

Organisation for Wellness



February 2017

Introduction

In late 2012, Flinders University offered to adopt *Oasis*, an inclusive, faith friendly centre, (formerly the *Religious Centre*), into its administrative structures. I was the Uniting Church chaplain at the time and was consequently appointed as the first Flinders Oasis Coordinating Chaplain.

What would ‘coordinating’ mean as part of a large, highly regulated institution that saw itself as ‘godless’? Could Oasis be integrated into the life of the university? How could diversity of religious belief and practice be accommodated?

This resource supports a presentation I was invited to offer to the Urban Mission Network on the theme of organization for wellness, skimming the surface of some discoveries I found helpful over the last four years.

My intention is to demonstrate that there are different *ways of organising* - different intentions - and to promote awareness of the dynamics of each way.

As a focus, I have taken a *YouTube* presentation, summarising recent research by **Frederic Laloux**, who, over four years, examined organizational structures across the Western world.

The video, lasting about ten minutes, can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0Jc5aAJu9g>

Laloux concluded that, roughly speaking, organisational structures fell into five paradigms.

I will show each of the paradigms from the video and ask that you discuss your experiences of each, in turn.

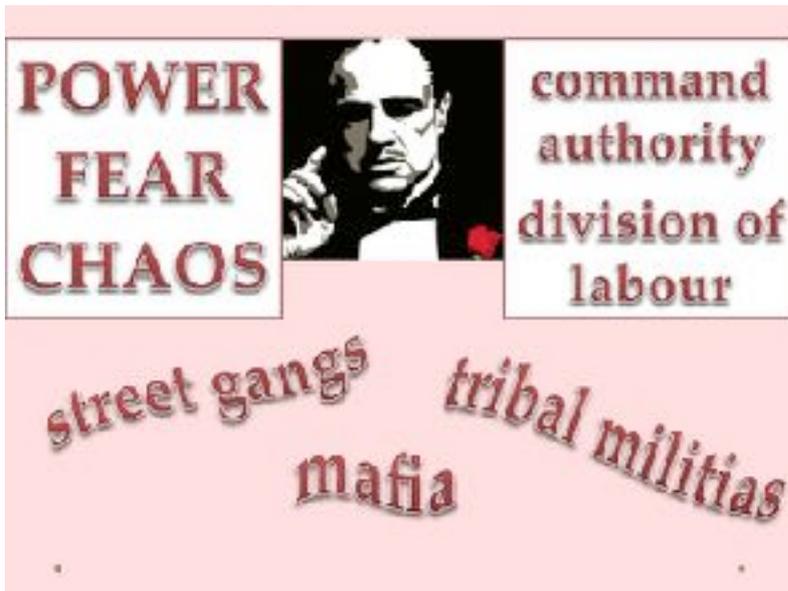
Like Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Basic Needs*, Laloux begins the presentation of his conclusions with the most basic, placing it at the base of a triangle, then moving up through time to the most nuanced at the top.

Below is a summary of the paradigms presented in the video.



The Laloux Model

The Wolf (the Godfather): Command-Authoritarianism, Tribal, Magic



At the base of the organizational paradigms, Laloux places command-authoritarianism as the most basic and primitive.

This paradigm is driven by fear – people falling in behind a strong champion-leader who is seen to be able to exert power and protection on their behalf.

We might think of that Hebrew period, when the Jews wanted a king like all the other surrounding nations, an insult to the long-

suffering Jahweh, who had been, and was still, their champion.

Additional examples also typifying this organizational paradigm might include Communist regimes led by dictators like Mao Tse-tung and Stalin, and Nationalist regimes led by figures like Hitler.

We also see it at work in history, such as after the Russians withdrew from Afghanistan, creating a vacuum for tribal warlords to emerge again.

Fear is the basic drive, the people having the hope of having a powerful, protecting champion.

The Army: Law and Order, Agrarian



Out of the chaos of systems characterized by individuals exercising organizational power by fear ('The Wolf'), Laloux identifies the emergence of a second paradigm - systems typified by army-like structures. This organizational paradigm might be represented by the Roman period, when stability, law and the infrastructure of roads and viaducts were achieved, and control maintained by imposing law through a large, well-disciplined army.

