I would like to develop a conversation between Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) theory and Storytelling Organization theory (SOT). CCO and SOT are both about communication, self-organizing process, and adaptability of complex organizations to their environment. However whereas CCO privileges the ‘communicative’ event in organization and organizing, SOT privileges the fragmented story and untold story events. CCO and SOT rarely cite one another’s work, but both have important contributions to make to counter-narrative.

I will review each in turn, then summarize their contributions to counter-narrative.

**Part I: Communication as constitutive of organizations (CCO)**

Michael Reed (2009), in his review, says CCO is not only a bold claim, it is ontologically audacious and analytically ambitious. CCO “purports to tell us what must be present for an organization (or organizing) to exist and endure” (Reed, 2009: 1). There are in CCO ontological prerequisites of organization and organizing that need to be identified, understood, and explained. It is ‘communication; that constitutes organizations’ “ontological positioning” (IBID.). The schools of thought that make up CCO have theorizations that need to pay their philosophical dues, if for example, we are to accept Taylor (2009: 182), assertion “If ‘organization is not an ‘it’ but a becoming”, then the ontological foundations of each CCO approach need to be unpacked. Taylor (2011: 4) asserts that society itself exists in the transmission, in communication.
According to Schoenebor and Blaschke (2014), CCO combines three schools of thought: (1) the McPhee's Four Flows based on Gidden's Structuration Theory, (2) The Montréal School, and (3), Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems.

All three schools make the claim, that it is communication that is constitutive of organization. Cooren et. al. (2011) says COO theory has fix premises:

1. CCO scholars study communicational events.
2. CCO scholars are inclusive as possible about what organizational communication means.
3. CCO scholars acknowledge co-constructed (or co-oriented) nature of organizational communication.
4. CCO scholars hold that who or what is acting is always open to question.
5. CCO scholars never leave the realm of communicational events.
6. CCO scholars favor neither organization nor organization

**The McPhee School of CCO**

Robert D. McPhee and Pamela Zaug (2009), McPhee and Iverson (2009), and McPhee (1985, 2004) distinguish four types of communicative flows generate a social structure through interaction: self-structuring, institutional positioning, membership negotiation, and activity coordination. While distinct, these flows affect one another resulting in multi-way conversation (or texts) involving reproduction and resistance to the rules and resources of the organization.

Organizational self-structuring occurs through groupings (crowd or mob) in a process deliberately carried out through communication among role-holders and various groups. The communication is dialogic and recursive (self-structuring). Communication concerns control, documentation, and design of norms, processes, relations and entities. On the one hand, formal structures of communication (e.g. charter, organization chart, & policy manual) predetermine work routines, rather than allowing them to emerge. On the other hand, individuals, traditions, interests, and systems in a subjective process that is not always free of ambiguity and error can affect political processes. The formal structures and the informal politics are two aspects of organization that imply formation and
governance of a differentiated whole that includes reflexive response cycles and mechanisms.

**Membership negotiation** is required since people are not inherently members of organizations. Negotiatory communication occurs to incorporate people into organization structures by establishing and manipulating relationships through job recruitment, socialization, and evaluation. Membership negotiation process can be influenced by prior power and status of members, power-claiming, and spokesmanship that result in resource gains of an organization.

**Activity coordination** results from the fact that organizations typically have multiple purposes to which members’ activity contributes. On one hand, activity coordination occurs in an informal process of mutual adjustment, self-structuring the division of labor, changing workflow sequences and processes, amending or creating policies etc. On the other hand, this informal activity coordination may not be fully understood, for free of problems, from the vantage point of formal structure. Therefore communication arises among members to engage in activity coordination to resolve unforeseen practical problems. Activity coordination assumes members work in interdependent social units that extend beyond individual work tasks. This includes informal mutual adjustment processes and attitudes of members to now complete work, slow the work down, do work arounds, or seek power over one another.

**Institutional positioning** connects organization to its environment, to suppliers, customers, and competitors (or peers). Institutional positioning is involves communication to entities outside the formal/informal organization negotiate terms of identity, recognition, and legitimacy (or positioning). Institutional positioning can come from a more powerful external control organization (e.g. accreditation, standards enforcement, legal). Organizations therefore negotiate inclusion in their environment. On the one hand, this involves two-way dyadic communication to demonstrate legitimacy or assert a particular image (or identity). On the other hand, there is institutional positioning within networks of organizations, where for example, a start up venture may have to
move from periphery into centrality of pre-existing organizational relationships. Both the dyadic and network aspects of institutional positioning involve communication constitutive of complex organizations links to their environment.

