

# The dynamics OF CHANGE

## 1 Social symptoms

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## 2 Wellbeing conditions

The possibilities for development in human groups are intimately linked to the relation between production conditions in social systems, and wellbeing of people.

## 3 Mediocrity performance

Symptoms are signs that express the mechanization of life of these systems and show the difficulties in interaction.

## 4 Vicious circle

More pressure on productive conditions generates more symptoms in quality of life. This is manifested in a wild race to nowhere that leads to the self-destruction of the system.

## 5 Emotional vulnerability

The mechanization of workplaces ignores the emotional context of relations. This situation have an impact both inside organizations as in relations with the context.



## Social symptoms

**In the classical concept of “disease”, the symptom appears as a result of an external cause (attack or external trauma). From this perspective the causes of the symptoms are searched in the past. The assumption is if we find, remove or transform these causes, the symptoms could disappear.**

When chimneys of the early nineteenth century began to expand and industrial growth shook Victorian monotony, Freud opened the doors of the unconscious. The world was introduced to new explanations about the causes of many symptoms. According to the postulates of Freud, the traumatic events that people did not solve remained in the depths of the mind through a “mechanism” of repression. Some messy fragments were returning to consciousness generating a series of

events: from naughty verbal structures, disturbing images in dreams, to severe symptoms. The provocative novelty of Freud’s ideas is that the most of these traumatic events were related to sexual repression. Traumatic sexuality as the cause of many symptoms grew just as did the chimneys. In a world of economic transformation, repressed sexuality was associated with the consequences of repressive Victorian morality. Thus, the past century began with the idea that society symptoms patterns were related to the traumatic consequences of a rigid morality. But, in fact, in the beginning of last century, sexuality was unproductive for a workplace within which 90% of the work was based on physical effort. In a world that was changing their production conditions; the consequences of Victorian

morality were a functional excuse for the expansion of an industrial model that needed energy from both the minerals and the workers.

Today, the “repressed sexuality” is far from a pattern of social symptoms because a diversification of job roles has expanded the diversity of everyday symptoms. Currently the physical workers have been reduced to less than a third in relation to the Victorian Era. The current range of symptoms includes everything from classical diseases (e.g., depression, heart disease, stress, physical trauma) to the most modern, which in the last years have grown exponentially (e.g., panic disorder, Burnout, addictions, bullying, substance abuse).

When systems lose their purpose of reference, become prisoners of automatic behaviors and begin to act compulsively and reactively. When the “guide of life” has been lost or abandoned, dysfunctional patterns are established in the system. The symptom recovers the “reasons for existence” and becomes a guide to adaptation that order everyday actions. From a biological perspective, the development of automatic behaviors is a natural for the optimization of resources. The more automation, the lower the level of resources involved. Therefore, the response is faster and more efficient. But, this principle works in stable environments with predictable dynamics. In the case of social systems keep automatic responses, if the environment becomes unstable, is risky for the living conditions of the system. The risk of automatic behaviors in unstable contexts generates

dysfunctional patterns responses. The “automatic mode of life” is a sign of fear that represent the fear of system to transform their structural patterns to suit the conditions of the context of a healthier way. This way of adaptation tends to generate symptomatic life structures or dysfunctional structures. The symptom is a temporary manifestation that shows the structural vulnerability of the system to meet new conditions of life.

When does a circumstantial symptom become symptomatic condition of structure? This occurs when a system begins to depend on symptom to maintain the context adaptation. Therefore, are differences between the appearance of circumstantial symptoms (which may be a momentary mode response to conditions on the context), and the consolidation of symptomatic conditions or dysfunctional structures for the system. In the second case, the system maintains its inertia in these symptomatic conditions of life.

Dysfunctions arise from a complex structure. Therefore, addressing an isolated symptom, to reduce or remove the effects, does not guarantee the transformation of the dysfunctional structure. Change the status of the symptoms without addressing the dysfunctional patterns that sustain only generates a renewal of symptoms. In this sense, the concept of a “a disturbing external factor in the past” is reversed. The “enemy” is not outside the system. The enemy is inside the system at present. The symptom is an ally of the system, which is attempting to maintain a durable structure unchanged.