This was also the time of formation of the institutional church, bringing order to a chaotic Jesus movement.

The Factory - The Scientific-Industrial Age



The image of the factory represents the third paradigm, which emerged as a result of the **Industrial Revolution**. Even though we see manufacturing on the wane in advanced industrial countries, the consciousness of this paradigm is probably still the most influential today. Many institutions and corporates continue to be influenced by efficiencies typified by Henry Ford's production line.

But recent research shows that 70% of today's workers are disengaged from their work and feel like 'cogs in a machine', their personal aspirations subjugated to corporate goals for profit by accountability structures enforcing imposed objectives.¹

In Australia, the same percentage of Millennials would like to leave their well-paying jobs in the corporate and public service sectors because that feel stuck in a machine, unable to influence 'the machine' or fulfill their inner imaginative potential. (Braver souls are jumping into the next paradigm, despite the financial risks).

You may have noticed that hierarchical traditional churches with bishops and archbishops, and many of today's public universities with executive elites, fall into the Army/Christendom and Industrial epochs.

Lean , Agile, Open Source: The Computer/Internet/Postmodern/Information Age



This was the closest organizational model I could find to manage the new Oasis, even though it conflicted with the existing factory model of the university.

These ways of thinking are a growing influence today, particularly among younger people. We are at a point of transition from the factory paradigm to a leaner, more agile and connected way of doing things.

Think Internet!

Think 'Google it'!

Think Smart-phones!

There are many videos that attempt to explain Lean and Agile.

Two to start with:

- **Lean** – Toyota Japan, efficiency by eliminating waste: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=El2e1lxIMGU>
- **Agile** – Software Development: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TycLR0TqFA>

My son, a software developer in the UK, working as ‘Head of Tech’ for a large art-print company, introduced me to these management ideas. He would never work in a hierarchical or controlling workplace. For him, creativity cannot survive within a bullying, gatekeeping, coercive or meritocratic organisation. (He holds no tertiary qualifications, but he’s very good at what he does!). During the last 20-40 years this Gen X and Y way of thinking has permeated younger generations, who live on the web and the smart phone. It is mere ‘wall paper’ to young ones going to school today.

Oasis had evolved as a place of hospitality. For me, hospitality and Oasis are synonymous. Once adopted by the University, hospitality had to continue to be the core of its ethos, building a culture of inclusion and empowerment in Oasis rather than merely managing rooms for people with programs, or running our own programs.

Nor would the university’s ‘command and control’ management be appropriate for the university’s management of Oasis or for management of volunteers within Oasis.

However, Laloux’s fifth paradigm, though preliminary, promises an approach that seems be more aligned to the spiritual values espoused by Oasis.

‘Teal’, Organic: ‘Organisation with Soul!’



This paradigm values the aspirations of Oasis, aligned to the goals of religion, in dialogue with the university.

Wholeness is undermined by systems that split the human person, as if religion is one bit, and health another, or that Science and the Arts are ‘two cultures’; it challenges the way faculties and schools of the university see themselves as separate from one another. It deals with the down-side of ‘bosses’ and coercion by authorizing self-managing teams; it is organic, motivated by broader and higher purposes and processes that allow the organization to evolve, rather than be ‘managed’ from above. This paradigm

takes into account the way Oasis evolved over the last twenty years.

Those of us conditioned to the Hierarchical-Industrial model find it difficult to imagine how any enterprise of significant size and complexity could be effective without ‘managers’. Yet Laloux has found some!

These can be discovered by listening to Laloux himself. (See Further Resources, below)

Reflections

Aspects of all the above models are realities in human life at any one time – at work, in sport, in families, in education and so on. The purpose of this presentation is to create greater awareness of how the way we organize, or are organised, is critical to creating foundations for well being. Human flourishing is not just a question of individual piety. ‘On earth as in heaven’ requires thoughtful organization that empowers collectives. For us, ‘The Basis of Union’ is an essential guide to be placed alongside what we learn from scholarship and experience.

Could Church become a ‘Soulful Organisation’?