The Montréal School of CCO

In the Université de Montréal School of CCO, originated by James Taylor, Francois (see Putnam & Nicotera, 2009 and Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009 for more on Taylor’s work), Cooren (see Cooren, 2004; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011), as well as work in France, by Bruno Latour’s (2005) Actor Network Theory (ANT). The Montréal School of CCO develops a ‘co-orientation model (Cooren et. al, 2011). In the Montréal School the assumption is that texts have agency (Cooren, 2004) not reducible to human actions or human interactions. ANT adds a focus on materiality, which has been overlooked or marginalized in the social constructivism. See more on this school: Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, and Clark (2011)

The Luhmann School of CCO

Luhmann is applied to CCO, because his autopoiesis theory is about communication. Systems theory for Luhman (1986, 1995) is a (1) societal theory, (2) a communication theory and, (3) an evolution theory. Society is the most encompassing social system, and social systems are comprised of communication, and these systems evolve in an environment. System is defined by boundary between itself and environment (that is infinitely complex & chaotic). The system boundary allows communication within the system to reduce environmental complexity, selecting limited information from the environment, and a process of ‘reduction of complexity’ by its meaning. Both psychical (personal) systems and social systems (co)-operate in processing meaning.

Part II: Storytelling Organization Theory (SOT).
Storytelling organization Theory (SOT) began with work by David Boje (1991) in the office supply study, where storytelling is asserted to by the primary sensemaking device of organizing in the storytelling organization. Boje (1995) continued SOT work in study of Disney as a Tamara-land of storytelling processes, spatially and temporally situated in organizing and organization. Recent work by Linda Hitchin and colleagues theories that there are ecologies of untold stories as well as story fragments antecedent and pre-ontological to organizational stabilized narratived (Izak, Hitchin, & Anderson, 2015; Hichin, 2015; Izak & Hitchin, 2014). She draws on David Boje’s (1995, 2011, 2012) work in Tamara-land storytelling organization theory, antenarrative theory, and quantum storytelling theory.

Hitchin (2015) asserts that untold stories are “boundless magnitude and scale” in organization relations of Tamara-land and the quantum storying that is ontologically grounded in spacetimemattering in Boje’s story work.

**What is Tamara-land?** In Tamara-land theory, each new teller edits the original performed story others are telling by inserting their own trope, metaphor, characterization, and/or emplotment. This indifference to the *in situ* story performance, privileges a quieten a passive non-telling of untold stories. Tamara-land theory situates story work enactment in the political, by embedding buildings, rooms, and landscape of the spatial and temporal shifting contexts of organizations. In organizations, bigger than the one room schoolhouse, participants in ongoing storytelling are not all in the same room, at once. Rather people in organizations, as in a Tamara play, are not one audience, in one room, witnessing story performances. In the real ‘spacetime’ of organizations, some people are in particular room, while others are in their own rooms, or in corridors, parking places, etc. distributed spatially and temporally. People in Tamara-land, must decide which room or hallway to be in, whom to follow, to trace the shifting meaning of stories told in one room and another room. You cannot as an individual be in all the storytelling rooms, at once. Tamara-land raises the specter of the ‘real’ over against the naïve fantasy that storytelling is situated in one room, at one time, with all participants in the role of passive audience. The play, ‘Tamara’, takes place in a mansion, or as in last summer’s ‘Big Story Conference’ in the offices of Steel Case Corporation in Las
Angeles. Most organizations have people distributed spatially across many office locations. This raises the theoretical concern for the ambiguity and uncertainty of storytelling spread out spatially in different rooms (& corridors), different floors, different buildings, and within those sites, at different times. The hierarchic organization cannot unilaterally control the narrative, since storytelling is simultaneous, and this includes the politics of who gets to tell and organization narrative, and the majority of untold stories. In sum, in Tamara-land storytelling organization theory, locational position (place), timing, and physics of not being able to be in every room of storytelling enactment, at once is an essential sociomaterial landscape, and situation of the storytelling, and the politics of theatre as actors and audience generate self-organizing trajectories.

**What is Quantum Storytelling?** Quantum stories of the flux of interacting, complex, and unfinished organizing projects relates to Hitchin and colleagues, focus on untold stories, their multiplicity, and sociomateriality in ‘real’ spacetimemattering (Barad, 2002, 2007; Boje & Henderson, 2014; Henderson & Boje, 2015; Strand, 2011) of organizations. Quantum storytelling (Hitchin, 2015: 221) attends to attractors, fractals, virtual fragments, stings, flux contingencies, complexity, contradictions, and the forever inability of obtaining consensus, synthesis or harmony between untold and fragmented stories and the overarching, dominat, representational narratives.

