
DOUBLE TRANSLATION: A POST-COLONIAL APPRAISAL OF MANAGEMENT MODEL TRANSITION IN A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY NETWORK

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how popular management techniques are implemented in firms and how management experts actively manipulate the interplay among multiple competing ideas. Building on trending and semantically related fashion research, we intend to center upon a case study in which one of the leading electronic manufacturers of the World strives to change its implementation focus from Six Sigma to Factory Improvement 11. Thus, we strive to emphasize not only the temporal transition and resistance patterns but also contextual (double) translations that occur in one of the overseas subsidiaries. The case provided us with ample evidence about how the initial resistance to essentialist global rhetoric triggered local translations based on locally enabled bricolage of ideas and practices. We found that experts located in the subsidiaries often enjoyed significant levels of autonomy to display agentic behavior in denouncing/renouncing/editing both symbolic and material components of managerial practices.

Key Words

Management fashions; management innovation; diffusion; lean production; Six Sigma.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the scholarly works that have been associated with the travels of management knowledge across countries have largely overlooked a refined treatment of power (Sturdy, 2009). This is not surprising because the theoretical frameworks of these studies are often derived from institutional theories of organization and/or sociology of translation, themselves are accused of being rather negligent about power (Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008; Barley, 1986).

To reinstate power back in transnational knowledge diffusion models, we hereby build on post-colonial theory (Bhabha, 1994), and specifically, a double translation framework, referring to the dialectic modes of local transformative sequences that a management idea undergoes during its travel in space and time. The double translation term has been borrowed from Mignolo and Schiwy (2003) to invoke dynamics of counter-translation and resistance that are engendered by local agencies. There is a significant number of previous studies, which attempt to incorporate a post-colonial approach to trans-national diffusion of management ideas (i.e., Banerjee and Prasad, 2008; Boussebaa and Morgan, 2014; Boussebaa et al., 2012; Frenkel, 2008; Jack and Westwood, 2006). Setting aside their theoretical contributions to the field by opening up a novel paradigmatic approach, most of these works were inconclusive in terms of complementing their frameworks with robust empirical evidence. Scholars of international business (IB) also tackled the trans-national transfer of management practices, usually regarding the transfers between the headquarter and the affiliates of multinational corporations (Bouquet and Birkinshaw, 2008; Ferner et al., 2012; Kostova and Roth, 2002; Sayim, 2010). Studies in IB tradition have also paid scarce attention to power relations until recently when several scholars have started to underscore the issues of conflict and power within the MNC networks (Dörrenbacher and Geppert, 2006; 2009; Dörrenbacher and Gammelgaard, 2011; Geppert et al., 2015). While this strand of research has produced remarkable outcomes in terms of directing attention to the micro-political processes of power within the networks of MNCs, it does not systematically explore the problems related to the transnational transfer of management practices.

On the other hand, those who persistently focus on the trans-national transfer of management ideas and/or practices, usually draw on the theory of fashions and the sociology of translation (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). Scholars of management fashions usually provided supply-side arguments about the alteration of fashions, in which gurus, consultants, and mass media play the leading role (Abrahamson, 1996). Even when these carriers radically transform, manipulate, and frame original ideas inherent in a fashionable management discourse (Erçek and İseri-Say, 2008; Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008), less attention has been paid to the demand side, that is, actors' role in the translation process. Few case studies provide us with interesting evidence about how managers and experts within fashion-consuming firms occasionally resist, selectively amplify, and repress its constitutive elements (Benders and Heusinkveld, 2012; Gond and

Boxenbaum, 2013; Heusinkveld et al., 2013). Nonetheless, lacking a systematic treatment of power, extant research in this stream fails to represent power relations properly, which underlie existing patterns of identities, schemata, and rules/resources.

Our study aims to contribute to the line of research that seeks to understand how popular management practices are implemented in firms and how management experts actively manipulate the interplay among several competing ideas. We focus on a case study in which one of the leading electronic manufacturers of the World strives to change its implementation focus from Six Sigma to Factory Improvement 11. In this way, we strive to emphasize not only the temporal transition and resistance patterns but also contextual (double) translations that occur in one of the overseas subsidiaries. Whereas the case provides us with ample evidence about an intentional initiative of company headquarters to create firmer control over company-specific knowledge assets and constrain generic skill development of its workers, it also offers us a lucrative setting to observe how country-level experts and managers selectively (double)translate the symbolic and material elements of the competing practice as either dualistic or complementary. The case further exemplifies how transculturation forces are opposed in some instances by local resistance and double-translation of local, emergent meanings, practices, and priorities.

