Constructing Shared Understanding –
The Role of Embodied Metaphors in Organization Development

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Abstract

We present a novel metaphorical approach to organization development, the use of embodied metaphors, and in doing so we extend current understandings and uses of metaphor in OD. In terms of understandings of metaphor, we go beyond the dominant semantic-cognitive dimension to address the spatial and embodied dimensions. In terms of uses of metaphor, we discuss an intervention technology based on embodied metaphors, which emphasizes induced rather than naturally occurring metaphors, builds on a developed theoretical base of collaborative diagnostic technologies, and can be employed in a targeted manner for issue diagnosis and intervention. Implications for the use of embodied metaphors in OD are discussed.

Keywords

CONSTRUCTING SHARED UNDERSTANDING –

THE ROLE OF EMBODIED METAPHORS IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

We discuss a novel metaphorical approach to organization development, the use of embodied metaphors, these being collaboratively constructed physical analogs. In doing so we extend current understandings and uses of metaphor in OD by going beyond the dominant semantic-cognitive dimension to address the spatial and embodied dimensions. In terms of uses of metaphor, we discuss an intervention technology based on embodied metaphors, which emphasizes induced rather than naturally occurring metaphors, builds on a developed theoretical base of collaborative diagnostic technologies, and can be employed in a targeted manner for issue diagnosis and intervention.

We suggest that embodied metaphors complement and extend traditional approaches to metaphor in organization development by emphasizing induced rather than naturally occurring metaphors, by building on a developed base of diagnostic technologies, by enabling a collaborative effort of metaphorical selection and diagnosis, and by enabling the employment of embodied metaphors to address specific, targeted issues of consequence to participants. In addition, we suggest that embodied metaphors can enable politically contentious issues to arise and be decoded and debated, can foster creative thinking, and can facilitate organizational change by being occasions for collective sensemaking where important issues can be surfaced and debated.

METAPHORS IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

The Linguistic Turn

The linguistic turn in the social sciences has portrayed language as fundamentally constructive and constitutive of social reality rather than merely representative and functional (Wittgenstein, 1967). In organization studies, the constructive view of language thus seeks to explore the communicative practices of organizational actors and their role in the intersubjective construction of meaning through social interaction (e.g. Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Barry & Elmes, 1997; Ford & Ford, 1995; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001). A conception of social reality as constructed and constituted through linguistically mediated processes, places organizational discourse at the centre of investigation (e.g. Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995; van Dijk, 1988; Heracleous, 2004; Oswick, 2000). In highlighting the context-dependent, teleological and symbolic dimensions of discursive interactions in particular, discourse can be conceptualized as situated symbolic action (Heracleous & Marshak, 2004). In this perspective, communicative actions convey actors' perceptions, values and beliefs that shape frames for interpretation and guide social reality construction. In this respect, metaphors – here conceived of as the archetype for a broader set of tropes such as metonymy, synedoche, simile and analogy – play a central role (e.g. Black, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1990).

Metaphor as a Creative Force

Traditionally, metaphors are assumed to suggest similarities between a source and a target domain, and to be primarily ornamental and thus unnecessary

and expendable as linguistic devices. From a constructionist viewpoint however, this literal view of metaphors as unnecessary linguistic ornaments is rejected, and their seminal role in human sensemaking and understanding is emphasized (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are viewed as primarily conceptual constructions that play a central role in the development of thought and intersubjective meaning making. According to Lakoff (1993: 203) for example, "the locus of metaphor is not language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another". In this respect, these conceptual similarities involve both ontological correspondences (target entities correspond in certain ways to source entities) as well as epistemic correspondences (knowledge of source domain is mapped on to knowledge about the target domain) (Lakoff, 1990). Social constructionists suggest that these correspondences are created rather than just revealed by metaphor, thereby emphasizing the inherently creative dimension of metaphor rather than viewing it as something that can merely reveal an antecedently existing similarity (e.g. Black, 1993; Johnson, 1987; Schon, 1993). Metaphors are more potent as creative devices if there is neither too much similarity nor too much difference between the source and target domains (e.g., Schon, 1993; Morgan, 1997).