Hitchin (2015: 214) connects Boje’s storytelling theory of ‘untold stories’ to Actor Network Theory (ANT), since they two theories share a concern with “socio-material relationships, energy, action, and situations.

Boje’s (2014) purpose in this chapter is to declare that the relationship of ‘untold stories’ to ‘told narratives’ of organizations is a ‘dialectical’ development kind of relation between unbounded localness of untold stories and more privileged organization narratives. There needs to be greater research and theory attention to the dialectical relation between locally occurring untold stories and the kinds of summative or representative post hoc narratives of research findings. For example, *post hoc*

The Politics of Explanation Hitchin stresses the politics of method, and problematizes inductive reflexive explanation that depoliticizes the organization situation. The untold story calls for researcher attention to sociomateriality and the “deep field ethnographic study” of locally situated storytelling practices, the politics of storytelling, and problematizes the researcher-author ‘restorying’ or ‘renarrating’ people’s locally situated untold story, story fragments, and living story webs of relations (i.e. microstoria) --- into a ‘representative’ or ‘abstracted’ narrative. GT uses ‘reflexive’ inductive practices combined with positivistic coding rituals by the researcher to restory (or renarrate) and substitute a narrative for the flux, entanglement, and boundless magnitude and scale of untold stories. The result is the creation of the researcher’s own narrative fiction for untold stories, story fragments, and living microstoria. This practice in GT leaves the researcher open to “criticisms of ventriloquism”, “delusion”, “bad fiction”, and “epistemological hypochondria” (Hitchin, 2015: 216).

Hitchin’s and Boje’s work on untold stories, emphasizes a sensitivity to the localness, to space and time relations of Tamara-land antenarrative, and quantum story fragments that problematize elite grand narratives, or researcher’s substituted representational narratives (as used in GT inductive reflexive & positivism coding schemata).

Here I would like to extend Hitchin, by looking at dialectic relations of untold stories to such representational (retrospective) narrative. Hitchin proposes four theoretical deductive premises of Tamara-land and quantum storytelling theory in their relation to ANT and untold stories.
**Fragment 1: After Method** ANT agent positions in network of organization relations raises awareness of theorists to the politics of method. People in organizations exist in Tamara-land landscape (spacetimemattering) in which the resulting phenomenon of storytelling has “multiple, heterogeneous entanglements processing multiple threads and possibilities” (Hitchin, 2015: 227). The dialectics include the challenge of the illusion of ventriloquist or virtuoso narrative representations and the living story and untold story webs that can be partly studied using ethnographic methods. “Quantum stories” in Boje’s work are combined by Hitchin (2015: 221) with ANT assemblage of actors, actants, and things in moving and shifting networks that include “boundless and innumerable untold stories” for every narrative or counter-narrative.

**Fragment 2: Ontological Politics** If we move from what Roy Bhaskar (1993) calls the fallacy of monovalent (single) ontology to a theory of multiple ontologies, then we can say that people exist in multiple relating realities of inter-action in Tamara-land landscapes, where “story fragments that are on the move and energetic” in their quantum storytelling dynamics (Hitchin, 2015: 227). More robust organizational narratives (&/or robust stories told) are dialectic to living story (localness), fragmented and untold stories that are antenarrative to (before) narrative formation. This flux of fragmented and untold stories is knocking on, interfering in, dialectic within and between multiple realities, of multiple ontologies that are colliding and interacting in and around complex organizations. These dynamic ontological and dialectical politics create sociomaterial agency, where the flux itself is self-organizing.

**Fragment 3: Cutting the Network** The concern is with untold stories (and story fragments) that challenge ways researchers are ‘cutting the network” using an analytic cut, to pull out a landscape of storytelling network relationship for study from multiple interconnected worlds. Each researcher’s analytic cut that creates a particular orientation that changes the situation. As Haraway (1989: 331, as cited in Hitchin, 2015) puts it, “one story is not as good as another.” The analytic cut picks up some story fragments and untold story possibilities, while ignoring others. “Inevitably, taking an analytic cut
changes the story” (Hitchin, 2015: 231). Demonstrating her own cut, Hitchin uses thick
description of the entanglements of the terrain she chose to study.

