitoring the progress toward their targets and maintain continual improvement. Companies set their own environmental targets, and certification does not require an independent assessment of the sufficiency of these self set targets.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What's the iso 14001 certification?

There is another standard : the Environmental Audit and Management Scheme. This one is less frequently adopted in France. We won't pay attention to the certification impacts on market access. What drove our study is to find out whether those certifications would or not modify deeply the organizational structure or production methods or culture, in a way that favours sustainable development.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What's the iso 14001 certification?

Our definition of sustainable development Gone to this point of the discussion, one might wonder what is our definition of sustainable development. This covers three different fields :

- Economic dimension;
- Environmental dimension;
- Social and ethical dimension.

The economic dimension concerns an organization's impacts on the economic circumstances of its stakeholders and on economic systems at all levels.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What's the iso 14001 certification?

The economic dimension concerns an organization's impacts on the economic circumstances of its stakeholders and on economic systems at all levels.

The environmental dimension relates to an organization's impacts on living and non-living natural systems. This dimension is widely agreed within companies.

The social dimension regards to an organization's impacts on the social system, which it operates, at local, regional, national and global levels.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Those dimensions are linked. Finally for us, sustainable development concerns all possible impacts, visible and invisible, due to manufacturing or any other activity linked to an organization's existence. It leads to a better natural and human resources management, by enhancing organizational' strategy global consistency.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Four aspects of this new management:

Spare natural resources (energy and raw materials), thanks to environmental management systems, or to integration of these criteria from the product conception;

II. Empower employees and give them opportunity to participate to environmental policy, work organization, living standards, health and safety ...

III. Increase open relationships between companies and their area;

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Four aspects of this new management:

IV. Respect and diffuse ethical principles, especially with its subcontractors and partners.

As one may doubt as to the industrial world' capacity to quit its old habits: short term benefits and costs reduction for example... One might consider sustainable development as a future competitive advantage, but actually, it is more likely an investment. We have then decided to explore the motivation for this new strategy.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What certification can cover up?

Managers we met said their companies' main objectives while creating an environmental management system were mainly to (by decreasing order) limit product's environmental impacts during its life cycle, reduce disagreements like noise, odour, rejects, pollution, to avoid spoiling, to give a good picture to the company, to motivate people.

One understands at once that the time is pragmatic. Most of the companies we've visited were not respecting legal pollution restrictions. Getting the Iso 14001 certification creates the opportunity to settle those prevailing and recurrent disorders.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What certification can cover up?

We are far from really protecting our future generations resources. One may wonder what brought the idea of sustainable development. It's always the CEO's which decide to promote this process. There is sometimes a real care for environment. More often, a client make it compulsory for its suppliers. Competitors or partners may play the role of "opinion leader"

Finally, gaining new points on international markets is also an incentive. Lots of environmental protection service managers were proud to show that their colleagues truly picked their wastes. This might prove a day-to-day involvement, but at a very simple level. This involvement is very difficult to get. In fact, solving technical questions might be difficult, but the human challenge is more complex.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What certification can cover up?

The Iso 140001 certification intends to develop as well social stakes, security, communication and training. There is a lot of work to do, simply to be in conformity with the laws. Then the certification may help to make a global assessment of the firm's existing system and capacity to prevent any environmental risks.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What certification can cover up?

This norm's benefits for the firm are multiple :
it may develop a continuous improvement culture, give credibility and reliability, enhance the company's reputation and fame.

This management tool helps companies to track, understand and sometimes reduce their environmental impacts. It implies financial and human investments to understand and apply the quality procedures requested.

IS CERTIFICATION A PROOF OF A COMPANY'S WILL TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

What certification can cover up?

The global tendency within the companies we've visited is to focus first on the technical aspects. When they get the certification the problem they face is to keep up. Those certifications are not living systems as long as people have to be fully dedicated to maintain the quality process. If those people disappear, sustainable development won't remain a priority

A perverse effects appears when lots of energy is focused on technical aspects only, to the detriment of systemic and human factors.

Section 2

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IMPLIES
A SYSTEMIC APPROACH**

Introduction

Those who get an Iso 14001 certification are not always the more willing to create and assess a fair and sustainable production. In the firms where no certifications were chosen, managers were more likely to consider sustainable development as one part of their everyday responsibilities, even if they have had to change some organizational routines.

