

Storytelling Organizational Practices: Managing in the quantum age

By David M. Boje

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Once upon a time the practice of storytelling was about collecting interesting stories about the past, and converting them into soundbite pitches. Now it is more about foretelling the ways the future is approaching the present, prompting a re-storying of the past. Storytelling has progressed and is about a diversity of voices, not just one teller of one past; it is how a group or organization of people negotiates the telling of history and the telling of what future is arriving in the present.

With the changes in storytelling practices and theory there is a growing need to look at new and different methodologies. Within this exciting new book, David M. Boje develops new ways to ask questions in interviews and make observations of practice that are about storytelling the future. This, after all, is where management practice concentrates its storytelling, while much of the theory and method work is all about how the past might recur in the future.

Storytelling Organizational Practices takes the reader on a journey: from looking at narratives of past experience through looking at living stories of emergence in the present to looking at how the future is arriving in ways that prompts a re-storying of the past.

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Editorial Review

Review

'David Boje's storytelling imagination burns with the fierce energy of a volcano generating more insights in a few pages than others display in whole volumes. Whether revisiting St George and the dragon or having dinner with Zygmunt Bauman, Boje delights, provokes, subverts and resurrects. His latest book is a must for every true lover of story, narrative and antenarrative!' -*Yiannis Gabriel, School of Management, University of Bath, UK*

'David Boje is one of the most innovative thought leaders on organizational change and narrative methods. His expository style is equally fluent regardless of the context at hand, be it in the trenches of a distribution warehouse or the ethereal realms of philosophies and life worlds.' - *Nikhilesh Dholakia, University of Rhode Island, USA*

'The brothers James would be delighted with Storytelling: James because of the weight given to the narrative and Henry because of the central place of pragmatist theory in this new David Boje book. Both would be happy to see the two united within a field unknown to them, which are organization theory and the enlightened placing of pragmatic storytelling in a new era. The contemporary readers, organizational theoreticians and practitioners alike, will be enriched by its broad historical perspective and the rich imagination of its author.' - *Barbara Czarniawska, Professor, Managing Overflow, University of Gothenburg, Sweden*

'David Boje has written an incredible book. Writing from the perspective of philosophical pragmatism, Boje has laid out the theoretical underpinnings of organizational storytelling. It is a must read for those interested in organizations from a deeper perspective.' *– Dr Ian I. Mitroff, Mitroff Crisis Management*

'David Boje's work makes an outstanding contribution to the study of organizations. His distinct perspective has powerfully influenced the way in which researchers engage with and understand organizations, and this book is no exception. In *Storytelling Organizational Practices* Boje provides a comprehensive analysis of the various ways in which storytelling is used and interpreted within the organization: beautifully written and engaging.' - *Heather Hopfl, University of Essex, UK*

'Dr David Boje takes storytelling to a stratospheric level in this book; giving his readers an exciting, thought-provoking, and extreme depth of understanding of what storytelling is really all about. He leaves 'no stone unturned' in his profound and gifted way of dissecting and explaining the variety and complexity of storytelling. No book has ever before been published that has given us such a rich and diverse understanding of what storytelling is all about, as does this marvellous and monumental work. David has created a masterwork.' - *Ed Breeding, Painter/Writer/Documentary filmmaker, USA*

In this book Boje prompts us to see the open-ended nature of possible futures as an invitation to re-story the past and re-imagine the present. The academic formula of quantum age management allows Boje to notice a

broad spectrum of contemporary storytelling organizational practices. He systematically rejects the mainstream conformism of professional bureaucracies and moves away from Academies of Management, via International Academies of Business Disciplines towards Standing Conferences on Management and Organizational Inquiry (sc'MOI) and towards open sources of responsible civic conviviality's.' - *Slawek Magala, Rotterdam School of Management, Boje's successor as editor in chief of Journal of Organizational Change Management, Netherlands*