Maybe “Church” might become the weekly connecting of team members to share where they have seen God at work during the last week, to gain insight into ‘the new thing (God) is doing’ (Isaiah 43:19) and to organize for the next week (the next iteration) to cooperate with God.

Maybe clergy are lay-people, given specific tasks appropriate to their individual skills and talents on behalf of the self-managing congregation ‘on its way to a promised end’.

In searching for better ways to organize, great hermeneutical care needs to be taken before justifying any organisational model on the basis of Biblical texts. The classic ‘Body of Christ’ texts may easily be coopted by Chief Executive Officers and their Boards to see themselves as the ‘head’. Advances in neuroscience discount such metaphors, employed as obvious plays for status, power and control, so characteristic of the Machine paradigm. (How long have Aboriginal people been saying to Government – ‘we have the solutions – work *with* us, not do things *to* us!)

Sociologist Robert Muller has pointed out that a lower, more dominant paradigm has the power to assimilate a higher emerging paradigm back into its well-established organizational system. For example, the creative freedom required for the imagination to reign freely among software developers and their commitment to an ethic of transparency and global free flow of knowledge, inherent in the Green paradigm, may be drawn back into the Orange sector. So the object of many ‘start-ups’ today may not be so much to ‘delight customers’ but for profit.

What seems to be emerging is that the industrial-age university is adapting its ‘silo’ mentality to accommodate various other organizational *paradigms* within itself. Control and decision-making is the province of the administration, which maintains the dominant hierarchical ‘factory’ paradigm, ‘managing’ down from the top. As complexity increases, regulation increases; more and more layers of management bureaucracy are added, grass roots staff fall further and further down the pecking order; spending on promotion becomes more of a priority to compete with others also looking for ‘market share’.

At Flinders the *New Venture Institute*, which applies Lean/Agile practices to create Start-Ups for profit, is held up as a success icon by the University. Today’s successful university has to look shiny!

It is hard not to become cynical when staff are taught progressive management skills to cope with continuous restructure and the university management itself doesn’t seem to practice them!

Could it be that different organizational paradigms may be emerging in the Uniting Church – the experiment with ‘City Soul’, for example?

Could it be, that with the best of intentions, some people of influence are structuring for ‘command and control’, rather than in humility, for empowering all, no matter how low in status, in the spirit of Jesus?

Overview



For Discussion

- What have been your experiences of each paradigm, both positive and negative?
- When have you noticed leadership styles of each paradigm being most effective?
- What image of God fits with each paradigm?
*Choose one example for each, and record it with any Biblical references.
- How is each paradigm consistent with UCA Polity?
*Note the UCA Polity concerned.

Further Resources

Frederic Laloux, *Reinventing Organisations* (Nelson Parker) 2014

(two versions of the book of the same title are available: one is an in depth book, the other is for mere mortals like me, with cartoons!)

Frederic Laloux, *Reinventing Organisations* on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcS04BI2sbk>

Lean , Agile, Open Source: The Computer/Internet/Postmodern/Information Age

<https://travellingchaplain.com/2015/02/08/agile-lean-and-the-scrum/> <https://travellingchaplain.com/2015/02/09/comments-on-agile-scrum-and-lean/>

Others are also attempting to transfer Agile management to their spheres: <http://indaily.com.au/news/business/2015/06/23/the-vanguard-lawyer-adopts-agile-approach/>

‘Teal’, Organic: ‘Organisation with Soul!’

A brief introduction to the ‘Teal’ model by Frederic Laloux: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxGGkrtKZaA>

Further explanation of Laloux’ schema is documented at: <https://agilewarrior.wordpress.com/2015/04/07/reinventing-organizations-frederic-laloux/>

My initial take on Laloux’ schema and its connection with spirituality is at: <https://travellingchaplain.com/2016/08/11/valuing-spirituality-in-organisations/> and its **connection with Social Work best practice** at: <https://travellingchaplain.com/2016/10/09/oasis-as-a-self-managing-community/>

¹ According to Gallup Daily tracking, **32% of employees** in the U.S. are engaged -- meaning they are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. Worldwide, only **13% of employees** working for an organization are engaged. <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/188033/worldwide-employee-engagement-crisis.aspx>
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