

The Knowledge Frontier: Essays In The Representation Of Knowledge

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Manifestations of Knowledge

Observing Intermediate Outcomes of Knowledge Production

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This paper refers to recent approaches of *Science and Technology Studies* (STS) in order to show how structures and objects evolve in an organisation during the process of knowledge production. Since these studies focus on the practice of knowledge acquisition they uncover remarkable similarities to those issues that are of importance for knowledge management and organisational learning, too. Affected by changing assumptions in theories of scientific knowledge they focus on the technical and social conditions that shape path-dependent trajectories. Their thorough regard to these issues helps to deconstruct the black-box-like notion of 'organisational knowledge' into observable manifestations. Once manifest, these entities do not any longer have just an epistemic, ontological quality but a *real* one, which is observable. *Boundary objects* and *standardized packages* promise to be interesting manifestations in order to serve as anchors for conducting empirical research as well as to control knowledge production and to conduct management activities. By referring to the 'translating' capability (of knowledge and more) of *boundary objects* and *standardized packages* I like to call for epistemic heterogeneity and division of labour, an issue that sometimes tends to be neglected in knowledge management but still remains important – especially in geographically extended knowledge management.

1 Introduction

Recent empirical management studies witness an increasing interest in issues that address knowledge creation as a process of interaction of people among each other as well as of people interacting with their environment. Very prominently, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) demonstrated how Polanyi's (1966) concept about the 'tacit dimension' of knowledge can be used in order to describe every day knowledge creation. It shows a process of innovation by learning from somebody else's skills. We may remember the example, when, during an apprenticeship in a bakery, an employee of Matsushita had been able to learn how to knead dough in a way that she, later on, described as "twisting stretch". This metaphor was used in order to communicate the needs for the adequate performing of the machine. Nonaka and Takeuchi described this process as 'socialisation' (of tacit knowledge from the baker to the apprentice) and 'externalisation' (of the apprentice's newly acquired tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge by means of using the metaphor "twisting stretch" among Matsushita's development group).

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