Metaphors in Organization Development

It has long been recognized that as primarily cognitive and semantic devices, metaphors play a vital role in the discursive construction of meaning in organizational change and development processes (Cleary & Packard, 1992; Marshak, 1993 #766; Sackmann, 1989 #954). According to Burke, metaphors can be "windows into the soul, if not collective unconscious, of the social system" (Burke, 1992). Metaphors are crucial dimensions of organization members' cognitive schemata, providing lenses for interpreting the world, embodying implicit evaluations, and implying

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"appropriate" actions based on the prevailing metaphors (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1992; Hirsch, 1986). Metaphors can help to concretize vague and abstract ideas, can holistically convey a large amount of information, and can foster new ways of looking at things (Sackmann, 1989).

Cleary and Packard (1992) suggest a two-phase process of assessment of metaphors and other symbolic aspects of the organization, and then development of change goals and planning of action steps based on that assessment. Marshak (1993) in addition, proposes that change agents can listen carefully to the metaphors used by organizational members as a means of diagnosing the organization, help them understand the implications of employing different types of metaphors by conducting relevant workshops, and try to shape the way people think about change by diffusing appropriate metaphors that align their conceptual system with the type of change that needs to be achieved.

Perhaps the potency of metaphor to effect change is related to its complexity and ambiguity that allows for multiple interpretations to co-exist but at the same time can provide a shared direction. According to Pondy (1983), "because of its inherent ambivalence of meaning, metaphor can fulfill the dual function of enabling change and preserving continuity" (p. 164). This complexity and ambiguity is often downplayed in accounts of the use of metaphor in OD interventions (Inns, 2002). Despite the advantages of using metaphor for diagnostic and intervention purposes, often organization members may use mutually incompatible metaphors to describe the same organization, as Oswick and Montgomery (1999) found. In such cases, more extensive collaborative efforts need to be undertaken to explore the sources of contradiction and make further, improved diagnoses and interventions.

TOWARD EMBODIED METAPHORS

From Cognitive/Semantic to Spatial Metaphors

Metaphors are often based on characteristics found in the physical world, as illustrated by the three generic image schemata of up/down; container; and link or connection. This suggests that sensemaking seems to emerge from the human capacity of establishing and mentally resonating with these physical relationships of and between objects (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Going beyond metaphors' verbal, semantic dimension, Weick (1990) highlighted the relevance of spatial relatedness in terms of maps as two-dimensional devices of sensemaking employed in organizational practices. A map is a visual device signifying a territory that might either be spatially extended (then the map serves as a cartographic, spatial icon) or might be *conceptualized* as spatially extended (then the map is enacted as a spatial metaphor) (Robinson & Petchenik, 1976). Thus, Weick (1990) posits, sensemaking itself could be reframed as reading a map while writing it. For such recursive processes of meaning generation, maps draw on the spatial dimension of metaphors by displaying relative sizes, relative locations as well as interrelations among entities.

Broadening the expressive repertoire of metaphorical thinking in organizations, cognitive mapping has operationalized maps as spatial metaphors that can facilitate organizational change and development (e.g. Bougon, 1992; Brown, 1992; Calori, Johnson, & Sarnin, 1994; Clarke & Mackaness, 2001; Eden, 1992; Eden & Huxham, 1996; Hodgkinson & Johnson, 1994). Cognitive mapping involves the creation of maps as visual representations of a domain and its most relevant entities as cognitively perceived, and portrays these entities within systems of relationships (Huff, 2002). Maps can serve as triggers or focal points of reference and meaning

negotiation in open-ended conversations, and it is primarily the communication around the mapping process that seems to trigger fruitful conversations and insights. Given the recursive nature of meaning generation (Weick, 1990), a map does not solely represent but can rather construct the territory in important and consequential ways. Thus, a map does not merely reveal an antecedent order but can also instigate action that subsequently enacts a certain order; or construct a shared reality leading to corresponding actions. Extending metaphors' cognitive, verbal and semantic aspects by adding a spatial dimension can thus facilitate discursive processes of meaning making and change in organizations.