The remainder of the paper will address theoretical discussions of its framework. Then, it will briefly discuss the methodological approach and details of the data. It will conclude with the presentation of the preliminary findings and theoretical contributions.

POWER, POST-COLONIAL TRADITION AND DOUBLE-TRANSLATION

The political character of management knowledge has been a central subject in critical management studies. Studies conducted in many diverse fields and settings have unraveled the hegemonic framing of organizational rules and systematic silencing of many organizational roles and identities (Clegg and Palmer, 1996). Yet, power has also been conceptualized positively; to be able to accomplish tasks, carry out activities, and create novel entities or abstract ideas. Alongside with 'power over' and 'power inside' types of categorizations, social theorists also developed frameworks to demarcate a 'power across' category (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008). In this vein, the Foucauldian framework focuses on the relational aspects of power and tends to conceptualize it alongside with and inseparable from associated knowledge relations (Foucault, 1977). Vested in all social relations, Foucauldian power/knowledge operates by disciplinary discourses, reified by accompanying rules and practices of institutions, and brings subjects into existence (Townley, 1993).

Despite power's widespread use in critical and post-structural analyses of management and organizational studies, it has not been employed as a central concept or an analytical scheme in the research stream that focuses on the travel/translation of management ideas (Czarniawska and Sevón,

1996; 2005; Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008). The latter were generally inspired by organizational institutionalism, the sociology of translation, and the theory of fashions (Ansari et al., 2010). In this line of research, translation refers to a change/transformation process, whereby one or more focal entities get transformed during a travel in space and time. However, as O'Mahoney (2016) eloquently shows what gets transformed during the travel can be divergent: entities' state, content, meaning and interests can change. Moreover, it can be stipulated that the stream lacks a systematic focus on power because its meta-theoretical foundations are also quite apolitical (O'Mahoney, 2016).

Unlike the sociology of translation or organizational institutionalism, post-colonial theory retains its primary focus on both power relations and transnational knowledge appropriation simultaneously (Banarjee and Prasad, 2008). It differs from previous strands of thought by concentrating on various transnational knowledge transfer mechanisms through which the First World retains its superiority over the Third World and how various forms of resistance arise from such interaction over time (Ashcroft et al., 2007). Inspired by influential theorists such as Bhabha (1994a; 1994b), Said (1978; 1993), and Spivak (1988), the theory has often focused on ways by which subject positions such as the Colonizer and the Colonized are recursively constructed over time. Although, the tone of the theory comes closer to the post-structuralist representation of constructed subjectivities, and thereby, a mutually recursive relation between power and knowledge claims, it retains a critical room for reflexive agency on the part of the Colonized. In particular, Bhabha (1994b) elaborates on the intricate details of such agency through coinage of concepts like hybridity and mimicry. The latter concept refers to the enduring difference between the identities of the Colonizer and the Colonized, even when the Colonized successfully appropriates the Colonizer's cultural conventions and norms. It is so because the construction of the Colonized Other can never be complete according to Bhabha (1994b), formulated in the famous phrase: "It is almost the same but not quite." In this vein, national cultures are conceptualized as not essential, holistic, or fixed, but rather, represent narrative constructions that are continually reconstructed. Thus, even when different forms of mimicry (i.e., disciplinary, hegemonic, brutal) have been forced on the Colonized's culture, the outcome shall always be a hybrid one. Hybridity, in this sense, represents a liminal space, which cannot be reduced either to the original -Colonizer's- or the indigenous -Colonized's- system of beliefs, norms, and conventions. Being a blend of two cultures and having gained attributes that cannot be reduced to any, hybridity enables a reflexive capacity, by which the Colonizing discursive claims can be questioned and transformed. This critical capacity of the 'Third Space' stimulates creativity and potency for novel claims of knowledge, instigating the ongoing construction of the hybrid space.