Immaterial assets

Sustainable development implies more than environmental respect. It requires a systemic approach including competencies improvement, regular appraisals, knowledge management, communities of practices, information and innovation strategies.

Lots of researchers insist on the CEO's involvement to initiate the process. One may not focus on the wrong objective: maintain one's certification and lose the global target: reduce the firm's negative impacts on environment, economic and social dimensions. It starts within the firm with communication, transparency, training and participation.

Immaterial assets

Furthermore, it focuses on quality and immaterial aspects of work organization as well as on social links. Organizational structures and power relationships provide good clues to understand what is the CEO's aim. But they are not sufficient to analyse the change process going on.

In French companies, one or more managers are dedicated to environmental policy. He is always executive and according to the firm, reports to the CEO's, the quality department or the production team. We found out that there were mainly two hypotheses. In the first one, the environmental manager reports to the CEO's. He's a kind of coordinator. He might lack for legitimacy and direct link with the plant. He is a traveller, and the risk is high to be enable to create a sustainable system.

Immaterial assets

The second hypothesis consists on a manager dedicated to environmental protection, which belongs to the plant. In this case he will easily know if procedures are correctly respected by operators and be able to adapt and motivate the plant. The limits of this organizational choice come from the close link within local activity, which may prevent from a global approach.

The best solution at this time seems to adopt both solutions in a transversal organization.

Good wills are not enough

Environmental management is not settled once for all. Targets and objective become more and more difficult to reach. This system lives and grows as an open system. Good wills are not enough: recycle paper can be more pollutant than buying new one. There are no obvious facts. The recycling procedures are not always satisfactory.

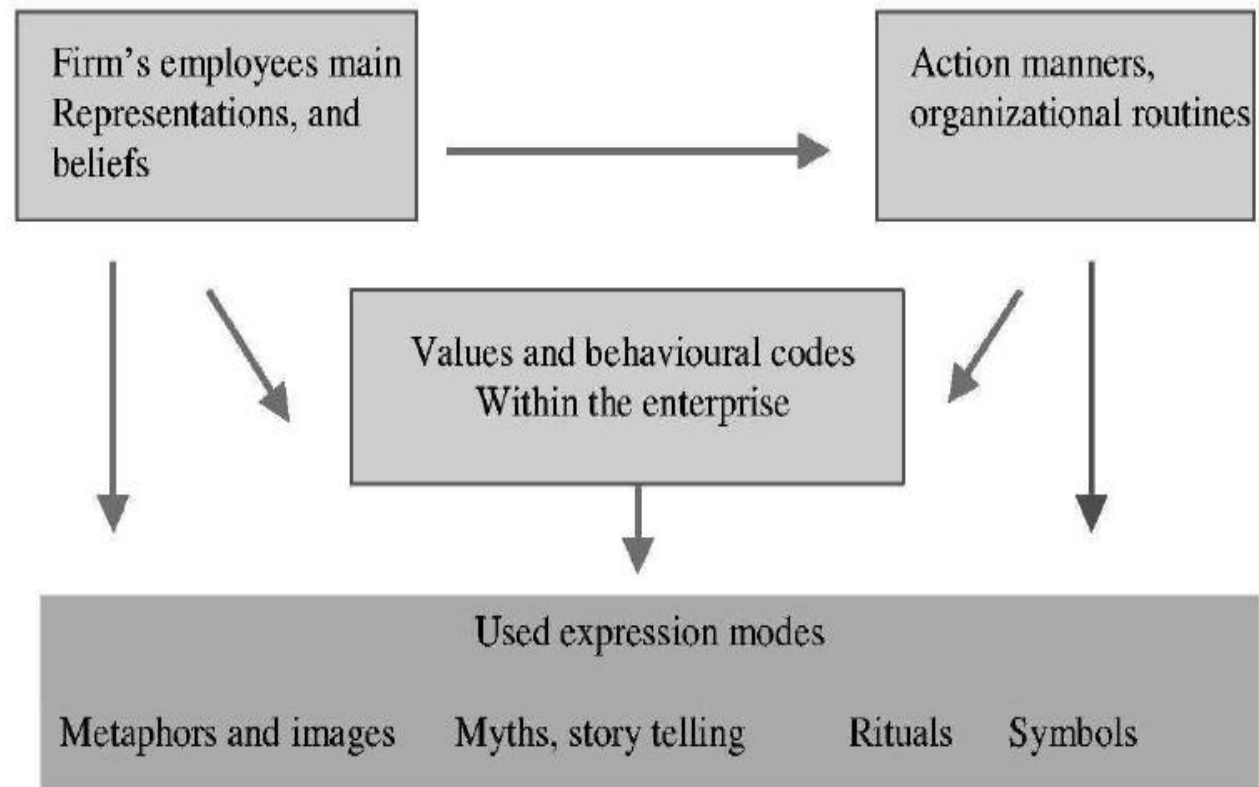
Companies managers won't get ride of those issues simply by spending money to reprocess their emissions. The most simple and efficient method remains to reduce energy, water, and raw materials consumption. Prevent using dangerous products; find other ways to add value. Furthermore there is no perfectly agreed resources consumption quantification procedure. Criteria are the firm's choice.