## Wellbeing conditions

The possibilities for growth, development, and transformation in human groups (organizations and societies) are intimately linked to the relation between production conditions in social systems, and wellbeing of people. This relation between production structural conditions and personal conditions of life is dynamic, with different nuances in different regions and life cycles over time. Throughout history, when production conditions create pressure on personal wellbeing, relationship deteriorates and people begin to suffer stress. This tension generate symptoms which affect growth. Symptoms can appear in a company, organization or community when this tension cannot be resolved and people become trapped in a vicious circle that leads them to “run wildly,” forced to work under pressure.

From a different perspective, achieving wellbeing conditions and competitiveness implies the ability of an organization to respond to environmental demands. Competitiveness is not related exclusively to profitability or market share, size, strength, or geographical coverage. Competitiveness is the physical and emotional capacity of a human system to maintain its level of response with the lowest incidence of symptoms or dysfunction. In this way, productivity without symptoms is directly related to working conditions in a group. The relation is direct: a better working conditions leads to greater productivity. This involves profitability, innovation, reduction of labor costs, participation and commitment.

# Mediocrity performance

## VICIOUS CIRCLE

The equation between productivity and quality of life is one of the most important concerns of organizations today. On the one hand, the conditions of production transform some limits on economic growth. On the other hand, the demands of adaptation have expanded due to the instability and volatility of the context.

Pressure on the conditions of adaptation in a context of instability affects wellbeing of the people in organizations. In the quest for strengthen the “quality of life”, organizations have tried different solutions.

More pressure on productive conditions generates more symptoms in quality of life. This is manifested in a wild race to nowhere that leads to the self-destruction of the system. This is the feeling that occurs sometime in the life cycle of a system.

The vicious circle transforms the system dynamics into the worst enemy of growth. The biggest obstacle to growth is the way of life of a system, the beliefs and attitudes that lead a system to live under pressure and to keep the life conditions at the cost of a variety of symptoms.

Structural conditions in social systems, defines the characteristics of daily life in the system. In this frame, the social symptoms or illnesses that characterize a historical period depend upon with the conditions of life in this society at certain moment of their history. In social systems, patterns of disease (common symptoms), depend on the characteristics of life in that society.

The inability of the system to transform their structures to adapt to changes generates parallel structures that mechanically, biologically, or psychologically support (as prosthesis) a fragile dynamic of interaction. Under these conditions, the adaptive capacity depends upon the resistance of this prosthesis. In order to achieve a level a new dynamic, the system requires a different level of organization in its structure that allows new patterns of relationships with the context. This means, new modes of internal organization that allow the system to absorb environmental shocks without generating dysfunctions. If the system does not solve its dysfunctional dynamics, it will continue to generate different symptoms.

The symptom is a result of a way of organizing of the system that has a role in its structure. We can explain the role of symptoms in a human system as a mask. In general terms, masks have the function of hiding some features while keeping others visible. Like masks, symptoms show certain aspects of the system. These are the visible aspects of the symptom. What does the system hide through the symptom? Symptoms display the mediocrity of the system. What is meant by mediocrity? The mediocrity is the naturalization of the “mechanization of life”. Symptoms are signs that express the mechanization of life of these systems and show the vulnerability of their automatic ways of life that create difficulties in interaction. Therefore, particular symptoms are not of concern, the key factor is the structure that has created and contains this self-destructive dynamic.

The magnitude of the dysfunction depends on the function of symptom. That is, the complexity of symptoms depend on its importance as a structural support. The risk of dysfunctional conditions in human systems is, if there is no transformation, the symptom engulfs the entire structure. That is, dysfunction engulfs the function. This is the paradox of suffering and possibility that exists between destruction and creation. These are two faces of the same mask.

