Traveling Cultures: Management Theories, Practices and Differences

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Stream: Critical Views Across Cultures: Legitimacy and Divergences in Management Practices
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Abstract: In a globalized economy, management credentialism, training, skills and education have become indispensable but affirmative toolkits for governments, students and managers to legitimize their actions and advance their interests. Its practicality, scientism, rationality and professionalism are continually touted, naturalized and universalized. While there is an increasing awareness that management is a constituted, political act, most of these 'deconstructive' readings are still locked in an engagement with theoretical revisions of contemporary management discourse. There is very little recognition of and reflexivity on management’s imperial spread. In this paper, I have sought to extend the critique of 'western' management theories via an examination of some salient features of the nature and development of 'western' management theories.

In my interrogation of this discourse, I point to its gaps and partial nature and suggest that an alternative, more inclusive managerial practice can be developed. In the second half of the paper, I set out some of the elements through which this may be achieved. They include amongst others, a deconstruction of the widely held view of 'western' universalist and transcendental management theories as well as the study of 'East Asian' business as refracted through western management thought. This latter analysis has tended to privilege an interpretation that posits and reifies a cultural distinctiveness. While the culturalist view has its merits, its derivative functionalism is problematic. In the paper, I seek to show that there are indeed some common elements in both societal discourses but because they are 'submerged', they are often not recognized. In so doing, my analysis breaks away from a purely 'oppositional' stance and suggests that a critical engagement and interrogation of cultures may enable the development of new discursive practices.

Introduction

The end of the 20th century has been characterised as the end of history and the triumph of the indomitable West (Fukuyama, 1992). Accompanied by its twin angels – liberal democracy and market capitalism - 'all that is solid melts into air'. All vestiges of the old ideological order have been swept away and previously autonomous enclaves are now integrated into a 'borderless' and global system of production and consumption (Dicken, 2001). The idea of international capitalism and its 'free' market mechanisms has traveled and triumphed. 'Corrupt', 'cronyistic' and 'protectionist' Asian-style 'capitalism' was found wanting in the light of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and certainly not as robust, efficient or 'transparent' as 'western' liberal market economies. 'Transparency', 'market principles' and 'corporate governance' now become key buzzwords and as these concepts 'travel', they 'flatten' the world and discipline inefficient, 'corrupt' Asian business practices (Backman, 1998; Friedman, 2000, 2006). But before the ink dried and as the 21st century unfolded, spectacular corporate collapses in the 'west' e.g. Enron, MCI, HHI, Parmalat amongst others, raised concerns that cronyistic, opaque and corrupt practices were not 'continental exceptions' and that 'suspect' business practices may not have 'travelled' but are rather inherent in certain market practices. Although the world may have become increasingly more integrated, linked and interdependent, as these crises attest to, ideology and history has not ended. If any, it has brought into sharper focus the tensions undergirding the global system. There is a greater recognition of 'market fundamentalism' and global capitalism. September 11
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further emphasized this view - the 'west' and its self-styled claimed values of 'freedom', 'democracy', 'human rights', 'rationality', 'decency', 'modernity' and 'market economy' became an ideological battleground against the 'threatening' and dangerous Others.

In business, threats to 'western' business systems and practices are not new; they have, however, become increasingly articulated and rooted in culture. In the 1980s, it was the threat of 'the rising sun' (as in Japan) and more recently, the rise of China has reinvigorated concerns of the much feared 'yellow peril' of the 19th century in both Europe and the USA. Critics claimed that Asian competitiveness is largely a consequence of cheap labour and more importantly their distortions of market practices through government intervention. For many Asians, these claims are self-serving and fail to recognise their cultural specificities and historical exigencies. The purpose of this paper is not to stocktake the accuracies and/or veracities of these truth claims as both explanations are plausible but rather that such debates are often like the 'blindmen and the elephant' puzzle, each containing a kernel of truth. Theories privileging exclusiveness, noted Said, often 'give rise to polarisations that absolve and forgive ignorance and demagogy more than they enable knowledge' (Said, 1993: 31). Indeed, one can readily find putatively distinctive 'Asian' business characteristics in 'western' societies and vice-versa e.g. as in discussions of interlocking directorates, networks and the distinction between negative 'protectionism' and positive 'export-enhancing subsidies', merit-style recruitment, just-in-time practices and organisational charts and structures. This criss-crossing of practices and ideas suggest that practices and ideas travel and that it would be churlish to examine one's environment and position independently of others. Globalists likewise concur (Giddens, 1989; Friedman, 2006; 2000; Gray, 2000; Ohmae, 1995). Because of this, business curricula has been increasingly 'internationalised'. For example, the very influential AACSB (American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business) has sought to include 'international business/management' as part of its 'essential' skills set. International business/management texts and articles have inevitably followed and as they 'travel' (and are also 'translated'), this literature participate in, contribute to and help reinforce perceptions and attitudes about the 'west', 'western' practices and the world. In the main, this corpus of 'writings' accepts and allocates for itself a sovereign, independent and normative view of the world. Through its putative scientism, rationality, objectivity and empirical positivism, it becomes self-validating, further consolidating its authority and power (Latouche, 1996; Rist, 1997).