**Fragment 4: Avoiding the God-Trick** Trying to untangle a living story web, and its
untold stories in a messy situation. In a living story web, one story leads to telling
another, and in a relational situation, it leads to an entire community of organizational
involvements. When an untold story is told, more are told, and more are untold. Haraway
(1998: 115) describes the illusion of the god-trick narratives of techno-scientific world, as
follows:

> “Vision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all
perspective gives way to infinitely mobile vision, which no longer seems
just mythically about the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but
to have put the myth into ordinary practice.”

Haraway takes a feminist standpoint on Western science: “History is a story Western
culture buffs tell each other; science is a contestable text and a power field; the content is
the form” (p. 111). In short, the grand narratives of the god-trick standpoint promise
more objective, integrated accounts of techno-scientific world that become techno-
monsters.

We turn now to implication of CCO and STO for counter-narrative theory, research, and
practice.

**Part III: CCO and STO contributions to Counter-Narrative**

Considering narratives an essential part of meaning construction in organizations is also
shared by Timothy Kuhn (2005; 2006; 2016) who applies the term “authoritative texts” to
demonstrate how an organization’s trajectory is authored internally through internal
narratives. With outset in the theory concerning the ways communication constitutes
organizations associated with the Montréal School (Cooren & Taylor, 1997; Taylor,
Cooren, Girouz & Robichaud, 1996) – also known as Communication Constitutes
Organization (CCO), Kuhn (2016) observes that “If authoritative texts are narratives about the “we,” counter-narratives would be understood as confronting or influencing the authoritative text in organizing practice” (22). As such, the concept of counter-narratives can, according to Kuhn be viewed as “ever-present components of organizational constitution that always saturate and infuse (i.e., are continually present in) overarching narratives of organization” (18).

Thus considered from a CCO perspective, narrativity is indeed the very basis of sensemaking (Robichaud, Giroux & Taylor, 2004), since the latter always consist of explicitly or implicitly “selecting, naming, or even inventing aspects of a given situation or sequence, aspects that are meant to serve the purpose of the storytelling or storyteller’s interest” (Cooren 2015, p. 39). In other words, even when people do not appear to be telling a story – for instance, when they seem to be simply deploring a situation while proposing solutions – they are, in fact, involved in narrative processes. Selecting and naming aspects of a situation indeed amounts to pointing to what is supposed to matter or count in a given context and what to do about them.

Narrativity, as Greimas (1987) reminds us, thus always displays normative and polemical dimensions. Telling a story indeed implies that we follow or take the viewpoint of an actor facing a specific problem, opponent or obstacle that s/he is trying to overcome. The moral dimension of a narrative is therefore related to the values that are implicitly or explicitly defended or cherished by this actor. For instance, deploring a situation in which a company’s profitability is suffering while explaining what should be done about it might consist, for a Chief brand officer (CBO), of implicitly telling a story in which some obstacles are identified (e.g., lack of concern for the company’s image) and solutions proposed (e.g., investment in branding, marketing, advertising, public relations, and customer services).

Through this narrative, we are supposed to take an actor’s viewpoint – here, the CBO’s – where certain aspects of the situation are valued (e.g., image, reputation, packaging, integration, emotions) while others are disvalued, not attended to or even disqualified
(e.g., traditions, operations, differentiation). A CCO perspective also consists of noticing that telling the story of what is happening amounts to translating \textit{what the situation supposedly dictates:} According to this CBO, recovering profitability indeed requires or dictates that investment be made in branding, marketing, advertising, public relations and customer services. Telling a story is therefore a way to express how a situation does, did, should or will evolve.

Counter-narratives, according to a CCO perspective, can thus be identified as any narrative in which alternative ways of making sense of the situation are proposed, that is, alternative ways to show \textit{what the situation dictates, requires or commands}. For instance, a Chief operating officer (COO) or a union representative might tell a different story where other obstacles are identified (e.g., lack of investment in the operations, narrowness of the target markets, lack of training) and other solutions proposed (investing in operations, training, and R & D). Counter-narratives thus always constitute ways to highlight other actors, other circumstances, other obstacles and/or even other objectives. They constitute alternative ways to highlight what matters or counts in a situation, which means that they usually amounts to following alternative pathways.

\textit{Antenarrative Analysis of Counter-narrative}

There are rhythms (repetition & mundane) times, spaces, and mattering in organizations. These rhythms vary cross-culturally. Here we would like to look at an ‘antenarrative’ method for analyzing counter-narratives and their relation to narratives and living stories (often left out of both narratives & counter-narratives). Antenarrative is pre-narrative, and pre-story. Antenarrative is defined as processes \textit{before}-narrative, \textit{between} narrative and counter-narratives, \textit{beneath} them, \textit{bets} on future, and the \textit{becoming} of care for what can and ought to be (Boje, 2001, 2008, 2011, 2015; Boje & Henderson, 2014; Haley & Boje, 2014; Boje, Haley, & Saylor, 2015; Henderson & Boje, 2015; Svane & Boje, 2014).

