

## ON ORGANIZED CREATIVITY IN GENERAL MOTORS POLAND

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper a case about the implementation of creativity through continuous improvement, so called Kaizen, in General Motors Poland is presented. It is the case of successful knowledge transfer of the notion of Kaizen from Japan, through the UK to Poland which took place in the early 1990s. This study's objective was to understand the circumstances in which ideas are transferred across cultural and, consequently, linguistic boundaries and whether successfully or unsuccessfully. The Polish GM plant is a place where the knowledge transfer and change in the value system of its employees was successfully conducted, despite the initial presence of certain values, which might have inhibited this process. The paper argues that the presence of values seemingly in conflict with the implementation of new managerial practices such as organized creativity does not need to lead to failure.

Each idea, which was institutionalised in Poland, such as Kaizen or TQM, was carefully translated in a way that did not conflict with the values embedded within this idea in Poland. Some ideas brought by General Motors offered invaluable alternatives to the practices in existence. A good example of this was the organisation and planning of one's work combined with creativity. Despite a strong tradition in Polish industry in the past towards the opposite – chaos and relatively low levels of creativity, the Poles in Opel Polska accepted these new concepts as they offered the fulfilment of the individual and national ambition to succeed. If this need was to be satisfied, the Poles had to change some elements of their core construct system and link the idea of organisation to creativity. This was possible due to the alternative idea of Kaizen offered in comparison with the traditional approach to work and its poor results.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Creativity and innovation have been widely discussed in the literature which led to many different definitions of these concepts. Majority of authors agree that although very close creativity and innovation are not synonymous (Miron et al, 2004). Creativity has been defined as the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain (Amabile et al, 1996), a process that leads to a sudden and significant discovery or an escape from mental stuckness. In an organizational context creativity can be described as a process producing new and valued responses to environmental challenges by which it supports problem-solving, learning, change management and innovation (Rickard and de Cock, 1994). Creativity is expressed and brought to life through organizations and their products and

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services. It enables progress in the organizational production to more innovative products by which the needs of customers and communities can be better satisfied leading to an increased quality of life. Therefore, creativity plays a critical role in society and it serves all of us (McLean, 2005).

Creative idea generation is only meaningful when implemented into practice. Bringing idea into innovation requires skillful management of creativity (Lempikoski, 1996). To bring idea from concept to market it must be recognized, receive resources, funding, overcome technological obstacles (McLean, 2005) and often it may require major changes in organizational structures or processes (Damanpour, 1991). It comes not as a surprise that many potentially great ideas are never brought to fruition in organizational life.

Innovation can be defined as a capacity to develop ideas to be usable in practice by skillful use of company's core capabilities. It is a deliberate and radical change in existing products or processes or the organization in order to achieve a competitive advantage over competitors (Leede and Looise, 2005). Innovation depends on managerial skills to initiate change and it can relate to administrative or technological issues, and to core or peripheral acts (Damanpour, 1991).

The focus of creativity is primarily on the individual (personality, motivation) whereas innovation operates more at the group levels (interrelationships, interactions, group dynamics) (McLean, 2005). Great vast of creativity research has focused on creativity as an inherent cognitive process of an individual (e.g. de Bono, 1995, Sherwood, 2001) and resulted in numerous techniques for unleashing creative potential in every individual and organizational interventions facilitating creative thinking in a workplace (Rickards and de Cock, 1994; Birch and Clegg, 1999).

In this paper a case about the implementation of creativity through continuous improvement, so called Kaizen, in General Motors Poland is presented. It is the case of successful knowledge transfer of the notion of Kaizen from Japan, through the UK to Poland which took place in the early 1990s.

The collapse of the soviet bloc in 1989 began a new era in Eastern Europe's management – an era of adapting to the market economy and bringing new managerial practices from the West. However, many of the attempts to implement popular management ideas such as continuous improvement or Total Quality Management (TQM) failed. Some authors blamed it on the Polish culture and the values embedded in it, as creating a net of resistance making knowledge transfer impossible (Roney, 2000). According to many authors (see Kostera, 1995; Kozminski, 1995; Zaleska, 1998), some aspects of Polish culture also contributed to a new dependency structure that emerged in Polish companies after 1990.

Eastern European economies have been evolving under completely different circumstances to other Western European countries in the last half a century. A development of the Eastern block was centrally controlled from Moscow: the borders were closed; the contact with the West cut off. The mechanisms developed in the command economy were far different from those in the free market economy. The command economy shaped the market of the Eastern block, but also the mentality, attitudes to work and the notion of many concepts among the people in Eastern Europe, for example, the notion of creativity and quality. Due to the completely different way of development between the East and the

West, many issues are beyond comprehension for a contemporary Western reader. The notion of creativity is one of them, as will be elucidated in this writing.

Globalisation inevitably led to attempts to transfer know-how and expertise to markets in different locations and cultures, where the particular organisation was willing to begin to operate. Hence, the need for understanding the conditions for successful knowledge transfer became especially important. In order to operate successfully, organisations engaged in the process of constant ideas transfer between their international divisions. The increased integration of national economies stimulated this process even more. It resulted in the expansion of financial and physical capital in international markets and the rise of globalisation.

This study’s objective is to understand the circumstances in which ideas are transferred across cultural and, consequently, linguistic boundaries and whether *successfully or unsuccessfully*.