The purpose of this paper is not only to critically examine 'western' management discourse. This is a relatively easy task – cataloguing its 'evils' but rather to subject it to a critical reflexivity where absent knowledges and voices can be recovered. This is best done through what Said has called a 'contrapuntal' reading. According to Said and others, knowledge is not an innocent act but rather pregnant and laden with power. To act and think contrapuntally, as Said suggested, we have to 'think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant' (Said, 1993: 32). As he argued, 'partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic' (1993: xxv).

Consequently, he suggests '(by) looking at the different experiences (of metropolitan and formerly colonised societies) contrapuntally, as making up a set of what I call intertwined and overlapping histories, I shall try to formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility' (Said, 1993: 18). Such reading enables the reader to reveal the overlapping and intersection of power and resistance. Resistance, however, requires more than a sense and act of oppositionality alone. It requires first the recovering of "geographical territory" and then a strategy enabling the "changing of cultural territory" (Said, 1993: 252). This requires not only the break down of barriers existing between different cultures through an active engagement with the dominant discourse but "to transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories" (Said, 1993: 261). Mary Louise Pratt (1992:...
argue that they are wrong but rather to point out the operations (and limits) of representational power (Foucault, 1972). This is a partial and mediated process, and must therefore be read and understood as constructions. This struggle for domination, Foucault has suggested, can be both systemic and hidden - it sets the field and terrain for definition and engagement and in relentlessly constructing its subject and naturalizing its own position. Choice and politics are therefore embedded in what is accentuated and marginalised. Management theories and practices are no different but when they 'travel' and are embraced in 'other' parts of the world, this subjectivity is 'hidden' from view. More importantly, these seemingly objective definitions and analyses “support, elaborate and consolidate the practice of empire” (Said, 1993: 14). By taking up the metaphor of movement, I am trying to try here to escape from the debates over globalization versus localization but rather seek to look at practices and cultures in terms of ‘fluidity’, movements and flows across time and space, and ‘fixity’ which refers to ways in which practices is about location, tradition and cultural expression. Through a contrapuntal practice, I seek to effect a strategy of resistance which not only ‘deconstructs’ this received but dominant knowledge but also to enable the deployment of different readings and approaches. In the process, such a dialogue engenders a re-evaluation of past historical practices and wisdom, enabling a recognition that alternatives exist and that they can even be attractive possibilities. A more open and inclusive form of scholarship can be (re)discovered as we explore the different 'vectors' of 'travelled' theories and practices.

Traveling Theories and Spatial Conquest

In an influential article published in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said pushed forth the notion of what he called ‘travelling theory’. Ideas and theories, asserted Said, travel from person to person, from situation to situation, and from a particular context to another. Since theories originally develop in specific locations in response to clear and definite historical and social circumstances, they may, in travelling, undergo a process of transmutation when applied to new circumstances, emerging ‘as complex maps and histories’ (Clifford, 1997: 7). They, however, run the risk of being tamed and revamped as a new orthodoxy. A dozen years later, Said revised this argument by proposing that ideas and theories can be reinvigorated and made to speak to whole new political situations when they travel from one location to another. It all depends on the work being done. How well has Said’s work travelled to management studies? Has management studies domesticated and appropriated his work into a slick professionalism, or has it breathed a new and novel life into his ideas by applying them to a different set of political and cultural circumstances?

The eminently popular and influential management guru, Peter Drucker, wrote that management was "something new, *distinctively western* (my emphasis). Prior to and outside of the modern West, resources have always been considered a limit of man’s activities, a restriction on his control over his environment – rather than an opportunity and a tool of his control over nature" (Drucker, 1954: 4). In one fell swoop, Drucker defines management as quintessentially western, differentiating it from other civilizations and via it, enables the ‘west’ to achieve economic and social superiority. The dissemination and inculcation of ‘western’ management concepts and
major deviation from the core golden rules. Governments ... which deviate too far from the core rules will see their investors stampede away, interest rates rise and stock market valuations fall" (Friedman, 2000: 87-8).

This cultural conditioning is rife in the literature surrounding economic modernization2. At its heart is a singular, developmental track. Its history, however, belies its anthropological underpinnings – civilization demands a transformation in work patterns and discipline unlike ‘childish and irrational’ savages, barbarians and/or primitive cultures. These assumptions, as Trahair (1984) has noted, enable Elton Mayo to develop his ideas of ‘human relations’ and indeed, formed the core of much management theorizing where the rational manager provides oversight, supervision and leadership for the irrational worker (Waring, 1991; O’Connor, 1999).

The work of Weber can similarly be thus framed. In his analyses, Weber argues that western societies were technically and developmentally superior because of their embrace of a distinctly ‘western’ administrative tool – the formal rational bureaucratic organization. According to him, this superiority derives from its “precision, speed, lack of equivocation, knowledge of the documentary record, continuity, sense of discretion, uniformity of operation, system of subordination and reduction of frictions” (Weber, 1946: 196) unlike patrimonial non-western societies. Because of this, other cultures will seek to imitate this ‘western’ rational, bureaucratic model in order to transform themselves and be economically competitive.

