

Travelling through Organisational Management



What elements determine the management of your organisation? The quality of the results, the needs of the people working for it, the fun of being together, values and contents? How can your organisation improve its management?

A training course that was run within the partnership on European Youth Worker Training last year provided the frame to take a deeper look at these questions. Paola was one of the trainers on this course and is embarking on a journey of discovery about organisational management - a journey about "people, projects, processes and ourselves".

Organisational Management is a wonderful journey towards the discovery of oneself through the history of others. Undertaking this journey allows us to discover our attitude towards people, projects, processes and ourselves.

It is about navigating in a calm sea full of islands to explore. Some are visible from far away and therefore better known. Others, which have only recently been discovered, are less attractive because of the complexity and unusualness of their landscape. All of them have fruits and berries, different in taste, shape and colour, and preference for them changes from time to time.

On every journey there may be storms. In this part of the sea the only storms are inner ones. Outside the sun is always shining. Therefore, pay attention to your emotions.

Here you can find some directions in case you would like to undertake such a journey with your organisation.

The departure harbour

Youth organisations take off from the harbour of Values, named after the strong wind of values always blowing over the region. The characteristic of this harbour is that the quays are named after each youth organisation and identified by their missions. All of them deal with human rights, development and solidarity. They fit nicely together.

The wind of values is the driving force of the sailing boats. Values allow for many types of activities, but not all, and are therefore sometimes seen as a

limitation. In reality however, they are essential for each youth organisation. Without values, youth organisations cannot sail. Many skippers come along and stay for a while. There is an ongoing learning and training process. Little is written down, talking and meeting others is more important.

The neighbouring harbour

In the next bay there is another harbour named Market. Each commercial organisation has its own quay there, but all of them look similar. However, there is one big difference: the prevailing wind blowing over here is called Profit. It is a very crowded harbour. There are always many people wanting to have a place for their boats and competition is very high.

The main stops

Islands peopled by thinkers theorising about Management fill the sea in front of the two bays.

Task Island is the most organised one. As everything there is economic, each person does what he or she is requested to do, neither more nor less. Everything is rationalised, scientifically organised and controlled. It is the most visited island. Youth organisations do not like this island. An unfamiliar language is spoken there and they find the island rather boring, too technical, bureaucratic, hierarchical and with little understanding of democracy.

On *Human Resources Island* it is people's needs that are cared for. Jobs are allocated according to motivation and the ability to perform. Informality is allowed, but power must be understood as well as authority. There is a co-presence of managers and



by Paola Bortini



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leaders encouraging participation in decision-making. Youth organisations often spend time on this island because they like the mixture of formality and informality. This mixture reminds them of their own organisations' practices, procedures and norms but it particularly reminds them of flexibility and involvement. It is not by accident that this island faces *Task Island*. The final aim of people on this island is always profit and therefore everything is done with an economic perspective.

On *Management By Objectives Island*, everything is done because there is an objective to be achieved. Tasks and assignments are clear and drive people in their actions. Planning is a key word. Projects are the best way to operate. Motivation factors coincide with tasks to perform. Youth organisations are quite familiar with this island. Often they come to prepare their projects and to learn all the different technical languages that the donors oblige them to speak. One problem is that fun and the pleasure of being together are not allowed as objectives on this island.

On *Total Quality Management Island* every detail is taken care of. The quality of products and services is very high, but not that of personal relations. Youth organisations find this a bit strange. They suppose that this situation is due to the fact that personal relations are not marketable.

Knowledge Island is the most recently discovered island. On this Island each person is valued according to how much and what he or she knows. Knowing is more important than being. There is information everywhere. People read a lot and try to remember everything. Information is the island's official currency. Youth organisations are a bit afraid to come to this island because it makes them feel disoriented: there is just too much information.

NGO Island is very different from the previous islands. People living there are able to combine fun and work, pleasure and duty. Games and adventure are tools for learning, and the latter is a tool for working. Working, in its turn, is a way of promoting rights and meeting needs. There is a mixture of situations, some appearing to oppose others. Each individual has the big responsibility of taking an active role in translating all of these situations into his or her own language.

This island is the furthest away from the harbour and therefore each sailing boat requires a long journey, good stamina and patience to reach it. Youth organisations have dared to travel here. Lately, some boats from the neighbouring harbour have also

come to visit and have taken back many fruits, selling them with their own labels.

The final destination

Each journey is safely completed when, once back home, there is the joy of talking about the experience. Comparing this journey with other experiences and discovering what can be applied in everyday life make of it a permanent journey of self-understanding.

Stopping at each island can provide youth organisations with different landscapes to which they can adapt their behaviour according to the situation they are in. Organisational Management is therefore a way to relate yourself and your organisation to yourself, the organisation, people, processes and material resources around you.

Have you ever thought about such a journey?

Let's take a minute to concentrate and think about your own organisation and yourself in it.

Is your organisational management driven by the Values wind?

Have you got a space in the harbour of Values or in the harbour of the Market, or in none of them?

Which islands do you visit the most?

Have you discovered any new islands? What are they called?

Free sailing is a great exercise when you know the sea, the islands scattered in it, and especially when you take off from a safe harbour.

Note by the author

The Islands' names come from some of the most well known management theories. I have made a deliberate selection as this article is not a management compendium. For further reading please wait for the T-Kit on Organisational Management, which will soon be published by the Council of Europe and the European Commission (foreseen date of publication: June 2000).

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