Toward Embodied Metaphors

Phenomenology highlights the embodied nature of human experience and reasoning. In a radical rejection of the Cartesian dichotomy, the body is seen as mediating human perception and experience of the world: "I am my body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 159). Human embodied existence is experienced and expressed prior to conscious processes of thinking; thus phenomena are not only purely cognitive but enacted in and through the body. Thus, human knowledge is rooted in and emerges from bodily experience of the world. Similarly, Joas (1996) reminds us of the body as the origin of pre-reflexive impetus to action. Focusing attention on the body, Joas posits, means "to challenge the presupposition that the body can be instrumentalised for the purposes of action and forces us to construe a non-instrumental relationship to the body" (Joas, 1996: 251).

Johnson (1987), in addition, reflects on the role of the body in human thinking from a cognitive science perspective. He views metaphorical image schemata as patterns of bodily experience that enable the structuring of bodily interactions with the world at more abstract levels. Image schemata – figurative, analogical and non-

propositional in nature – emerge primarily from spatial relations, and more particularly from perceptual interactions with the manipulation of objects. Human thought is organized through metaphorical elaborations of image schemata that form and structure experience and understanding. Thus, meaning is firmly rooted in, and emerges from bodily experiences. As Johnson (1987) argues, metaphors become constitutive for structuring bodily experience and also emerge from this experience.

Given that metaphors contain an abstracted understanding of domains and are based on bodily relationships, why not construct and draw on physical objects explicitly, as embodied metaphors, in order to facilitate the creative and meaning-making functions of metaphor in organizations? Several relevant approaches have emerged over the last decade. For example, Barry (1994) draws on depth psychology and art therapy to introduce the concept of *analogically mediated inquiry*. An object or model created by participants ('the analog'), allows the process consultant and the participants to engage in a collaborative process of interpretation and sensemaking. Thus, analogically mediated inquiry engages the client actively in creating a spatial metaphor that is not only of a semantic, cognitive or graphical nature, but also importantly of a physical nature. This process allows literal, embodied engagement with otherwise elusive mental images, and the relatively safe debate of alternative perspectives. Taking a psycho-analytical view, this resembles the process of surfacing conscious as well as unconscious aspects of participants' cognition that might have been projected onto the analog, whereby the analog absorbs and encompasses these projections and serves as a "positive scapegoat" for participants (Barry, 1994: 39).

Building on Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) hypothesis that perception is bound up with figurative thinking, Doyle & Sims (2002) discuss cognitive sculpting, the

constrruction of three-dimensional objects in the context of conversations for change. Participants are invited, using several objects on a table, to form a sculpture of an organizational issue at hand. This process involves verbal and non-verbal meaning negotiation that has both a mnemonic as well as a constructive effect. Paralleling the "positive scapegoat" effect of objects in analogically mediated inquiry, objects in cognitive sculpting also take attention away from the speaker and allow participants to focus on the collaboratively created sculpture, which in turn enables the exploration of meanings that could be politically contentious and would otherwise be undiscussable. The primary outcome of cognitive sculpting consists of developing a shared metaphorical language within a group that can be drawn upon in subsequent strategic conversations. Finally, cognitive sculpting fosters a collaborative setting of shared sensemaking. When two or more groups work independently on the same theme, the groups can discuss the differences in features and genesis of the construction, as well as critically reflect and comment on these differences. Cognitive sculpting results in an enhanced capacity to think and reason about a constructed concrete, physical object; but more importantly, to debate and make sense of the organizational issues it represents.

Buergi & Roos (2003) in addition, have discussed *serious play* as a multimodal process of sensemaking that goes beyond metaphors as pure cognitive devices by similarly employing physical analogs. This process invites participants to configure and represent abstract organizational issues such as organizational identity or the landscape of an organization or team by means of three-dimensional metaphorical objects made of construction toys. The theoretical antecedents of this approach include both Black's (1979) discussion of the creative potential of metaphors as well as Oswick et al.'s (2002) proposition to consider structural

dissimilarities as origins for metaphorical reasoning. Drawing on Worren et al. (2002) and Gardner (1993), in addition, the relevance of visual and tactile/kinaesthetic knowledge as a complement to propositional knowledge or intelligence is emphasized.