While Bhabha's formulations are invaluable in terms of their contribution to the post-colonial understanding of the trans-national knowledge appropriation and frame how such appropriation mechanisms work, a more detailed microlens is needed to account for how Bhabhian frame is reified in

ongoing practices of (re)appropriation. At this point, we draw on a rather unnoticed concept of “double-translation” to anchor our theoretical frame firmly on the post-colonial discourse theory and capture the intricate details of the ongoing transformation of knowledge claims. Double-translation has been coined as a term to explain various modes of counter-translation and counter-enculturation activities that happen in post-colonial settings as resistance to oppressive, naturalizing, and all-encompassing Globalizing forces (Mignolo and Schiwy, 2003). In line with the Bhabhian frame, double-translation allows local actors to act in a critical reflexive fashion, especially when they are immersed within the recursive cycles of reconstruction spurred by novel external knowledge claims. In this way, symbolic and material constituents of the inflowing knowledge relations could be reframed as local bricolage, which reconfigures the old repertoire to make sense and renounce/redefine the new one. Consequently, double-translation does not necessarily end up in total enculturation of the local, nor does it conceptualize a dual opposite that perfectly counters and renounces the Colonial (Frenkel, 2008). Instead of a binary opposition, double translation logic advocates the hybrid, transformative, and blended mix of Global and local elements. It simply focuses on how and with which means locals can activate reflexive frames of mind to counter or transform naturalized rules, resources, and logics of the Global.

The latter logic aligns perfectly well with the recent research trends, which tend to represent MNCs at the intersection of a nested institutional order (Boussebaa and Morgan, 2014). According to the scholars, who study transnational fields or institutional order of the Global, MNCs have access to both local national institutional and the meta-institutional order located at the transnational level. Besides, as Delmestri and Brumana (2017) argue, simultaneous embeddedness in these two different institutional layers can instigate conflicting exposures for an MNC, which, in turn, spur continual tension between many internal and external actors over a multitude of resources, norms, and interests. It is such tension that stimulates a critical reflexive stance on the part of various actors in an MNC network to counter, nullify, denaturalize, and/or reconstruct infiltrating claims of management knowledge; and challenge, at least, some elements of the institutional order, within which they are embedded. In the following section, we try to outline the methodological approach that we have employed to uncover how actors engaged in the above-delineated types of actions in an MNC subsidiary located in Turkey.

DATA AND METHOD

The main research questions of this research are respectively how popular management discourses are disseminated within organizations, how management professionals actively manipulate the interplay among several competing management discourses, how country-level professionals and managers selectively (double) translate the symbolic and material elements of the competing practices and how transculturation forces are opposed in

some instances by local resistance and double-translation of local, emergent meanings, practices and priorities. In line with these research questions, we have employed a qualitative methodology to understand the contextual and agentic factors that affect the ongoing counter and/or double translations of globally circulating managerial discourses within the inter-firm network of a Multinational Company (MNC). For matters of secrecy, we keep the name of the multinational as anonymous, with an acronym of Electro. Electro is a Worldwide giant in electronics manufacturing products and its headquarters (HQ) reside in South Korea. We have been granted access to its operations in its HQ and specifically the subsidiary in Turkey regarding the implementation of the Factory Improvement System (FIS) and the Six Sigma (6S) initiative.

To better represent our case, we used participant observation and on-site interviews. One of the researchers, who was already an employee of the Turkish subsidiary, but working in a different division, was granted access to the related departments' activities both in Turkey and the HQ for four months. An observation protocol and a participant list were devised which was updated by the data-gathering process before participating in the activities of 6S and FIS. The participant list includes managers (mid-level & executives), and professionals who have been involved in 6S and FIS implementations at HQ and Electro's affiliated companies. They were located in Turkey, India, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand. However, due to the inability to gather systematic ethnographic evidence from other sites, we concentrated our research effort on the Turkish subsidiary and made use of our data to triangulate our focal case. The interview protocol consists of 18 questions in total which aimed at analyzing four fundamental research questions. The former author travelled to the HQ and interviewed FIS and 6S experts from HQ and other subsidiaries to collect data.

The data for our case are composed of face-to-face interviews, corporate archives, mass media sources that are related to the relevant activities of the multinational, and on-site observations/field notes. In total 31 face-to-face interviews representing HQ and four different affiliated company sites were conducted. Each meeting took 1,5 hours on average. The whole process lasted approximately 11 months (data collection, data transformation, etc.). After getting permission of participants, all interviews were recorded both as audio and video to prevent data loss. After each meeting, all recordings were directly transformed and stored as text files both on a cloud platform and on two separate disks. After completing all interviews, we acquired all data which consisted of 52 pages and 26212 words. The different responses of all participants for the same questions were evaluated together in a separate report. All findings and results of qualitative research were analyzed according to this report.