Importantly in Weber’s view was the concept of specialization. In his formulation of the bureaucratic organization, Weber argued that specialization allows people to specialize in particular activities. This not only makes work processes more efficient, precise but also (economically) rational3. Similarly, Taylor has argued that when tasks within organizations were broken down and individual workers worked on discrete processes, the organization is able to realize greater output, efficiencies and also facilitates complex tasks. Conversely, specialization also affects knowledge distribution in that people have reduced knowledge and understanding of the whole process, and thus marginalized.

Lest the arguments rendered here be considered esoteric, I seek to ground some of its effects via the activities of ‘western’ business organizations such as the East India Company, the Dutch East Indies Company, the Hudson Bay Company, the Royal African Company and similar ventures (Dunning, 1992: 96-132). The activities of the ‘overseas manager’ involved a combination of the supervision of economic activities with the attempt to discipline, transform and control indigenous people, their institutions, traditions and practices (Memmi, 1965, 1984; Alvares, 1988, 1989). When combined with the prevailing norms of ‘gentlemanly’ conduct, the overseas manager would instead be likely to institute some form of ‘heretical’ structure to manage his ‘clients’ and organization. Specialization of tasks was critical to this ‘imperial’ project, as it sought to
This model contained basic assumptions about the desirable traits for workers and managers and legitimised and naturalised a particular type of organization over other types, at both the global level (between states and societies) and the local (as in between the different disparate indigenous groups). The identification of these traits with a particular (cultural/racial) system also engenders a hierarchy between groups of workers and people within and between organizations and societies, and continues to be played out in current global practices.

2 See for example, the heavy ideologically laden articles in The Economist, which has relentlessly taken a globalist and neoliberal position on economics and politics. Of course, the genesis of this can be seen in Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth.

3 Lyotard (1984) suggested that this economically rational practice is distinctively western and is both historically and intellectually rooted in liberalism.

Clearly, early ‘business organizations’ demonstrated almost intuitively what ‘western’ management theorists have sought to articulate and indeed can offer us productive routes of enquiry. An examination of these organizations will readily show that these ‘early’ organizations are imbricated within the state’s logic. Not only do they combined both the public and private interest but they also demonstrated the critical nature of public-private relationships as they pertained to market activities and mechanisms e.g. state largesse, monopoly behavior, amongst others. More critically, they demonstrated the core components of business activities: the extension of territorial and temporal sovereignty and the critical embedded nature of business and political networks. They also showed to us that managers take on multiple roles: a diplomat, a monarch, a negotiator, a wizard, the head of a clan, a spokesperson or just a more important node in a network of skills and resources (as indeed, Henry Mintzberg (1973) and others have suggested).

The discussion to date suggests that contemporary ‘western’ theories of management has a historical lineage – it shares some continuities with ‘colonial’ management practitioners. They both shared the ideal of seeking a ‘one best way’ of managing, enabling greater productivity, efficiency, profits and growth. They also both seek to ‘diffuse’ civilization (Bhabha, 1994), acculturate and educate the ignorant from wrong beliefs and/or inefficiency (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997). Where they differ is that the latter were ‘culturally embedded’ unlike the former who seek a universal model transcending national and organizational borders (Friedman, 2006). This ‘desire’, ‘disciplined and managed’ via scientific justification (Venn, 2000; Rose, 1990), endows ‘western management theories’ greater legitimacy for they are logical, natural, scientific and rational. Inadvertently, these (research and discursive) practices produce reality, “domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1977: 194) of the ‘non-western’ world, and in so doing, act to preserve and reproduce ‘western’ superiority.

**Masking Power/Knowledge: Management Theories and Practices and The Production of Truth**

In his discussions of ‘white hegemony’, Richard Dyer (1988) has suggested that the valency and potency of the power of whiteness lies in its ability to project a seemingly natural, neutral, transcendental image, comprising the full diversity of human experiences. Gauri Viswanathan (1990) similarly noted this tendency in her *Mask of Conquest*. Through an examination of colonial records, Viswanathan suggested that education became a mask for material and economic exploitation by developing attitudes coeval with sociopolitical control. In ‘naturalizing’ and privileging these ‘literate’ and ‘civilized’ attitudes and behaviors, she showed that colonial subjects through their consumption of these practices, became willing participants in the colonial project where economic growth and individual gain are not only desirable.
but realizable. This process is still prevalent today and clearly manifested in the travel of ‘western’ management texts and education. The global spread of management education, the MBA and other executive programs, all offer the promise that its ‘consumption’ and adoption would enable and induce a seemingly and entirely knowable and visible reality. In discussions of the non-Western, there is a tendency to (re)present them as non-individuated selves, interchangeable and often unorganized contra the stable, organized ‘Western’. This ‘orientalist’ discourse, as Said (1978) has argued, is a closed system, resilient and enduring. In management discourse, this is seen in both popular and academic writings on international and/or comparative management/marketing/business, which paying the customary caution to be conscious of cultural differences, nonetheless, often proceed with set analytical frameworks of countries within the anecdotal, although rendered universalist discourse. Prescriptions are similarly rendered as ‘ready-made’ scientific prescriptions based on these analytical observations. This strategy is clearly effective; it enables the ‘unknown’ and the ‘strange’ to be (re)presented and tamed. Differences can therefore be known, neutralised and appropriately managed out. These management prescriptions are in effect, more akin to Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’ which mobilises individual and group practitioners of these technologies (Foucault, 1988, 1991b). At the same time, they comfort, reassure and even ‘protect’ management practitioners as these technologies accord onto them an assumed mastery of ‘skills’, knowledge and ‘moral’ legitimacy (Fineman and Gabriel, 1994: 385).

