

Krzysztof T. Konecki  
University of Lodz

**Joanna Kłodkowska, *Radzenie sobie pracowników ze zmianami w organizacji (Coping with changes in the organisation)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, 2014, 291 pp.**

In her seven-chapter *Radzenie sobie pracowników ze zmianami w organizacji (Coping with changes in the organisation)*, Joanna Kłodkowska discusses issues associated with organisation management from the viewpoint of employees who have to cope with the changes their organisation is undergoing/implementing. She studies change-related issues in the Voluntary Labour Corps, an organisation different, in many senses, from other ones. Her monographic study importantly relies on the techniques of document analysis and draws also on the ethnographic method. The organisational changes are described as a “biography of the organisation,” with events alternating and some of them being depicted in detail as formative events (change in the organigram). The history of changes is presented as “a lifeline” of the organisation.

Coping with organisational change was treated as a biographical experience. The adopted approach is unusually interesting as this kind of conceptualisation is certainly an innovation in Polish research into organisational change. Kłodkowska competently combines two perspectives: the sociological and the pedagogical ones, which is not an easy task given the differences in how findings are arrived at and responded to in the two paradigms (a non-practical approach vs. a practical one).

In the first chapter, Kłodkowska defines the notion of social change in order to address the issue of organisational change. She draws on Piotr Sztompka’s work, in particular on his *Society in Action: The Theory of Social Becoming*. When adopting the concept of social change, it is usually assumed that there are moments when things continue as they are – and no change occurs. The social structure is supposed to serve as a stabiliser and provide a firm, permanent framework for society. However, in other approaches – such as, for example, ethnomethodology, social phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, grounded theory (referring to Basic Social Process), Adele Clarke’s situational analysis, social worlds theory and Anselm

Strauss's theory of identity – social reality, including organisational reality, is defined in different ways. In these theories – adding up to what has come to be known as “a process view of organisation” – a continuous change is viewed as an immanent feature of social systems and of formal organisations. In this, Kłodkowska passes over the interactionist tradition of analysing social worlds and organisations.

In the second chapter, Kłodkowska analyses the definition of what is referred to as “coping” and problems inhering in the notion. She states here that “coping” becomes the content and meaning of interpersonal interactions. This happens owing to counselling” (p. 38). She assumes, thus, that there is a value system which makes it possible to provide counselling on “coping.”

Kłodkowska applies Erving Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor to the concept of coping exceptionally innovatively. In this framework, the world is seen through the theatre metaphor. Such a take on the world makes it possible to cope with everyday problems – yet, not all of them, obviously, as the world is not only theatre or a spectacle in which we perform our roles, even though sociology and social psychology would have it so. Deep-running anxiety and fear, clearly noticeable in human lives, do not belong to the theatre; they are part of being in the world which is ridden with real threats to individual self-concepts and perceptions of the world here and now.

In the third chapter, Kłodkowska outlines the history of *Junackie Hufce Pracy* (Youth Labour Corps) and *Powszechna Organizacja “Służba Polsce”* (“Service to Poland” Public Organisation), showing in this way the predecessors of the *Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy* (Voluntary Labour Corps), and analyses the founding documents of these organisations. The chapter sketches the ideological grounds for their establishment and operations and elucidates the ideas of socialist pedagogy.

In the fourth chapter, Kłodkowska discusses the schematic organisational change in the VLC initiated by the dismissal of the organisation's long-standing Commander. This change proceeds following a certain pattern, after which the organisation starts to operate upon a new scheme. In her analysis, Kłodkowska focuses on organisational rituals: “The ceremony was held outside the workplace of the organisational actors, in a nearby restaurant. The former Commander was presented with flowers and a diploma and toasted with champagne. (...) I believe that for the VLC employees it was a turning point in the process of organisational changes; it broke the pattern upon which the organisation had functioned” (p. 137).

In the fifth chapter, Kłodkowska discusses the developmental change within the organisation and the events following the coming of the new Commander. Events of ritualistic nature make it possible to reflect on definitions of the situation and their revisions. Such factors as awards for professionalism and the attendance of important personages enhance certain values.

In the sixth chapter, Kłodkowska examines the traumatogenic change – the process of power displacement (change of the Commander) and salvaging of the organisation's image. With a shift from the Bureaucratic Hero to the Persona-Non-Grata

Commander, a change takes place which can be characterised as traumatic since it affects the values and norms of behaviour. The change is effected through an external intervention, and the employees perceive it as an assault on their values and the relations in place. The members of the organisation are saddened. Emotions are socially formed.

In the seventh chapter, Kłodkowska builds on Sztompka's concept of "becoming society" to discuss the subjectivity formation of the organisational community. At this point, it would be advisable to draw also on the older and original constructivist concepts, such as symbolic interactionism, which postulates that individuals and groups play a constructive role in forming a society (H. Blumer, A. Strauss). Kłodkowska analyses the ways of coping with a sense of insecurity stemming from the loss of organisational continuity and stability. As coping has a dramaturgical nature, it is based on the skills of stage-performing and the dramaturgical co-operation among the organisation members.

Joanna Kłodkowska's book is an interesting application of the dramaturgical perspective to analysing organisational change. The findings of research reported in the book exemplify a rare application of an interpretive perspective to organisation analysis in Poland. The author thoroughly examines the "dramaturgical" aspects of the communication processes in the studied organisation. This shows the insightfulness of her research and her incisive analytical skills. She adopts Goffman's dramaturgical framework to analyse an institution although it was originally devised to study relatively isolated interactions.

Kłodkowska's work is also an interesting application of Sztompka's traumatic sequence theory and serves, in a way, as its verification. A traumatic situation requires analysing the emotional culture of a given organisation, and Kłodkowska seeks to capture it by enumerating emotions which accompany a given situation and emotional principles which govern the expression of emotions (intensity, way of expressing, type of emotion, etc.).

*Translated from Polish by Katarzyna Sawicz*