For analyzing data, we used critical hermeneutical analysis to analyze the bulk of data gathered from the company archives and interviews with key informants. In this way, we were able to focus on how various actors legitimize FIS alongside with, and sometimes, as opposed to 6S; which particular power/knowledge relations are assumed by FIS and 6S; what kind of translations and double-translations occur in the local subsidiary and, by

which means ongoing translations iterate and evolve. Critical hermeneutics has been increasingly used in organization studies (i.e., Noorderhaven, 2004; Prasad, 2002), specifically in cases that are anchored in post-colonial theory (Gopinath and Prasad, 2013). The root of the hermeneutical analysis goes back to deciphering the meaning of historically situated texts, but with the works of recent philosophers like Hans-George Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur (Bleicher, 1980; Palmer, 1969), hermeneutics expanded its analytical focus from texts to various cultural symbols, sign systems and even to organizational practices (Gabriel, 1991; Gopinath and Prasad, 2013).

The hermeneutical analysis builds on the concepts of the hermeneutical circle, merging/alignment of horizons, and escaping from the intentionality of authors and interpreters (Gadamer, 1975; Thatchenkery, 2001). To achieve completion of the hermeneutical cycle, we have accumulated observational data not just from the focal subsidiary of our research, but added other subsidiaries' data from India, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand. Besides, we have collected secondary data about the HQ's national culture and scrutinized how such culture permeates in organizational dispositions through field notes and interviews. Inclusion of texts, archives, and site observations from MNC's various spaces and going back and forth with the collected evidence, we have achieved a representational storyline of "what" happened. In engaging a critical understanding of the storyline, we used secondary interviews and a session of focus group study with the key actors that had taken place during the implementation phase of FIS and 6S at the Turkish subsidiary. 11 professionals participated in our focus group study, which lasted about 3 hours on average. The meetings of the focus group study were also recorded, and it was transformed and stored as text files both on a cloud platform and on two separate disks after the meeting ended. To unravel naturalized practices, and taken-for-granted norms and conventions, we pushed informants by open-ended questions, enabling them to take a reflexive position for their past work. Going back and forth between the outcomes of the analysis, data, and theoretical debates, we followed the general rules of abduction to construct a narrative (Reichertz, 2009). By allowing representation of evidence on a plot, that is composed of space and time elements, narratives enable readers to better make sense of complex and rich data gathered from qualitative analyses. We constructed our narrative so that it is firmly focused on the ongoing (double)translations of FIS and 6S and the multitude of factors (micro and macro) that might have impinged the systemic disruption of power relations as the result of the former process. We start narrating our case by giving a detailed description of our site (both HQ and the subsidiary). Subsequently, we elaborate on our focal research questions under different headings to ease readers' understanding.

ELECTRO'S BACKGROUND

Electro is a leading multinational group that focuses on electronics and electrical home appliances manufacturing and distribution (enlisted among

the top five Global manufacturers). The Group's Global position in terms of consolidated revenues and manufacturing capacity significantly changed between 2003 and 2007. The perceived success during the latter growth period was attributed to Mr. SSK, who led the group as the CEO from 2003 to 2007. The motto for the strategic growth period was 'fast growth and fast innovation', backed up by top-down initiatives geared to establish a solid innovation culture within the Group companies. However, the roots of establishing an innovation culture went back to 1996, when the company initiated the appropriation of two global management practices: Six Sigma and Toyota Production System (which would be renamed after 1996 as Factory Improvement System).

The initial introduction of these two global management ideas into the group was based on benchmarking efforts coupled with the consultation activities spurred by the popularity of such practices in those years. Six Sigma (6S) culture was transferred from General Electric Corporation and the Factory Improvement System (FIS) from Toyota Corporation. At the initial stage, 6S was implemented in an extensive and high-fidelity fashion (see Ansari et al., 2010), suggesting that there were only a few transformations made to the original ideas. 6S was principally built on a systematic project-based methodology to improve process efficiency by reducing defects and process variance. It was implemented by the conventional methodological protocol, acronym as DMAIC (define, measure, analyze, improve, control) by the guidance of trained experts (standard belt training like master black belts, black belts, and green belts). FIS, on the other hand, was constructed as a standardized and comprehensive set of measures and checkpoints, which operated as a benchmark tool to score and grade different company manufacturing units. Modeled over the Toyota Production System and total quality control philosophy it consists of eleven categories: Basic Orders, Clean Up, 3 Steps, Manufacturing, Equipment Maintenance, Surface Mount Technology, Injection&Press Field, Warehouse 6 Tools, Electro Static Discharge, Field Improvement Team and Memo Suggestion. Under each category, there are detailed manuals and checklists, by which each production unit in the Electro's network was systematically evaluated and graded. The two models were used jointly during the period by a systematic separation of activities and roles. Six Sigma projects were run by white-collar office workers under the auspices of the Group HQ according to the specific needs defined by the subsidiary, whereas FIS was used to evaluate, grade, and benchmark all affiliated group manufacturing plants among each other. The latter was predominantly a responsibility of the blue-collar workers, understood as a key differentiating point between the two initiatives. Initially, there was a systematic complementarity between the two initiatives, whereby 6S's innovative outputs at the subsidiary level could be diffused and implemented across other manufacturing units by using FIS' systematic benchmarking tool.