Contemporary culturalist accounts have challenged the universalist assumptions embedded within the international and comparative analyses. In their wake, they have posited (and resurrected) enduring culturalists customs and traditions as alternative worldviews effecting management behaviors and practices. Clearly, these accounts have enabled greater cultural sensitivity and suggest a greater awareness of institutional practices and yet, like our universalists, many of these accounts are nonetheless ‘orientalist’ themselves. There is often in the literature an oversimplification of a culture, glossing over its internal cleavages (race, class, gender and regional) e.g. in discussions of China, ethnic, regional and gender differences are constantly ignored. There is no recognition in this literature of conflicting interests and dissenting voices silenced, and more critically a form of unitary ‘Asian’ traditions and customs portrayed as eternal and essentialized. Differences are glossed over and pressed into the service of a singular customary and/or traditional whole, conveying both eternity and continuity. This quest of making “the east different from the west” sought to exile one from the other (Kabbani, 1986: 59) but as Ashis Nandy has so brilliantly and poignantly argued in his study of the Uncolonized Mind, it marks a failure to rid one from the other. Instead, there is a double bind; its logic constrains choices and forces the “Eastern man” to “stress only those parts of his culture which are recessive in the West and to underplay both those within which his culture shares with the West and those which remain undefined by the West”. Paradoxically, this binds ‘east’ “even more irrevocably to the West” (Nandy, 1983: 73; see also Memmi, 1964; Carrier, 1992).

Charles Taylor (1992) has suggested that this bind is a highly political charged process where there is contestation for recognition. In such a politics, identity and recognition can only be forged through dialogical interactions and relations with others. This requires the transgression of space

4 Lacan (1977) for example suggests that desire arises from a sense of lack and a perception of the Other. In the context of management, western management and managers connote a sense of success and power and their putative skills constitute a driving desirable product and outcome which is realisable through the ‘consumption’ and acquisition of these ‘western’ skills and knowledge. Once realised, power and success is deemed to be attainable.

5 Bruno Latour (1987) and Chia (1996), for example, have been highly critical of this. For them, analytical models are but representations of the world. In the ‘readv-made’ scientific view such models are use.
Because of the dynamism associated with the Japanese economy and subsequently the ‘tiger economies’ (of South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong) and more recently, China, East Asia has assumed critical import for policy-makers, businesses and academics. As a place, East Asia lacks geographical obviousness despite academic pronouncements. For Richard Whitley (1992) the differences between East Asian states are greater than the differences separating those states from western states, and indeed, if we extend East Asia to the South, the cultural differences are significant. Language, civilizations and territories all confound the issue and as such, rather than an object of inquiry, East Asia presents more as a theoretical problematic. Business schools and management theorists, however, have the luxury of not engaging with this issue although their methodologies and the questions they posed are imbricated within a sociology of knowledge of East Asia, unified by a ‘Confucian’ telos (Reid, 1990; Tung, 1996; Rozman, 1991; Redding, 1990). This ‘culturalist’ account, as Huntington has suggested is invariably a ‘threat’ to ‘western’ civilizations and is also not compatible with the tenets of western liberal market economy. Indeed, this ‘telos’ has undergirded analyses and while providing a useful alternative discourse, it is too narrow. It fails
to acknowledge that there are significant internal variations within this beliefsystem. Different economic strategies can ensue (Warner, 2003; Wong, 2005)10. Historically and epistemologically, it also fails to seriously account for the different contesting circuits of Confucianist practices and their efficacies in East Asia.

At a minimum, the 'recuperation' of an alternative 'Asian' practice needs to be approached via a greater sensitivity to historical and cultural contexts, and includes at least a consideration of the following areas:

• Different conceptions of the nature of a state;
• The issue of ethnic homogeneity;
• Cross-border connections and movements;
• Acceptance and rejection of foreign influences; and
• The presence and absence of natural resources.

In East Asia, it is possible to discern two basic conceptions of the state. There are the rigid, pyramidal, heretical organizations found in Japan, Korea, Vietnam and China (Keyes. Kendall and

10 For example, although largely 'Confucianist', the economies of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore are shaped as much by small businesses, entrepreneurialism and state actions. Confucianism as a singular explanatory narrative is clearly inadequate.

