Tünde Taxner

Using Storytelling to Facilitate Change at the Workplace
Book Review

Cleland Silva, Tricia **–** de Tarso Fonseca Silva, Paulo 2022: *Making Sense of Work Through Collaborative Storytelling. Building Narratives in Organisational Change.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. Online: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-89446-7

Stories convince others, make sense of lived experiences and provide an identity for communities (Bruner 1986). However, "the stories that we embody remain uninvited or under acknowledged at the workplace" (Cleland Silva – de Tarso Fonseca Silva 2022: VIII). Therefore, the authors of the volume *Making Sense of Work Through Collaborative Storytelling. Building Narratives in Organisational Change* dedicated their work as researchers and entrepreneurs to organisational storytelling. Tricia Cleland Silva and Paulo de Tarso Fonseca Silva are a multicultural family living in Helsinki, Finland. While working as researchers, university teachers and business consultants, they realised that undiscovered stories hinder collaboration, engagement and equality in the workplace. Thus, they aim to bring employees' narratives to light and start discussions between organisational members.

Making Sense of Work Through Collaborative Storytelling. Building Narratives in Organisational Change presents the roots, the background and the meaning of storytelling in times of organisational change to show how to mediate conflicts, confusion and mistrust with the help of stories at the workplace. Building upon the theoretical background of organisational change processes, stories and metaphors, the volume presents the Collaborative Story Craft (CSC) method, a storytelling-based intervention which is built upon scientific works and the authors' experiences as organisational developers.

The first chapter provides starting points for the discussing organisational storytelling and change processes. Based on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), the authors consider the workplace a community of practice: every employee is connected and defined by shared goals, roles and rules. However, "everyone at the workplace is a storyteller" (Cleland Silva – de Tarso Fonseca Silva 2022: 1) meaning that sense-making can be explored through personal stories in organisations. Mainly building upon the works of Gibbs (2013) and White (2007), the authors consider the importance of metaphors, dominant narratives and employees' stories for initiating honest conversations about organisational change.

The second chapter explores local and global systems of narratives which influence employees. The authors differentiate between narratives, exclusive narratives

and stories in an organisational context. They emphasise the role of storytelling in recognising power relations and extending diversity beyond organisational policies. The authors introduce "the social world of snakes and ladders" (Cleland Silva – de Tarso Fonseca Silva 2022: 12), which metaphorically represents organisations where power is a social and relational phenomenon that dominant narratives – spread and formed by managers – mirror.

After exploring the sociocultural context of storytelling, Chapter 3 presents the theoretical background of storytelling practices. The authors define storytelling as a craft – a collaborative activity with clear goals and feedback from others. Craftmanship as a metaphor means that stories can be developed in a joint effort considering the characteristics of the work environment and the tools at hand. This metaphor serves as the basis of the Collaborative Story Craft method, an intervention designed by the authors for professionals who are open to engage with their own stories for work purposes. The CSC involves employees in a sense-making process to define organisational change on a common ground. This interactive method consisting of workshops, reports and storytelling enables the mapping of individual narratives about organisational change processes. The examples provided by the authors showcase that the CSC can be used in organisational development processes while also providing rich material for research purposes.

To understand the model's background, the authors present their personal and professional stories in Chapter 4. Besides providing personal information that is somewhat unusual in scientific literature, they describe the characteristics of their work as Story Mediators. The reader can explore the roles, core values and responsibilities of organisational developers who facilitate storytelling-based activities. The CSC consists of four steps that are presented in Chapter 5. The roles of the storytellers (the participating employees) and the Story Mediators (the facilitators of activities) are described in each phase. The next chapter provides a context for all steps needed and presents the purpose of the intervention: questioning well-established stories to consider an exchange of narratives within the organisation.

To gain a deeper understanding of the CSC, a case study is presented in Chapter 7. Narratives of multiple employees are explored who go through the same change process at their workplace. While getting to know their stories, the reader can discover connections between their different viewpoints and engage in a sense-making process. The case study shows that "Collaborative Storytelling […] provides the possibility of actively listening with curiosity and motivation, to hold the space for another storyteller, while exchanging one's own story" (Cleland Silva – de Tarso Fonseca Silva 2022: 97).

Finally, the Conclusions list scholars who influenced the authors' work, like David Boje, Yannis Gabriel, Wendelin Küpers and Matt Statler – dominant researchers of organisational storytelling. This part showcases how the volume builds upon relevant scientific perspectives and takes a critical approach to organisational storytelling – a perspective that became popular during the last two decades (Beigi et al. 2019). This approach limits the scientific discourse because it mainly focuses on power relations and how these shape organisational narratives and does not consider strategic or managerial perspectives. However, the authors move beyond contributing

to the scientific discussion on storytelling and change management and connect theory to practice. The book's style and clear structure showcase educative motives; the metaphorical stories and case studies facilitate a deeper understanding of the topic and initiate the reproduction of storytelling-based activities. Thus, the volume may inspire social scientists and organisational developers to discover the potential of using stories to facilitate change at the workplace.

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Tünde Taxner is a PhD candidate in communication science at Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary. Her research revolves around the strategic communication of non-profit organisations, organisational storytelling and environmental sustainability. She is a science communication practitioner with a background in journalism and a University Lecturer with experience from Corvinus University of Budapest and Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany. She holds her MA and BA in Communication Science from Corvinus University of Budapest and is a Pro Scientia Gold Medal awardee from 2023. E-mail: tunde.taxner@stud.uni-corvinus.hu