After 2007, Mr. SSK's role was transferred initially to Mr. N, and consecutively to Mr. BJK in 2010. The latter CEOs continued Mr. SSK's tradition of introducing innovation, but they put their emphasis more on process improvements to reduce manufacturing costs alongside with

breakthrough innovation and aesthetic designs. During the period between 2007 and 2010, 6S's Group-wide diffusion accelerated and became more infused with corporate values.

Observations and accumulated field data suggest that the first intra-firm modification to a global management practice was made at the Group HQ in 1996 during the appropriation of the Toyota Production System (which from then on was labeled as a Lean Production System). The initial implementation process was led by experts from Toyota Corporation, but soon after the basic framework of measures and categories were defined their ties were cut. Including a relabeling (from TPS to FIS) the initial translation of the TPS included significant changes to the original framework. The most important alteration was the use of intra-group benchmarking to foster innovation/improvement in focal firms unlike the original TPS model, which was rather reliant on intra-firm incremental improvements based on Kaizen methodology. Besides, FIS included specific manufacturing technology categories such as Surface Mount Technology, Electro-static Discharge, and Injection/Press Field, which were not the original components of the TPS model but were specific to the MNC production processes. Thus, the original translation of TPS not only included a major transformation (elimination of a major component as well as the inclusion of an alien component) of the content of the original discourse, but it also included bundling of TPS with the 6S as correlative constitutes of a comprehensive framework.

The bundled solution was rhetorically undermined as the outcomes of 6S implementation were increasingly perceived as problematic. First, heavy data requirements of projects that were conducted under 6S triggered a critical attitude inside HQ circles, since data collection and analyses considerably delayed project completion times. On top of project completion times, another negative rhetoric began circulating about the strict categorization of roles, prespecified by the methodology. According to this second line of rhetoric, because of the strict role categories like Master Black Belts, Black Belts, and Green Belts, which require certain eligibility criteria like training hours and project experience, it became harder to diffuse efficiency and innovation culture to each employee. 6S projects were offered by individual employees and they were not directly aligned with the strategic goals of the company. Since each project was offered by a different employee in a rather unorchestrated way, there was no systematic improvement over time on a project-by-project basis. Moreover, there had been an increase in the turnover rates of 6S expert roles, most of whom had developed generic skill sets about 6S projects and became certified via external bodies.

When discourse became intensified around three headings like the diminishing returns of projects, longer project times and turnover in experienced project personnel, top-level decision makers at the MNC HQ began reconsidering the intra-firm diffusion and endorsement of 6S. This discursive counter-movement against 6S continued for almost three years when Global HQ decided not to invest in 6S in 2013. Specifically, the latter reason, that is, the turnover of role-specific personnel became a major issue

in making a transition to the FIS model. The transition itself was a double-translation since the Group decided to go against a Global management practice -6S- and promote a customized model -FIS- instead. Furthermore, this transition was made to buffer critical knowledge assets within the Group by disabling the mobility of human resources with enhanced knowledge and skills. With the entrenchment of 6S across the Globe, it has been enlisted within the ISO standards. Moreover, specific project roles defined within the 6S became generic across industries and firms. Independent accreditation and certification systems emerged to grant eligibility and status for such roles. Even though it was clearly against the interests of intra-firm experts who had developed such skills, the last transition was deployed within the Group's HQ without much resistance thanks to the corporate culture that endorsed hierarchy, militaristic obedience, and vertical lines of communication.

In contrast to 6S, FIS methodology was totally dependent on internal experts, who centrally devised and improved standardized measure sets for all the manufacturing units alike. Thus, FIS was totally customized for the Group manufacturing companies and the circulation of knowledge about the production improvement processes/procedures was internal to the Group. There was no generic skill development like 6S projects because of the customization level of the system and the lack of external bodies that granted certification.