All three approaches discussed here exemplify and acknowledge the relevance of conceptual, creative metaphors, and extend the generally accepted semantic-cognitive dimension of metaphorical reasoning by viewing constructed physical objects as occasions for shared sensemaking. In this process, participants are actively involved in constructing or sculpting metaphorical symbols. Size, spatial relatedness, variety of materials, haptic and tactile aspects of the social construction process all contribute to the recursive process of sensemaking, involving the dynamic interpretation and reading of these embodied metaphors while constructing them. Even though these approaches draw from diverse theoretical underpinnings, they all share an attempt to surface participants' pre-reflexive knowledge, assumptions and experience to develop shared sets of metaphors and shared interpretations.

Our term "embodied metaphor" thus encompasses two related ideas. Firstly, the literal construction of a physical object as an occasion for sensemaking introduces the body in processes of creating and exploring metaphors. Primarily haptic, tactile and kinaesthetic aspects are involved in processes of cognitive sculpting, analogically mediated inquiry and serious play extend and complement the semantic and cognitive dimensions of metaphorical thinking. More importantly, however, the resulting physical constructions are themselves metaphors in the flesh, tangible metaphors representing organizational domains of importance to participants. Both the analogical creation process as well as the resulting physical

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constructions can be fruitful occasions for collective sensemaking and social reality construction, that can be immensely useful in processes of organization development and change.

Taking as a starting point the cognitive and semantic aspects of metaphors in terms of their constructive role in meaning making, we then highlighted two further dimensions. First, through the spatial dimension, operationalized in concepts such as cognitive or strategic mapping, the inherently spatial nature of metaphors (image schemata) can be brought to bear literally. Secondly, through the bodily dimension, exemplified in concepts such as analogically mediated inquiry, cognitive sculpting or serious play, embodied metaphors can be brought to bear on processes of shared meaning construction and negotiation about issues of shared concern. Further down we will draw on a management retreat of a private bank in Switzerland to illustrate the use and operations of embodied metaphors further down. Figure 1 below presents the views of metaphors discussed above and representative authors.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Organization Development Processes and Embodied Metaphors

From a traditional perspective of organization development as involving an analytical distinction of people and organizational processes on the one hand, the human-processual approach, vs technology and organizational structures on the other, the techno-structural approach (Friedlander & Brown, 1974), an embodied metaphors approach lies within the human-processual domain. Organization development has from early on recognised the importance of people and cognitively-

related interventions: "the cognitive work of clients has become a point of diagnosis and intervention" (Alderfer, 1977). In addition, the organization development field has continuously encouraged new approaches. According to Friedlander and Brown (1974), "broader applications of a theory of planned change will require expanded intervention technologies" (p. 335), and more recently Porras and Silvers (1991) noted that "we encourage the use of new tools in OD, especially when those tools are derived from a sound theoretical base" (p. 65). Interventions based on embodied metaphors aim to expand organizational members' ways of seeing through active, collaborative construction of metaphorical structures, thus potentially leading to re-framing, or change in perceptions of reality (Porras & Silvers, 1991).

The dominant approach with regard to metaphors in organization development suggests that change agents should take a leading part in diagnosing the organization through an understanding of the language-based metaphors used by organizational actors, and can foster change through diffusing appropriate metaphors given the context and type of change aimed for (Cleary & Packard, 1992; Marshak, 1993; Sackmann, 1989). Further, the emphasis is usually on naturally occurring metaphor use, rather than induced metaphorical creations. In addition, the emphasis is on a metaphorical intervention designed by the OD practitioner, rather than a collaborative effort of jointly developing and interpreting metaphors with organizational members. Lastly, metaphorical diagnosis is usually employed with regard to the whole organization, rather than a targeted issue that the organization is facing.

However, there is little knowledge of *how* organization development practitioners can elicit metaphors of organizational members through induced settings, and how this might take place within a collaborative context, rather than one

where the OD practitioner selects the metaphors they think would be appropriate. As Howe (1989) noted, "at present, practice seems to be guided largely by intuition and accumulated experience" (1989: 81). Fifteen years after this statement was made, there is still a lot to be learned about relevant intervention technologies. In addition, there is relatively little research on how OD practitioners might elicit metaphors to assist with a targeted issue, rather than a diagnosis and change of the whole system. Our use of embodied metaphors thus complements the current emphasis in organizational development by offering a means of accomplishing the above, as Table 1 below illustrates.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE: CONSTRUCTING SHARED UNDERSTANDING AT SWISSBANK CO