What is the relation of antenarrative to counter-narrative? The answer has to do with rhythms, those everyday mundane repetitions of events. These rhythms spatialize, temporalize, and are mattering in organizations. When existing dominant narratives are
open to challenge by counter-narratives, the antenarratives are at work before-between-beneath-bets-becoming.

Our everyday *time and space* and the assemblage of things that *matter* is full of rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004). Organizations *spatialize* their world, *temporalize* their history and strategic future, and order the things *mattering* (equipment, technologies, tools, etc.). Lefebvre (2004: 6) stresses how there is “no rhythm without repetition in time and in space” and that “differences” matter. The antenarrativists calls this ‘*spacetimemattering*’ because the three are inseparable (Henderson & Boje, 2014; Boje & Henderson, 2015).

Antenarrative analysis privileges the instant (the blink of the eye), not the duration of the moment (Bergsonian *dureé*). In the instant, the future and past collide, and narrative tries to hold the elemental forces in check, but often enough the narrative constrains do not contain the formation of counternarratives. Our work lives do have rhythms and tempos, and the rhythms do change.

Our storytelling is subject to loss of memory, vague recollection of how a process started, how it has changed with each repetition.

Many definitions of narrative stress the linear:

Aristotle ((350 BCE 1450b: line 25 p. 233) narrative is "imitation of an action that is complete in itself, as a whole of some magnitude... Now a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end."

Weick (1995) says “organizational realties are based on narration”, “the experience is filtered” by “hindsight” (127); “typically searching for a causal chain”, “the plot follows - either the sequence beginning-middle-end or the sequence situation-transformation-situation. But sequence is the source of sense” (128).
Czarniawska (1997: 78) says “A story consists of a plot comprising causally related episodes that culminate in a solution to a problem.”

Bakhtin (1973: 13) declares, “Narrative genres are always enclosed in a solid and unshakable monological framework” (Bakhtin, 1973: 13).

There are other definitions that allow for living stories to be less centering, more a play of differences:

Bakhtin (1981: 60) stress on the more “Dialogic manner of the story” that does not follow the linear, or monologic frame of narrative.

Gabriel (2000: 5), also makes a distinction between narrative and story: “I shall argue not all narratives are stories; in particular, factual or descriptive accounts of events that aspire at objectivity rather than emotional effect must not be treated as stories.”

Derrida (1979: 99-100) also makes a distinction between narrative and story: Each “story” (and each occurrence of the word “story,” (of itself), each story in the story) is part of the other, makes the other part (of itself), is at once larger and smaller than itself, includes itself without including (or comprehending) itself, identifies itself with itself even as it remains utterly different from its homonym.”

William James (1907: 98) “The world if full of partial stories that run parallel to one another, beginning and ending at odd times. The mutually interlace and interfere at points, but we can not unify them completely in our minds….”

Boje (2001: 1, 4): “Antenarrative” is defined as “the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet” (1), a very improper story can be transformative (4).
What these definitions suggest is that while narratives imitate action with a beginning-middle-end linear plot, there are counter-narratives with rival linear plots, and antenarratives that are more fragmented, nonlinear, partial, and lack the coherence of a narrative or antenarrative.

Antenarrative analytics looks at linear-narratives in relation to cyclical time. Linear time such as clock time is a mechanistic rhythm, that of teleological progression (Haley & Boje, 2014). Lived time, by contrast, is more cyclical, the repetition of actions, imitated in different sort of storytelling. The focus of antenarrative analytics is to look at the relationship between the linear and nonlinear, the coherent and fragmented storytelling. Narratives that center attention on a linear pattern can be opposed by counter-narratives stressing a different sequence. Antenarrative analytics problematizes both narrative and counter-narrative, for the danger of errors and omissions, leaving out the play of differences, being too focused on linear progress and coherence. Further, most narrative work stresses retrospective sensemaking since Weick’s (1995) seminal work. However, there is increasing study of prospective sensemaking, how the future arrives to collide with the past.

In closing, contributions in this special issue explore counter-narratives from various positions revealing how they may constitute alternative pathways. This insight carries along a deeper understand of international dimensions of organizational behavior and ways in which counter-narratives may contest or negotiate dominant narratives within an organizational context.

References


ADDITIONAL References