The overall storyline derived from the field visits, archives, secondary sources, and interviews made with the HQ-based informants indicated a counter-global initiative by the MNC's top management. Instead of intensifying its Global alignment with the popular meta-ideals that circulate at the transnational level and clinging to a Global management fashion to enhance its legitimacy, the MNC chose not to promote 6S. Whereas this action seemed to be engendered by rational motives, which were spurred by the negative lines of rhetoric about the inefficiency of 6S, the storyline got more complex at the subsidiary level.

STRUCTURAL CODES OF TRANS-NATIONAL MISALIGNMENT: CULTURAL CLASH, INSTITUTIONAL DIVERGENCE, AND RITUAL ADOPTION

Despite the smooth transition in the Group HQ, there were signs of double translations and resistance at the Turkish subsidiary of the Group. Evidence gathered from the local subsidiary informed that a significant source for such translation and resistance was related to the ownership structure of the local firm. Turkish subsidiary was formally established as a joint-venture firm in 1999 with a local partner, chosen among one of the strong competitors that were already active in the household electric and electronics market. In this case, the Turkish JV represented a unique one among the network of the MNC, since none of the other local partnerships engaged elsewhere were chosen among direct competitors, making the power-dependency structure even more complicated among partners. According to the JV agreement, the

manufacturing unit should distribute its products to the local market with the local partner's brand and export its products to other markets both with the MNC and local partner's brands. Being asymmetrically less dependent on local partners in other countries like Saudi Arabia or India, MNCs had to devise a more complex organizational structure and an accompanying process chart to mitigate the risks of losing control over critical know-how. The JV was operated by two chief executive officers, each of whom was appointed by two partners. The Korean CEO was made responsible for the technical processes, including the R&D, manufacturing, and technical sourcing operations, whereas the Turkish CEO was preoccupied with more marketing, sales, and channel development activities. The staff included a few expatriates from the MNC, with the majority of the human resources composed of local origin. The divide between each partner's role and responsibility allocations and the emergent aura of distrust was reified in the isolated operationalization of the management information systems. There was no full integration in the systems and software used in the company, requiring authorized staff to retrieve and feed data to separate systems manually to satisfy the requests of each partner.

The divide between the partners manifested itself in the cultural codes as well. Located in Korea, MNC inherited a hierarchically controlled, centralized organizational structure, led by autocratic leaders, whose decisions were never questioned or challenged. Despite the predominance of vertical nodes of communication and control among the members of the organization, there was also an inclination for teamwork and mutual responsibility. Interviews with the local expatriates and observations at the MNC HQ further suggested that the unquestioning and obedient behavior observed on the part of the Korean company culture was partly inaugurated by the national institutional framework. The post-Korean War trauma, and lengthy and compulsory military service led managers, all of whom were composed of males, to accept any superior order as unquestionable and natural to comply.

“In Turkey elementary school children learn initially rights and then they learn about responsibilities. In our home country (South Korea) we were brought up predominantly with the primacy of responsibility. We used to bring towels and other cleaning equipment from our homes to do the cleaning of our classrooms at school.” (Company translator, Expatriate)”.

On the other hand, the local partner's culture discouraged teamwork and submissive compliance. Instead, it instilled skill sets like opportunity-seeking, negotiating, and making do with the things at hand. The only cultural dimension shared by the two partners was the vertical nodes of communication and control. Even at this dimension, MNC culture remained far more autocratic and power asymmetrical than the Turkish partner.

Apart from but related to the cultural differences between the partners, another important distinction manifested itself regarding the difference between national institutional orders. The MNC's national institutional framework did not segregate blue-collar and white-collar work in a

predefined cast-like structure from the beginning of their career. On the contrary, blue-collar work was valued and endowed with significant pay and career opportunities. Diplomas from higher education institutions were seen in equal terms with the professional experience and certifications, blurring the boundaries between white- and blue-collar work status, especially in cases when blue-collar workers had longer tenures and successful track records. Conversely, the Turkish national institutional framework casts a strong divide between white- and blue-collar work from the start. A solid line of status asymmetry was built into the system by the hierarchy of educational institutions, which could never be breached or questioned under any condition. Managerial echelons were only accessible to those with degrees from prestigious universities, erecting a career and pay barrier between white- and blue-collar work. Such separation of status differences could never be transgressed nor questioned.