Good wills are not enough

What seems to make a difference is employees day to day involvement. This leads us to the idea that the company's culture and values should evolve to integrate new behaviours.

Organizational change and culture are main factors

Considering the socio-technical system, we discovered the main importance of culture. It embodies values and inner rules into dominant and accepted behaviours, as our model summarize it.



Organizational change and culture are main factors

If sustainable development or quality certification are understood as organizational change, they will have an impact both on organizational structure and on culture. Due to regular assessments and audits, the whole system will have to adjust itself and learn from these new experiences.

To make sense, the firm managers need to tell a story : our origins myths but also our children's life tale.

Quality certification is a very restricting and boring process when it runs. We have then to seek inner motivation through values and ideals such as our children's rights to inherit a pleasant environment.

Organizational change and culture are main factors

Security, quality and environmental policies can't be imposed. Employees' participation is central. As soon as possible, people should be involved in the definition of the main priorities.

Helping create a situation where systems can be self designing and support intelligent evolution seems to be the unique solution. It involves the creation of new shared systems of meaning that are accepted, internalised and acted at all level.

This might appear in group work. It would spare time and energy to convince people : they would discover it while getting certifications or modifying the production process for instance. Therefore participation and self organization should be quality certification's basics.

DISCUSSION

One can't affirm that our results are valid for any company in any activity in France. Still we studied an electricity producer, two car manufacturers, a painting producer, a metallurgical industry, a water producer, a telecommunication unit.

Several activities and some small enterprises as well as international companies are present.

The main limit of our work remains the difficulty to interviews also employees on the front line. This shall be the next step, to get a better picture of all the firms components.

Learning opportunities

Allowing every team member to embrace wider responsibilities and to learn from each other, the process become learning and mind opening centre. The challenge lay in the coordination of the skills useful to achieve a project, avoiding a hierarchical power structure, so that a real dialogue can begin between managers and « basic employees».

A winner / winner logic can provide an efficient dialogue frame.

Participation is not only a nice idea. It provides useful barriers against major inconsistencies. By taking into account the actor's culture, representation and skills, it avoids unrealistic plans, failure to understand the stake in «real working life », impossible to know without being implicated in everyday work and practices.

Participative management can also avoid the top down approach bias: actors won't feel forced in a change they were not informed of, don't understand the meaning and don't see the advantages nor the difficulties to find a solution (or why this solution was chosen).

A project is more likely to be implemented with success if the solution fits its context while respecting global values like equity and justice amongst every salaried employee of the company.

Empowerment

Argyris showed to what extent empowerment can be misunderstood. He clearly states that inner motivation is the only one nurturing organizational change and power decentralization. Another aspect that many team members highlight is the enrichment they gain mixing functional and operational skills and points of view. This is not so easy, a certain rivalry and mistrust at first could prevent them from working together.

Their strategic interests can be different. Finally they usually manage as Revel (2003) points it, to work efficiently on common projects.

Empowerment

Real employees participation remains rare and comes at the end of the process in the firms we studied. Lots of CEO's lack for trust in people's awareness or rigor. They seem to believe that they need to centralize decisions. Given that context empowerment remains a concept. Managers speak about empowerment when they meet reluctance and inertia. Although it should be part of the process beginnings.

What I expect from you?



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thank
you!