The function of symptoms, or the function of dysfunctions, is to maintain the permanence of the system given the impossibility of structural modifications. This is the paradox of the symptom: on the one hand, it makes life more painful (dysfunction), but it also allows for the benefit of inertia (the survivor function). This postulate is a key point in addressing dysfunctions because attacking the symptom reinforces the pressure on the system’s vulnerability. Attacking the symptom reinforces its dysfunction and increases the level of vulnerability. Therefore, the system closes to the possibilities of transformation.

Symptoms appear because every living system that does not structurally change at some point collapses. The possibilities of transformation in a system arise by transforming living patterns. These patterns, internal the rules, constitute a fundamental level in the transformation process. This is a strategic zone because, without transformation of the patterns, the structure does not change.

# Emotional vulnerability of organizations

## ENHANCE PERFORMANCE

In organizations the search for better living conditions, usually are addressed through fragmented and isolated solutions (e.g., courses, lectures, seminars, exercises) without regard for the patterns that define the structure of system. For an integrated structural transformation (and not a fragmented set of actions), we must to address three dimensions:

### **The Management of subjectivity**

is the personal dimension of transformation. How do we prepare people to face a new context? This involves cognitive aspects (i.e., extending their capacity to understand the context), emotional aspects (i.e., handling the feelings that appear before this new scenario), and technical aspects (i.e., developing new skills for instability).

### **Set a competitive architecture**

is the operational dimension of transformation. It is related to an appropriate structure for living in unstable context. Competitive architecture includes a series of processes that enable stability and flexibility (at a time), to explore and materialize new conditions of life.

### **The management of alternatives**

is the strategic dimension of transformation that is related to management models. This aspect implies a transformation of the conventional strategy that is based on “the formula of the enemy” in favor of a position of opportunities exploration and design of alternatives of development.

The mechanization of workplaces ignores the emotional context of relations. This situation have an impact both inside organizations as in relations with the context. The consequences are organizations become efficient and profitable at the expense of deterioration in its relationships and emotions. The weakness of production systems is emotional. This vulnerability is related to the strategies of adaptive responses to new historical context. The performance paradox appears between the volatility of the world with its unprecedented and unexpected changes and structural difficulty of many organizations to respond and act in this context of transformation. Thus, organizations are trapped in this paradox performance where all they do strengthens the system’s weaknesses.

The classical mechanistic model is effective in stable and predictable social characteristics. This corresponded to a time where the Industrial Age defined social characteristics. The mode of production ordered social dynamics. But the current changes of social dynamics generates new challenges beyond the control of the absolute efficiency. This creates paranoia in organizations and transforms strategy in a race for survival. The paradox of the mechanical efficiency is inertia. This situation implies that a higher efficiency, greater rigidity of the system. In the organizational sphere this means ineffective performance.

Why focus on emotions in this process? Emotions define the repertoire of responses in human systems. In a predictable and bounded context, a limited repertoire of responses was sufficient. Instability in the context transforms predictability in challenges (both positive and negative), which generates the need for a greater repertoire of responses. This means that the cognitive system, the emotional dynamics and biological support should extend the range of performance to face an environment that does not behave in the usual margins of predictability.

Emotional vulnerability is based on a neurobiological network that allows the body to respond to the characteristics of the context. It is an adaptive factor that has been present throughout evolution as survival alarm. When the perceived threat is high alarms are activated to protect the body (fight, flight or take refuge). The perception of threat can be real (related to an imminent danger) or may be conditioned by experience (a subjective interpretation). In both cases, the biological response is the same.

Why this emotional adaptation has become a factor of weakness? Why this evolutionary process become a self-destructive factor? In this new century, living conditions have changed drastically and for many people has changed dramatically. This situation has caused a personal experience of vulnerability and uncertainty that extends the sense of threat against the succession of unprecedented events. Therefore, we enter this new century with a defensive position on our living environment. The weak point of production systems is emotional because emotions hold conditions adaptation to the context and decisions. Despite the technical quality of our living conditions, we are as emotionally vulnerable as other historical eras. This perceived vulnerability has an emotional impact that mark our everyday steps.