The above-outlined cultural and institutional divergence between partners acted as an invisible barrier between the MNC and the local subsidiary regarding the mimetic transfer of management practices. Dependent on the white-collar work, which involved heavy computational skills and analytical project management competencies, there was very little cultural or institutional barrier for 6S to become operationalized at the subsidiary. The only dysfunctional element that enabled fast, but “ritual” adoption of the initiative was the tangible benefits that were attached to it. To promote 6S at the local subsidiary, completion of certifications and involvement in 6S projects were made compulsory for the career tracks of white-collar employees. Thus, during the initial years of implementation, there was an explosion of 6S projects, which were stalled at the later periods based on the negative feedback about the quality of outputs and/or delayed project completion times. During the focus group, some of the informants admitted that they had offered and completed ineffective 6S projects just because it was designated as a hard performance objective.

The implementation of FIS, on the other hand, significantly suffered from cultural and institutional mismatch since it was designated to be the core responsibility of the blue-collar employees and shop-floor management. Unlike Korean blue-collar workers, Turkish employees never internalized the responsibility of administrative activities related to work, nor did they possess such competency sets to comply with the evaluation and improvement protocols of the FIS. Higher turnover levels, lower skill sets, and weaker union bonds of the Turkish blue-collar employees caused FIS to become a responsibility of white-collar employees, perturbing the diffusion and internalization of the system. The latter resulted in lower grades awarded to the Turkish subsidiary by the reviewers of FIS at the HQ.

THE ROLE OF ACTORS: EXPERTS AND DOUBLE-TRANSLATION

Whereas cultural and institutional differences played a significant role in the adoption and implementation of imported management fashions, key actors also played a vital part in translating the HQ-mandated initiatives. The most

important actor at the Turkish subsidiary was the Turkish general manager, who was transferred from the Turkish partner's electric and electronics firm in 2010. Being formerly an expert in Total Quality Management, which he framed according to the guidelines and major framework of the European Foundation for Quality Management, he deliberately and intensely imposed the EFQM Model in the company. While previous Turkish general managers were coming from a sales and marketing background, and therefore, had left the technical affairs, including R&D and quality management, to the patronage of Korean general managers, current GM passionately forced EFQM framework to the subsidiary employees. Similar to the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Model in the USA, EFQM was modeled over key enablers (leadership, people, policy and strategy, partnerships and resources, processes) and results (people results, customer results, society results, and key performance results), which were defined in a causally integrated way including reverse feedback and learning mechanism.

Being a rather abstract model, EFQM's adoption alongside 6S and FIS, not only diverted attention from the latter to the former but also enabled some of the key internal experts to critically question their past conduct. To instill EFQM model into the cultural system of the subsidiary the current general manager used a systematic communication and enculturation campaign based on symbols and metaphors.

“We made use of metaphors in the employee management and leadership sections of the EFQM model, and we hang them up on the walls or distribute them to the employees as information notes. We use various kinds of written and oral instruments to make employees internalize these symbols in their everyday routines.” (GM, Turkish subsidiary)

With the intense campaign, some of the experts not only embraced EFQM as an umbrella philosophy and some as an ideology, but they also engaged in a critical activity to question the consequences of past attempts at quality improvement. One of the experts claimed that the introduction of the EFQM method made him realize that the employment of 6S during the early establishment period of the subsidiary was “a major mistake.” He claimed so because during the early stages of the subsidiary (between 2002 and 2010) key operational processes were subject to radical change and remained unstandardized due to rapid capacity increases. Thus, the implementation and use of 6S for processes that were neither efficient nor standardized brought about simple, uncoordinated, and costly projects, which only served for white collar engineers to earn salary increases. Instead, under the umbrella of the EFQM Model all quality improvements including FIS and 6S were incorporated, albeit with a significant focus on the former rather than the latter.

Coupled with the disenchantment of MNC HQ with the 6S in 2013, the implementation of FIS under the EFQM framework moved to the forefront. The situation was similar in other subsidiaries of the MNC, which concentrated their quality improvement efforts on FIS rather than 6S. Yet, in

none of the other subsidiaries, there was evidence about integrating FIS into a novel framework. Thus, the unique structural characteristics of the subsidiary and the active role of the general manager, who previously assumed an expert role on the topic, resulted in the translation of an MNC mandate into a bricolage. The unique model was not invented anew but practically made from convenient elements that were already in use. EFQM's popularity in Turkey enabled it to penetrate an East Asian quality improvement framework with the help of hybrid actors, whose identities were shaped by different institutional and cultural frameworks.

CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY AND TRANSLATIONS: A DISCUSSION

The outlined story of the MNC informs us about an initial transition from a more Globally constructed meta-narrative (6S and TPS) about the betterment of employee management and quality improvement to a hybrid and localized initiative (FIS). The initial transition refers to a critical reflexive activity pattern, albeit a limited one, on the part of actors positioned at the MNC HQ. On the other hand, it also signifies the transition of a peripherally positioned actor (emergence of a Korean MNC) moving into the central position of the Global capitalist system (MNC). Even when such consolidation of power occurs, the doubts about being labeled as illegitimate at the meta-institutional level, emanating from peripheral roots of the MNC, rendered it to design a mimetic response, trying to create a customized, but at the same time, imitated version of the Toyota Production System. Thus, by the post-colonial theorists' claims (Bhabbha, 1995; Frenkel, 2008), MNC's hybrid identity initiated the reproduction and solidification of its very hybridity through its partly conscious engagement in mimesis.

But what happens when a hybrid encounters yet another hybrid? The story of the Turkish subsidiary informs us about the complex interaction of two hybrid, but very different, actors at the periphery. Similar to the earlier claims of scholars, who concentrated their efforts on the micro-politics of power in MNC networks (Dörrenbacher and Geppert, 2006; Delmestri and Brumana, 2017), the degree of cultural and institutional distance matters even when both sides are hybrids. Structural forces instigate barriers that are made of different values, conventions, norms, and rules, which nullify the potential positive influence that might have emerged based on hybrids' mutual identification with each other's hybridity and peripheral identity. Instead, conflicting value spheres and partially unauthorized fields of action within the domain of the subsidiary triggered local agentic action, which could only flourish in such ambivalent conditions. Moreover, such attempts seemed to fuel a level of critical reflexivity on the part of local employees, who question their past conduct with reference to the enablement that they derived from the capacity of newly introduced frames of mind. Previously adopted 6S projects were condemned as untimely, premature, and mistaken with the novel frame of mind enabled by the EFQM Model.

Even when such a critical reflexive attitude was provoked, actors could not iterate towards further layers of questioning, which involved the

undergirding assumptions of such frameworks. Their frames were often stuck within their own departments' roles, activities, and norms, rarely going beyond the boundaries of the subsidiary. Even being exposed to many different institutional orders, especially as a result of working within an MNC subsidiary, did not seem to evoke reflexivity on more abstract layers. Thanks to the strong cultural elements instilled by the current general manager's efforts, none seemed to question even the pros and cons of abandoning the certification and compensation benefits of 6S instead of an ambiguous ideology about the importance of leadership and better management of human resources. Only passive resistance was evinced in the form of paying scarce attention, reducing enthusiasm and commitment, and doing for the sake of doing alone. Many of the Turkish engineers were aware of the conflicts driven by the cultural misalignment, but only Korean expatriates were more cognizant of the clashes between the national institutional order. Thus, the findings partly illustrated the fragmented ontological status of nested cultural and institutional frames, some of which were not perceived by actors, yet others perceived but not deliberately acted upon. The latter finding informs us about the limits of agency and reflexive action under the conditions of cultural and institutional complexity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

We aim to contribute to the transnational management knowledge diffusion/translation research stream by emphasizing both temporal and contextual effects that induce (double) translations in an MNC subsidiary. In this way, we focused on intentional resistance displayed by the corporate elite to the globally circulating meta-institutional discursive pressures, which was countered by contextual translations to their own initiative. The case provided us with ample evidence about how the initial resistance to essentialist global rhetoric triggered local translations based on locally enabled bricolage of ideas and practices. We found that experts located in the subsidiaries often enjoyed significant levels of autonomy to display agentic behavior in denouncing/renouncing/editing both symbolic and material components of managerial practices. Thus, our findings corroborate Frenkel's (2008) theoretical arguments, which propose that actors positioned in different locations of a multinational are likely to display strategic agency because of their heightened awareness emanating from their exposure to a multitude of cultures and institutions. The unauthorized fields of action, which were often rife with conflict, are likely to open up ambiguous, but fertile spaces for strategic and/or political display of agency. Relatedly, it can be argued that the complexity of the network configuration of an MNC, emanating from ownership arrangements and/or diversity of local market positions potentially stimulates non-linear and often dialectic patterns of knowledge circulation and translation. Yet, the degree of reflexivity engendered by such spaces is still far from exhausting intellectual boundaries, making actors stuck in their hybrid frames, which partly constitute the Global ideals of the dominant order.

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