

## PRESS RELEASE

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### WHY “ONCE UPON A TIME” IS HERE AND NOW

*Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC (Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2008)* – During a week when major corporations across the globe have had to revise their predictions for the future, David M. Boje, the leading authority on organizational story-telling, has written a landmark exploration of the stories we all tell ourselves – and each other – at work. Published by SAGE, ***Storytelling Organizations*** will be a must-read for everyone who needs to make sense of complex and conflicting narratives within organizations.

When interest in storytelling first came to prominence within the field of organizational studies, the focus was on understanding stories about what happened “once upon a time, a long time ago” within the organization. Boje, however, is just as interested in the stories we tell ourselves about the future. He is interested in the way stories interplay with our need to stay within our ethical and emotional comfort zone, and how multiple narratives emerge and evolve in rapidly changing situations.

This awareness that there is more to organizational stories than the dominant narrative would often suggest, or even allow for, makes Boje comfortable with complexity. Folklore and cybernetics entwine effortlessly in his text, and he draws on personal stories as well as his extensive research into storytelling in organisations.

His holistic approach is redrawing the bounds of storytelling as a field of enquiry and as way of understanding practice. The company motto, the architecture of corporate headquarters, the business strategy – all become part of the organizational story. Studying the story, therefore, becomes a new and fertile way into understanding strategy.

Boje looks far beyond organizational studies in his exploration of stories. In an argument which draws on therapeutic techniques and applies them to organizations, he advocates ‘restorying’ – taking a narrative which is negative, distorted or unfair and finding a more truthful and affirmative alternative. This simple but effective technique could usefully be applied to anything from justifications for malpractice to institutional discrimination. In Boje’s work, the chaotic, infinitely

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creative, multiplicity of stories is a power to be respected – it can undermine and subvert the officially constructed ‘narrative’.

He is also an astute commentator on the ways in which the incorporation of storytelling into KM initiatives, where employees’ tales are fed into a database, can be exploitative, arguing for a more sensitive approach to harvesting and working with tales from the organizational coalface.

In the words of Professor Karl E. Weick, “How can I know what I think until I see what David Boje says? What he says about storytelling will forever change what we thought we knew about stories.”

During a period when many things we thought we knew about organizations are changing as well, Boje’s work offers us a chance to engage with a new and richer take on organizational stories and the opportunity to ‘restory’ an alternative but authentic ending to tales where the big bad wolves look set to triumph. Who said happy endings were only for kids?

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**Storytelling Organizations** by David M Boje is published by SAGE, available in paperback and hardcover from <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book230400&>.

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