The CEO of SwissBankCo and his leadership team had recently agreed on the introduction and implementation a change in their marketing strategy with broader strategic implications. The overall concept – "I know my banker" – was intended to enable a more customer focused business practice throughout the bank. As part of a senior management retreat in 2003, a total of 47 managers of SwissBankCo including the CEO, six heads of departments and their direct reports, participated in a one-day strategy workshop in which toy construction materials were employed in the process of meaning generation and sensemaking. The participants were divided into six groups, each including members from different departments of the bank. Following some 'warm-up' exercises to familiarize participants with the

material, the groups were invited to build models of what the recently developed strategic concept "I know my banker" meant to them and to discuss the consequences for their respective daily practices.

In constructing and discussing their models, participants created a variety of embodied metaphors. These physical constructions portrayed the need "to raise customers up to the same level" as bankers; to improve mutual understanding by "getting on the same wavelength" or to develop a much closer relationship by even "getting into the jacuzzi" with customers. Figures 2 and 3 below give two examples of these metaphors illustrating how the concept of "I know my banker" was portrayed by participants. Figure 2 shows a construction where the small circle represents the client and his/her needs; the large circle represents the bank and its machine-like organization; and the intersection between them shows the ground where client and banker meet and interact.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Presenting a different portrayal of the concept "I know my banker", the analog below portrays a growth in the relationship between banker and client as a five-stage progression moving from the first state of a huge gap between them to the final state of proximity and mutual understanding.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

These constructions generated in a collective sensemaking process within each of the six groups illustrate the divergences of interpretations of the new

strategic concept "I know my banker". The building workshops that induced these metaphors provided a context within which these divergences of interpretations could be safely and effectively surfaced and negotiated in a group setting. For instance, the directional uncertainty of the concept was subject to a lively debate. Is the concept referring to ways through which customers can get to know us as bankers better? Or is the slogan just "a fancy twist to the notorious know-your-customer rhetoric"? Equally ambiguous was the target group of the initiative. Are we talking about all customers? Or do we focus on a yet-to-be-defined sub-set of premium customers? If yes, who are they and how do we identify them?

The occasion to collectively build three-dimensional, tangible models of a rather abstract strategic concept, enabled participants to make collective sense of this concept. The nature of the customer-banker relationship could be made sense of, be "shown" and be visually presented and remembered instead of only verbalized. Its fine features and details could be read and decoded by the groups from various angles. This collective process of constructing a physical model of a rather abstract strategic concept triggered a set of narratives around these constructions and induced variety of metaphors that drew on preverbal, pre-reflexive knowledge of participants; and embodied their assumptions and understandings of the concept in its tangible outcome. The recursive process of reading an analog while constructing it has facilitated a process of rendering visible differences and commonalities that were to be experienced physically, beyond a purely discursive or cognitive access to the concept. Intra-group differences in interpretations could be surfaced in and through the process of construction; and inter-group differences could be discerned through differences in the resulting physical constructions. Metaphorical diagnosis

about a specific, targeted issue that the client was facing was therefore made possible in the context of a collaborative, discursive and embodied effort.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Embodied metaphors represent a metaphorical approach to organization development that is quite different but complementary to traditional approaches. This approach draws on metaphorical reasoning not only as a cognitive-verbal exercise, but as a tactile, bodily experience that results in collectively constructed metaphors, metaphors in the flesh. This approach encourages OD practitioners to not only carefully identify metaphors in managerial discourse and reflect on what they reveal about the organization, but rather to actively induce embodied metaphors that encompass underlying assumptions and tap into bodily, prereflexive forms of knowledge in the process of construction. Embodied metaphors complement and extend traditional approaches to metaphor in OD in significant ways, as discussed above. Table 2 below illustrates this by drawing on the application of metaphors to the Swiss Bank case.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Being in the presence of physical models that are embodied metaphors, or metaphors in the flesh, can enable OD practitioners to pose probing questions triggered by the model and its detailed features. Why is there such a gap between customer and banker? Why does the banker sit much higher than the customer – although you told us they should be equals? Why is the circle of the "bank machine" much larger than the customer's needs circle? Within-model, intra-group

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interventions can help individuals or small groups in their local, collective construction processes, whereas cross-model, inter-group interventions can help to identify and explore differences and commonalities across models, and within the whole participant cohort.