Hardacre, 1994; Osborne, 1997: 27-34). Here, borders are fixed and stations within society generally fixed and marked by external honors or characteristics, controlled and determined by the rulers. By contrast, in Southeast Asia, the state is less pyramidal but coalesce around a series of concentric circles in which proximity to the central power wielder also denoted proximity to the state. This conception is characterized by weak control over borders (Wolters, 1999).

As a necessary concomitant to the preceding point, it is apparent that there will be varying attitudes of states towards travelling practices and other cross-border activities. More importantly, they will vary their abilities to enforce any such control. In Northeast Asian societies, historically there has been greater control and states continue to do so e.g. the Korean peninsula. In contrast, ethnic minorities populated the Laotian, Burmese and Thai borders and state representatives are not only resented but they also have no effective control of the border areas (Rigg, 1997). Indirectly, this impacts on the ethnic composition of these societies. Where a central state prevails and tighter control enforced, such societies are able to marshal more resources and hence more resistant to external influences; they also tend to be more homogenous societies. On the other hand, the converse is true – there is both greater heterogeneity and social interactions and reciprocity in the latter as porous borders enable flight, travel and, both syncretic and hybrid cultures and practices.

Typically, East Asian societies (except China) are resource-poor economies and have therefore developed market-seeking activities. Not surprisingly, the state looms large and is a prime organiser of resources and strategies to obviate its resource scarcity. Strategies crafted therefore, accord to the state a privileged role and this is certainly true for South Korea, Japan and Singapore where the state plays critical defining roles in their respective economic trajectories. In contrast, resource-rich Southeast economies tend to be typically rent-seeking economies and manifest a plurality of competing interests marred by cyclical manifestations of a strong, organised state and the vicissitudes of what Migdal (1998) calls 'weak states'. Indeed, historical analyses tend to support this view. As such, western firms seeking to conduct their business activities have also developed their mode of entry, structure and involvement accordingly.

As significant as these differences are, globalization and economic integration has been critical and transformative of these traits. They have become contingent and variable values acted upon by an
“immense range of sociopolitical and discursive processes, strategies and struggles that have been termed "any single encompassing dynamic” (Brenner, 1998: 461). Of course, in some of these economies and societies, the disruptive effects of colonialism are still being felt and structured their relationships with the global economy. Despite this, there is no denial that contemporary, ensuing, highly mobile resultant complex patterns of interactions are fluid and they changed rapidly, creating “interstitial zones” operating within and between states, nations and societies. Their interconnections elude and challenge our conventional assumptions of territorially shared ideas and practices requiring us to privilege process, flows, space and their interactivities. This focus on flows, space and flows has rendered business practices more fluid, given rise to what some analysts call the ‘network society’ (Castells, 1997; van Dijk, 1999; Bauman, 2000) and makes analysis and practices more complex (Urry, 2003). Ideas now travel more readily across and criss-cross spaces and rigid categorisations become problematic.

**The Network Society?**

Over the last twenty years, the concept of networks and relationships has become a critical organising motif in contemporary accounts of business and governmental practices (Newman, Barabasi & Watts, 2006; Cross, Parker & Cross, 2004; Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004). They are seen as influential prerequisites as well as the results for decision-making processes in organizations (Cross, Parker & Cross, 2004; Morgan, 1986); critical in the coordination of wide-wide actions and information (Birkinshaw & Hagstrom, 2002; Luhmann, 1998; Walker, 1985). More importantly, it puts to rest the view that business transactions occur voluntarily in an environment of atomistic exchange informed wholly by rational expectations. At the forefront of these analyses are those derived from a close investigation of East Asian firms. East Asian business practices and activities have been typically portrayed as one of creating and fostering long-term relationships, and the continual structuring and restructurizing of their access to networks of relationships, some analysts suggest, resemble the ways that individuals operate in the wider society (Henrich et. al., 2004; Hamilton, 1991; Burt, 1979). These processes are engendered through formalized rituals such as the exchange of gifts, the sharing of meals and companionship and mutual acceptance of each other’s personal network of relationships e.g. guanshi.

This reciprocity is “a specific set of linkages among a defined set of actors, with the additional property that the characteristics of these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behavior of the actors involved” (Mitchell, 1969: 2). Chinese business practices, it is claimed, is particularly redolent of these practices and numerous examples abound e.g. Lucio Tan in the Philippines, Robert Kuok in Hong Kong and China amongst others. On the other hand, there have been a number of studies that Chinese network ties are not only confined to the Chinese alone but often cut across various ethnic groups e.g. in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia (Gomez, 1999; Wibisono, 1995). Rubinstein, (2004), Gilding (2002), Mizruchi (1992) and Scott (1982) have also shown in their respective analyses the dense network relationships amongst business elites in the USA, Europe and Australia, and that ethnic ties may be important but shared business and economic interests are primarily influential in these relationships (Fruin, 2003; Sklair, 2000). Consequently, business behavior and practices need to take into account the nature and form of relationship and their affect on firms.