'We all love a good story! We all tell stories all the time! No-one tells as good a story about our storytelling - to ourselves and to each other - as does David Boje. In a compelling story about what we tell each other as explanation, truth, and possible futures, Boje reminds us, "lest we forget", that the story about one set of interests may over-ride all others - but that it need not be so. In a world that currently supports the interest of the 1% over the needs of the other 99% we might bet that another ante is possible.' - *Maria Humphries, Associate Professor, Waikato Management School, University of Waikato, New Zealand*

'In this ground breaking book, David Boje combines elements from such seemingly disparate areas as philosophy, quantum physics and Shamanism. He describes how storytelling can and has been used in good and bad as well as ethical and unethical ways by organizations to help them make sense of past events in the organization; including organizational culture and history. Students and professors, as well as the interested organizational reader, will find the book to be challenging, fascinating, and imminently practical.' - *Jerry Biberman, Professor Emeritus, University of Scranton, USA*

'Here is the Boje book we didn't know we were waiting for. David emerges as a quantum weaver, applying his deep insight and astounding creativity to connect the strands of theory – his own and those of others – with great clarity in his most approachable work. It is punctuated with significant examples, important stories, and pauses for reflection and action. David engages us with his ideas about what is happening now, and what is possible going forward. He takes us on an inside-out-outside-in journey filled with passion and integrity. If you care about people, stories, organizations, and their dynamics, read this seminal book.' – *Dr. Jo Tyler, Associate Professor at Penn State University, Storyteller, and Mosaicist*

'More than anyone else, perhaps, David Boje has sensitized us to the importance of narratives, narrative plurivocality, and storytelling in organizations. In this hugely insightful book, possibly his best so far, Boje goes further: he brings storytelling to the quantum (or post-modern) era – the era of uncertainty, indeterminacy, and complexity. This book is an insightful scholarly story about organizational stories – a masterful achievement.' - *Haridimos Tsoukas, The Columbia Ship Management Professor of Strategic Management, University of Cyprus and Professor of Organization Studies, University of Warwick, UK*

'David Boje is arguably the leading scholar in organizational storytelling. In this comprehensive new book he synthesizes and extends the storytelling literature to speak of restorying the future. This book breaks new ground by proposing alternate methodologies to explore how many storytellers, not just omniscient managers, may impact alternate future courses for organizations. A must read for anyone interested in storytelling, or simply in the mechanics by which managers choose organizational futures, and the moral hazard this entails for society.' - *Usha C. V. Haley, Professor of Management, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia, USA*

‘Storytelling matters! David Boje challenges us to question what we know about storytelling providing us with a compelling and wide-ranging account on theory and method for a sea-change in narrative research’ - *Anna Linda Musacchio Adorisio, Copenhagen Business School and author of Storytelling in Organizations*

‘David Boje knows everything about narratives and storytelling. This new book presents different approaches to storytelling and takes quantum storytelling to the next level. The book will certainly help and inspire both those who want to know what storytelling is all about and those looking for new innovative ideas and methods. There is so much to learn from this highly original package..’ – *Eero Vaara, Hanken School of Economics, Finland*

‘David Boje’s work merges us into the core of the storytelling methods and narratives based on interviews about organizational practices. Although Boje focuses on businesses and organizations, his book’s larger scope also addresses situations of human interaction. If storytelling of organizations is undoubtedly interested in the past stories and the present time practices, it is also oriented on the future stories, the antenarrative. Boje emphasizes on the fact that the future is not an extrapolation of the past but is rather a bet, a prediction.’ - *Professor Henri Savall, Socio-Economic Institute of Firms and Organizations, France*

About the Author

David M. Boje has a doctorate from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and an honorary doctorate from Aalborg University, Denmark. Dr Boje is past Division-chair of the Research Methods Division of the Academy of Management and incoming President of the Board of Governors of the Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry. He is Founding Editor of the *Tamara Journal of Critical Organization Studies* and Associate Editor (2003--2009) and formerly Editor (1989--2003) of the *Journal of Organizational Change Management.*

Users Review

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