Pondy (1983) suggested that metaphors can facilitate change by providing a bridge "from the familiar to the strange" (1983: 163). Embodied metaphors are particularly suited to serve as bridges between the old and the new since they represent, or embody, existing organizational elements as perceived by participants, as illustrated by the two examples of embodied metaphors discussed above. From an intervention perspective, this can guide debate to precisely the things that matter to organizational actors (even if these were not the explicitly stated purpose of the workshop), and provide a non-intrusive and non-personalised way to address them.

Embodied metaphors are collective creations, and therefore from a political perspective, they can make it easier for contentious issues to be placed on the agenda for discussion. Any individual would not be likely to bring such issues up on their own, but as part of a group such issues are easier to surface. In addition, embodied metaphors can bring to the agenda contentious issues because these issues are not overtly represented, but they have to be "decoded" with the help of the OD practitioner. Initially participants may not be entirely clear why they built a certain structure or what precisely it represents. Through the course of collaborative interpretation of the structure, new ideas and issues emerge. On a similar note, the process of constructing embodied metaphors enhances ownership and involvement. This is a fun and engaging way to address organizational issues, which makes it more likely that there will be active participation in this multimodal process of meaning generation.

From a creativity perspective, embodied metaphors can help organizational members engage in both more conservative, experience-based "thought imagery", as well as more unbounded, divergent, "imagination imagery" (Howe, 1989). In doing so, they can re-interpret and debate existing issues that their organization is facing, as was done in the SwissBank case discussed here, or, more radically, imagine completely new possibilities, as can be done when participants are asked to construct analogs of how they see the future of their industry or organization.

From a change efficacy perspective, metaphorical thinking is inherent in episodes of organization development and change. Embodied metaphors extend the traditional semantic and cognitive dimensions of metaphors by tapping into pre-reflexive knowledge contained in human bodily experience and interpretations embodied in the constructed analogs. Embodied metaphors are exceptionally vivid and memorable; photographs of structures (or actual structures) can be taken back to the organization and can serve as constant reminders of the issues that need to be addressed and the changes that need to be made. Embodied metaphors can thus contribute to developing and sustaining a shared set of metaphorical repertoires as well as shared understanding, vital to the success of organization change and development efforts.

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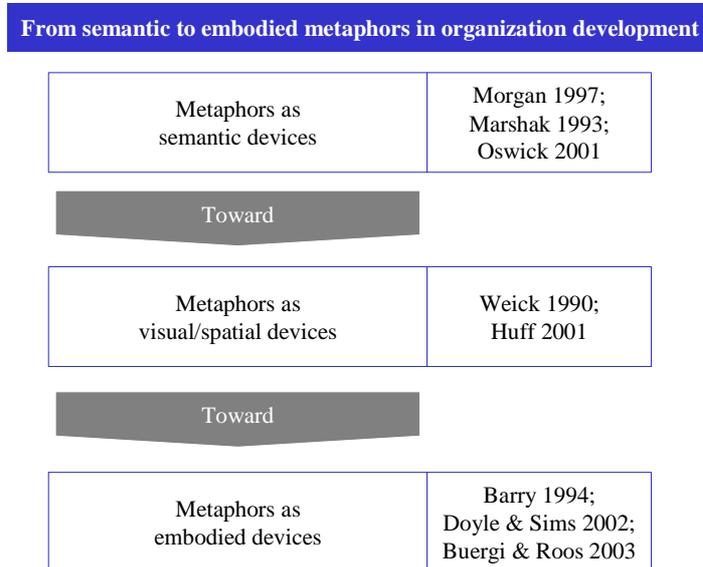
TABLES AND FIGURES

From semantic to embodied metaphors in organization development	
Metaphors as semantic devices	Morgan 1997; Marshak 1993; Oswick 2001
Toward	
Metaphors as visual/spatial devices	Weick 1990; Huff 2001
Toward	
Metaphors as embodied devices	Barry 1994; Doyle & Sims 2002; Buergi & Roos 2003