Apart from a shared world view and affection amongst business elites, the rationale behind their networking behavior can also be explained in another way. In order to ensure contracting and sub-contracting business practices are efficient and/or effective, it is necessary to be able to trust these agents who are required to provide suppliers at the appropriate time in which it is not desirable to integrate them into the firm. This can be seen, for example, within the textile and garment industries.
where sub-contractors are seamlessly integrated into a global commodity chain (hassler, 2006; bair, 2005; mamic, 2005; gereffi & korzeniewicz, 1994). nike, levi strauss, adidas, the gap and others readily come to mind (arnold & hartman, 2005, 2003; d'mello, 2003).

the bonding between different partners is in each case, an important and necessary part of a successful business operation (todevam, 2006; cross, parker & cross, 2004; burt, 1979), and that these arrangements and organizations may also impact on operational methods. the ICT industry reflects this industry. for example, taiwaese firms, Acer, Benq and Mita provide parts and even design for many well- established firms such as Dell, Hewlett-Packard (sengupta, Mohr & Slater, 2006; choung, Min & Park, 2003; levy & kuo, 1991) while Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and others provide knowledge expertise for firms outsourcing aspects of their operations (garud & kumarawammy, 2005; Dossani & Kenny, 2004; Khanna & Palepu, 2004).

Recent ‘western’ management theorists have sought to develop this network and relationship further (Todeva, 2006; Scott, 2000). There are now numerous studies on networks, centering upon the need to move to a ‘new’ or ‘network’ paradigm. They emphasized the changing nature of contemporary fluid and flexible business practices, pointing to ‘networks’ as a superior mode of organizing. This has arisen from the perception and view that networks facilitate trust, dynamic inter-firm collaboration clusters, enhancing competition and innovation, generating economic efficiencies and promoting both growth and wealth (Gintis et. al, 2005; Cross, Parker & Cross, 2004; Birkinshaw & Hagstrom, 2002; Gulati, Nohria and Zaheer, 2000; Best, 1990). Because of

11 wong (2005) has sought to challenge and deconstruct this notion of guanxi as an exclusive and unique practice.

this, network research has examined typologies (Miles and Snow, 1986; Snow et. al, 1992), processes within networks and the formation as well as the efficacy of networks as an organizational practice (for information, finance, and innovation means and ends see e.g. Mcnelis, 2004; Birkinshaw & Hagstrom, 2002; Baum et. al., 2000; Delmar and Davidsson, 1998). The study of networks has become a central feature of management and relationship marketing; in other areas, it has impacted significantly on customer relationship management, particularly the notion of loyalty and supply chain management. In e-commerce, virtual relationships, trust and ‘stickiness’ all draw their inspiration from the study of networks (Huysman & Wulf, 2004). The study of entrepreneurship similarly benefits from a consideration of networks, network behavior and the value of network (social) capital (Benkler, 2006; Flap, 2003). While many of these features appear so obvious and commonsensical, it was not until they were presented as in a mirror-type form that their import were recognized and understood contrapuntally. As the present discussion has shown, the study and analysis of networks has indeed benefited first from a concern with ‘Asian’ business networks which subsequently spread backwards into a further understanding and analysis of ‘western’ business and organisational practices and networks. Transgression and traversed boundaries have thus been part of the business and management literature, albeit unacknowledged and under-appreciated.

Complex or Exclusive Practices?

In the ‘west’, firms are assumed to be in business for the sole purpose of profit maximization, and hence organize their activities accordingly (Alexander, 2000). This concentration on profits and realizing shareholder value has led to some poor decision-making (Nace, 2005; Bakan, 2004; Hutton, 1996). Long-term considerations are sacrificed for short-term gains and have grave implications for the wider economy (Schwartz, 1991; Collins and Porra, 1994; Hallsworth, 1996). Recent studies of corporate activities have, however, shown that firms are increasingly involved with a wide range of goals and intent (Savitz & McVicar, 2006; Amable, 2004; Elkington, 1999; Kli, 1992; Khanna, 2002; Todeva, 2004). To date, little systematic research has been undertaken...
Kelly, 1994; Hawken, 1993). The Body Shop, for example, shows that it possible to

While it is possible that this is little more than strategic branding of the corporate logo, it is also apparent that many East Asian firms, as a matter of policy, follow other objectives (Mendoza, 1991:123-35). These goals and objectives may be national and political e.g. in the cases of Malaysia (Renong, Sapura), Singapore (Singtel, Temasek Holdings) and South Korea, (Posco, LG, SK Group) where companies were ‘channeled’ and/or directed into key industries. Taiwanese firms, on the other hand, endowed ‘trade diplomacy’ on their nation via their trading activities and their recent investment in China has helped to stabilize inter-Straits diplomacy, despite the occasional gestures and posturings.

