

# UNTOLD STORIES?

A storytelling conference

(the 20th in the Storytelling Seminar Series)

13th – 14th June 2013

*Lincoln Business School, University of Lincoln, UK*

## Keynote speakers:

- Professor Yiannis Gabriel, University of Bath
- Professor David Sims, Cass Business School

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Organizational life is imbued with story and story telling. What counts as a story is a matter of debate ranging from terse, polysemic and multi-authored postmodern ante-narratives (Boje, 1991, 1995), through emplotted, emotion-generating narratives endowed with relatively stable meaning (Gabriel, 2000), to approaching a particular scientific paradigm as a sort of a story (Czarniawska, 1995). Theoretical and empirical developments suggests that organizational stories fulfil a range of functions such as: mapping the territory of organizational sensemaking (Wilkins, 1984); expressing deeply embedded organizational mythologies (Kostera, 2008); glorifying past and/or future (Ybema, 2010); enforcing control and resistance (Wilkins, 1983); contributing to the formation of identity (Bamberg, 2010); managing (Brown, 2003) and disseminating knowledge (Campbell, 1972); facilitating the unmanaged spaces (Gabriel, 1995).

The nature and character of stories is variously theorised. For instance stories can be non-linear and may depend on the reader's predilection to assemble particular elements (Borges, 1962; Cortázar, 1966), including 'stories' told by organization theory (Burrell, 1993, 1997). Similarly, for some stories may not exist in text, but merely be assumed in the reader's cognitive apparatus (Eco, 1979; 1994). According to other concepts stories may underpin social reality, but never reach the surface – as timely psychoanalytic reflection on the recent financial crises suggests (Stein, 2011).

Interestingly, advantage may be gained by conceiving stories as constituted or imbued with their other: *untold* element. Whilst organizational storytelling research has often surfaced suppressed, little told or hidden stories (Gabriel, 2008; Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Sims, 2003), the ecologies of the untold remain under exploited. Untold stories have occupied a relatively silent space in storytelling research and merit further theoretical and methodological attention.

It could be argued that the notion of the 'untold' is implied in seminal works, for example what of Wittgenstein's un-played language games, Derrida's immobilized pairs of signifiers, Lyotard's unheard renditions, Foucault's illegitimate discourses or Weick's un-bracketed aspects of 'reality'.

In this call we encourage direct reflection on the work and meaning of untold stories in a social and organizational context. Acknowledging debates around the notion of criticality in organization studies (Grey and Wilmott, 2005; Alvesson and Willmott, 2011; Alvesson and Spicer, 2011), contributions are sought that respond to or extend established analytic boundary between political and not political; managed and unmanaged; established and emergent; heteroglossic and monologic. In particular we would welcome the discussion focused on, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Can untold stories be informative and/or performative? How?
- Which processes contribute to un-telling, stories?
- How does the non-performance of the story occur?
- Which strategies can be employed by the listener of the stories that are not told? What is the role of the teller in this case?
- Can untold stories be accessed?
- Has 'the audience' been sufficiently theorized and problematized in organizational storytelling?
- Untold situated stories: such as organizational change, learning processes, personnel development
- Hermeneutics of un-telling

Contributions in the form of 500 words abstracts (excluding bibliography) are welcomed until **1<sup>st</sup> of January 2013**. Please send to: [mizak@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:mizak@lincoln.ac.uk).

Information regarding acceptance of contributions: **31<sup>st</sup> of January 2013**.

Submission of full papers: **1<sup>st</sup> of May 2013**.

***Exceptional papers will be published in the special issue of Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry***

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