Figure 1: From semantic to embodied metaphor - Synopsis

Traditional use of metaphor in OD	Embodied metaphors in OD
Emphasis on naturally occurring, language-based metaphors	Emphasis on induced embodied metaphors
Relatively little available knowledge on diagnostic & intervention technologies, the *how*	Builds on a developed base of diagnostic & intervention technologies
OD practitioners select appropriate metaphors for change task and setting	Metaphors selected arise from collaborative effort
OD practitioners lead metaphorical diagnosis	Metaphorical diagnosis through shared sensemaking
Emphasis on whole system	Can be employed for targeted issue diagnosis and intervention

Table 1: Traditional use of metaphor vs embodied metaphors in OD

Circle 1: By putting oneself in the client's shoes, their needs and aspirations can be identified or anticipated. The different areas for example could be leisure or investing in real estate. This variety of needs is represented by the *orange circle* encompassing the different needs of the client.

Circle 2: The second circle represents the bank as a very complicated machine with its different functional areas of marketing, financials, logistics, IT, etc. The nature and functioning of the machine itself is of no interest to the client. The front line should provide the client with the appropriate products that the bank has developed based on its expertise. This *beige circle* covers a much larger surface than the client's circle.

Intersection of circles: Where the two circles intersect is where the encounter between banker and client takes place. Their heads are both connected in an attempt "to read the client's mind". The banker stands in front of a transparent wall through which the complicated machine can be seen.

Relationship: The banker should be able to read the client's needs and provide them with an appropriate response that caters to these needs. The skilful reading of the client would then result in providing an appropriate product. The expertise and knowledge derived from the "complicated machine" should feed into such a relationship. Confidence and trust should result from such a service encounter. The essential message of this construction is the bank's overall capacity to adequately serve the client's needs.

Key characteristics of embodied metaphor: The banker-client relationship seen as the need to match client needs and bank offerings; the focus is on responsiveness so as to read, interpret and respond to the client needs appropriately, and the bank's overall capacity to meet client needs. A machine metaphor of bank and its products is assumed.

Figure 2: Example 1 of embodied metaphor of "I know my banker" concept

Stage 1: Client and banker face each other on the same level but are distanced. There is a huge gap between them. There seems to be no proximity, no mutual understanding. The ideas that the client has in mind are misread and misinterpreted by the banker.

Stage 2: The banker sits on a carousel and tries to get his/her "head around" the client's needs - with the ability of turning in all directions he/she attempts to pick up the "right" signals from the client. The goal of this endeavor is to find a means of understanding the client.

Stage 3: The physical connection between the two is already established. The bridge cannot be crossed easily, it is full of obstacles; but the huge initial gap has been literally "bridged".

Stage 4: The client and the banker resemble each other. They seem to have a similar perspective and they talk to each other face to face. They have a conversation around a wheel, having reached a stage where they can "turn the wheel together".

Stage 5: Client and banker are close to one another; they talk and understand each other under the protective roof of the bank. While the banker's figure has a tree on her head, the client's figure has a flag on his head. This highlights differences and potential misunderstandings between them. However, the client appears to smile and is happy that his initial idea is not only understood but also addressed by the banker.

Key characteristics of embodied metaphor: Focus on the development/growth of the relationship; orientation to reaching mutual understanding to cater to the client's needs

Figure 3: Example 2 of embodied metaphor of "I know my banker" concept

Embodied metaphors in OD	Application to Swiss Bank case
Inducing embodied metaphors	Intervention process emphasized the construction of physical models of a strategic concept important to the client
Builds on a developed base of diagnostic & intervention technologies	Antecedents include analogically mediated inquiry, cognitive sculpting and serious play technologies
Metaphors arise from collaborative efforts	Metaphors collaboratively developed by participants rather than selected by the facilitator, formed the core of the intervention
Metaphorical diagnosis through shared sensemaking	This process helped to surface conceptual differences within groups in the construction process, and across groups through differences in the resulting analogs
Emphasis on targeted issue diagnosis and intervention	Cognitive divergences embedded in analogs formed the basis for probing questions by facilitator and further interpretation and collective sensemaking by participants

Table 2. Using embodied metaphors in OD: The SwissBank case.