East Asian firms, even when free to determine their own activities, tended to focus on developing long-term business activities and relationships, rather than a mere consideration of the ‘bottom line’ e.g. The Bangkok Bank, YTL (from Malaysia). The point is not that East Asian businesses operate so radically and uniquely different from the rest of the world or that its culture precludes it from focusing solely on the ‘bottom line’ but rather that it seems to take a wider contextual view. One prime example of this practice is Singapore Airlines which seeks to position and reinvent itself continuously in the competitive global aviation sector. Of course, there is also SingTel which has been buying into regional markets as part of its corporate growth strategy. It could be argued that

12 See for example, Heracleous (2001) for a discussion on Singapore. However, this practice is not a continental exception. Europe, for example, created and fostered the Airbus to provide competition to Boeing, which incidentally is also an important beneficiary of state funds. In Europe, the USA and Australia, subsidies and similar ‘corporate welfare’ measures have been significant, especially in propping up certain industries e.g. the agricultural, automobile and steel industries, with the motivation of maintaining an electoral edge.

these are Singaporean examples and not typical of regional firm’s practices Heracleous (1999). Whilst there is some validity in this claim, one can readily invoke other regional examples e.g. Petronas (Malaysia) in Central Asia, Ayala and Acer in their respective global pursuits.

In East Asia, there has been a recognition that networks and relationships are important in the development of their ‘market’ economies (Wilkinson, 1996; Hefner, 1998; Wong, 2003) and analysts have deployed this perspective to suggest that the debate over development needs to move beyond the state or market nexus (Chan, Clark and Lam, 1998; Huang, 2000; Chang, 2002). They point out that the ‘involvement’ of the state ‘is a given’ and has a long genealogy, which paradoxically can be found in the west (Chang, 2002; Aoki, Okuno-Fujiwara & Kim, 1997). These critics suggest the more important task rather is to focus on the efficacy and quality of these interventions (Evans, 1995; see also Amsden, 2001; Woo-Cummings, 1999). For Evans, close ties to key social groups are fundamental for the state to effect economic and business growth (Evans, 1995). Indeed, in East Asia, the economic and development experiences have shown that economic growth can be accompanied by decreasing economic inequality and improvements in the quality of life for significant numbers of people within each state are possible (Birdsall, Ross and Sabot, 1995; Campos and Roots, 1996). Firms typically provide some form of welfare services (e.g. health and contributions to pension funds) and contribute to human resources development (via training and contributions to training and/or development funds) (Cunha & Cooper, 1998). The latter is critical as these economies and firms seek to effect their transition to higher value-added and technologically advanced industries, often with state support e.g. the development of information and communication technology industries in Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, and biotechnology industries (Wong, 2003). There is clearly a recognition that the state can play important roles either in sponsoring or catalyzing strategic economic industries with the private sector and that such relationships and networks are not only crucial, but necessary and are
embedded within these societies. East Asian managers and their attendant
management practices consequently need to give effect to these 'values' and their realization as they negotiate, manage
and transform their firms accordingly. Arguably, these trends can also be discerned in the 'west'
particularly in socialised market economies e.g. in Scandinavian economies and Germany. In these
economies, the state is embedded in a 'thick' network of relationships and cannot simply impose its
imprimatur on this network but is rather required to negotiate and renegotiate its relationships with
the different actors in this network (Crouch, 2005; Henrich et. al., 2004; Wong, 2003; Hall &
Soskice, 2001; Aoki, 2001; North, 1990)

This institutional approach thus draws our attention to the critical but changing nature of state -
society relationships, particularly the changing circumstances and historically variant conjunctures
through which the state can effect its capacities. Such an analysis therefore allows us to examine the
common characteristics and also tease out the contingent effects of the different prevailing
institutional arrangements in different states (Crouch, 2005). Their effects are uneven, variable and
path-dependent and do not conform to an over-arching logic of a linear programme imported and/or
travelled from elsewhere. Indeed, their effects are in some measure, refracted, redeployed,
domesticated, or resisted and constantly (re)formed, and has profoundly altered the phenomenology
of being in the world. Formative experiences – like the nature of work, the reproduction of self,
identity, culture and community – have all shifted and blurred. In management and business
literature, however, the centrality of the West/Other opposition that has characterised Eurocentric
representations of cultural difference remains. Representational practices that separate the world's

components into bounded units tend to disaggregate their relational histories and turn differences
into some form of hierarchical relationship, and thus help (perhaps, unwittingly) reproduce not only
'historical amnesia' but naturalises and reinforces a political economy story that substitutes
asymmetrical power relations for the myths of ('western') evolutionary development (Frank, 1998;
Blaut, 1993). Such 'distractions' render practices 'normal' and insofar as its containment strategies
has been both persuasive and coherent, there are clearly other genealogical frames to discern the
interpretations of space implicated in understandings and knowledges of selves and others, which
this paper has sought to explore, examine and (re)present. Such spaces are not mere objects of
disinterest but rather one which is laden by complex cultural practices and can be imaginatively
restaged (Wong, 2001). This requires both a recognition and a resistance to omniscient discourses
that deny otherness within and the (re)construction of narrative recoveries and add both spatial and
temporal depth to the flat, global evenness proclaimed.

Conclusion

Although they do not appear on the map, cultural and political struggles accompany and continue to
challenge global politics and its imbricated 'modernity'. The alternative worlds 'destroyed' and/or
suppressed within these modern cartographic' readings become available only when the global map
is given historical depth and alternatives are countenanced. Thus, although the dominant
geopolitical map of business and management appears non-contentious and non-normative, this
venal representation constitutes a moral representation, a moral geography that preorganise explicit
cultural, ethical and political discourses (Foucault, 1991a). This potency has been recognised by
various critical management scholars. "Management", as Alvesson and Willmott (1992:1) put it, "is

too potent in its effects upon the lives of employees, consumers and citizens to be

unexamined. A form of rationality”. Similarly, Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) postulated that managers have become ‘central figures’ of our age; their actions are highly (and disproportionately) rewarded, widely reported and profoundly felt (via the stockmarket and their effects on employment, economic growth and emulative behavior). There is the desire to be ‘as successful’ as these heroes, and management as a field of study, has proliferated. Through it, students learn to ‘do management’ via management theorists who proclaim their abilities of unraveling these successful secrets. In the main, the key to success lies in management’s ‘desirability’ augmented and certified through the claims of scientism, rationality and performativity, conferring upon such recipients and practitioners, status, credibility and legitimacy. Indeed, the growth of ‘management’ is tied to an uncritical endorsement of ‘capitalism’, its science and technology, a modernization ideology, monoligualism as a norm and a seemingly homogenization of world culture and linguistic cultures.

In this paper, I have sought to ‘deconstruct’ this lineage and open up some ‘new’ and possible lines of enquiries (Grey, Knights and Willmott, 1996). Following others, I have argued that because management is a constituted act and is imbricated and invested with power, it has been able to traverse (national and cross-cultural) border, offer its ‘modular’ imaginings and prescriptions and in so doing, impart its ‘values’ as both superior and natural, thereby maintaining its hegemony. But as various writers have reminded us, we cannot simply transfer or extend knowledge from one place to another without change taking place – time and place matters (Said, 2000b; Clifford, 1997).

In drawing on travel as both a metaphor and practice, I have sought to show that travel makes possible knowledges that are necessarily partial and contingent yet constitutive of both self-understanding and understanding of others. Thus, for example in ‘critically' reading management texts and re-considering and (re)examining East Asian business practices, I have sought to insert and consequentially expand the discourse of management. The interpellation of East Asia in my argument is important for since the late 1970s, East Asia has become a significant ‘field’ as well as an area of study. As a consequence of the global economic crisis and as East Asia became economically significant, management theorists and practitioners began their search for the new defining ‘input’ to revitalise productivity. The ‘dynamism’ and growth of East Asian economies prompted them to re-evaluate culture as a critical variable in development and growth. Previously seen as a constraining agent, culture now provides the basis for a new discursive thrust: ‘corporate culture’, ‘shared culture’, ‘cross-cultural’ studies now all become critical management constructs and tools for management academics, analysts and practitioners.

Clearly, the context, histories and experiences of East Asia and its business practices provide a foil through which we can unpack “the cultural experience of globalization” (Tomlinson, 1991). In the context of ‘global’ and universalistic management theories and prescriptions, it calls for a more thorough analysis and interrogation of the silences within the dominant ‘ready-made’ mode of ‘global’ management discourse. This foil is not internally consistent or homogeneous and in tracking its trajectories, we can unravel a myriad number of possible alternatives to contemporary management theories (Locke, 1996). Their formulations of new forms of organizations and organizational practices enable us to reconsider critical issues of corporate behavior, governance and practices and their attendant effects, and frame alternate discourses (Foucault, 1991a). Clearly, alternative practices can be perceived as risky and destabilising of the conventional borders by which we study cultural production. As such, they may provide some of the best justification for conducting such an approach beyond international management/business's 'sterility' (Redding, 1994) or its 'parochialism' (Boycigiller & Adler, 1991). In opening up the discursive space of international management/business, it can serve as an anodyne for the tendency (inevitable in the academic profession), to reify or naturalise intellectual distinctions that are themselves contingent constructions.
This paper, as such, has sought not to reject management practices and theories but rather to reconstitute them in more inclusive, ethical and democratic terms, to imagine a discursive collectivity that crosses conceptual boundaries enabling us to change some assumptions that support our embeddedness in theory, pedagogy and materiality. By focusing on the social organisation of how business and management knowledge is constructed, represented and constituted, I have sought to redirect attention to the cultured and objectified practices and relations of knowledge and power, and its claims to objectivity and truth. In the process, I have sought to demonstrate the futility of 'innocent', 'objective' and 'pure' knowledge but rather that knowledge is suffused with power and is always represented, performed, 'impure' and that it 'is the critic's job to provide resistances to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside or just beyond the interpretative area necessarily designated in advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory' (Said, 1983: 242). Indeed, the late Edward Said had warned of the risks of loyalty to theoretical models: 'theoretical closures, like social convention or cultural dogma, is anathema to critical consciousness, which loses its profession when it loses its active sense of an open world in which its faculties must be exercised' (Said, 1983: 242). Theories travel and whilst intellectually stimulating, we must not forget its historical and material import. We have to force such 'travels' to be dialogic and open to the process of the recovery of other potential 'truths'.

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