The Polish GM plant is a place where the knowledge transfer and change in the value system of its employees was successfully conducted, despite the initial presence of certain values, which might have inhibited this process. The author would like to argue that the presence of values seemingly in conflict with the implementation of new managerial practices such as organized creativity does not need to lead to failure.

## 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research used some ethnographic techniques derived from anthropology, which represents the most distinctive methodological approach in the study of knowledge transfer (Rogers, 1995). The incorporation of the ethnographic interview and non-participant observation enabled the study of two cultures, between which the process of ideas transfer took place. The analysis of values and organizational culture change was conducted from the perspective of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1991).

The fusion of the two approaches works well: unthreatening in its approach, the ethnographic interview builds an atmosphere of mutual interest, affinity and closeness without excessive intrusion into the interviewee’s privacy, preparing the way for an in-depth Grid-based assessment of personal values that many people might otherwise feel threatened by without such preparation. The combination of these two research methods provided a very useful framework for analysing this phenomenon.

The empirical study was conducted in two phases:

a) The ethnographic interviews carried out at the Vauxhall Luton Plant in England and Opel Polska in Gliwice, Poland. It consisted of 30 in-depth, key-informant interviews and non-participant observation in both locations.

b) A second stage consisted of 28 Repertory Grid Interviews with the same key-informants who were involved in the process of the translation of the idea of Kaizen from Poland back to England. This stage involved the application of three constructivist techniques: the Repertory Grid interview, Laddering and Resistance to Change technique.

### 3 TWO LOCATIONS

The process of ideas translation described in this article took place between two General Motors’ plants in the UK and Poland. In this section, these plants will be introduced.

“I remember 20 years ago or more, maybe 30 years ago, when I was a young guy growing up in England, in a small-town, Japanese cars were considered as a joke. Quality was bad. Nobody liked them. We used to laugh at Japanese cars. Nobody does that any more.”

*English Manager 1 (Nissan UK, GME, Opel Polska)*

"The expansion of the Japanese in the eighties was a big thing; it was the 'Japanese miracle'. You know, a manufacturing miracle. And I wanted to be part of it. I wanted to learn. It was an exciting thing.”

*English Manager 2 (Nissan UK, Vauxhall Luton, Opel Polska)*

This is a story of another Cinderella in the car manufacturing industry - Poland. Once a country where the ‘Maluch’<sup>†</sup> used to reign supreme and determined existing quality standards and expectations, it became the country that achieved the best quality results in car production in Europe with Opel, in 2001. In the same way that the Japanese car manufacturing miracle was exciting for English people in the 1980s, the ‘Opel miracle’ is exciting for Polish people now, and many people want to be a part of it - and this story will tell you why.

#### 3.1 Brown field - Vauxhall Luton plant

The Vauxhall plant in Luton, England, was founded in 1903 and acquired by General Motors in 1925. It employs 10,000 people directly and supports about 100,000 further jobs in the UK.

“When I started here [38 years ago] Vauxhall was very much like that picture there. We didn't just assemble cars, we made engines, we made back axles, we made gearboxes, and we had our own grand plating plant. We just did everything to make the car; from a lump of metal, we made a car. We designed our own parts on cars at that stage. And when I started here at Vauxhall when that picture was taken, there were 26,000 people that worked on this side.

*English Manager 6 (Vauxhall Luton, Opel Polska)*

The Vauxhall plant has a very long and rich history. It used to be one of the biggest and best employers in the Luton area. It was an independent plant, planning and assembling all of its products (e.g. engines, exhausts) or getting them made locally. After General Motors acquired the plant, the majority of UK operations were shifted abroad. The company became centrally governed by General Motors and started operating as all other General Motors plants. From massive production, it changed the system into lean manufacturing. All planning operations have been shifted to ITDC<sup>‡</sup> in Germany. Many local suppliers have been swapped for other, foreign suppliers from the General Motors network. Vauxhall

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<sup>†</sup> The Fiat 125P, named ‘Maluch’ (‘Tiny’); it used to be the most popular/available car in Poland until the 1990s despite its poor quality and small size.

<sup>‡</sup> Information Technical Development Centre

became part of the GM Family and was transformed into a lean manufacturing plant. This transformation happened after the plant had already existed for 22 years and had had a well-established culture, workforce and facilities.

“When I first came here, it was full of autocratic, dictatorial managers, who dictated the daily events. And it was with people who literally did what they were told to do. Today, it's much more dynamic, it's much faster. It's much more stressful but there is a greater involvement and it's not the arrogant kind of ‘big boss’ syndrome in all environments. The hierarchical structure, if you like, is a kind of plateau, more of a flatter, natural environment where generally people can interact together. And when I started here, you would not talk to your boss unless your boss spoke to you. You just didn't. If you were asked the question and you answered it wrong, it was absolutely career limiting, much more intimidating, much more the fear factor, and stressful for the wrong reasons, it was just stressful for fear whereas now it's faster, it's much more interactive. It's stressful but it's a stress that could be adrenaline. You know, it's a buzz. It's a much more business-orientated place.”

*English Manager 7 (Vauxhall Luton)*

Vauxhall went through an enormous change. The managerial style and way of conducting business became less ‘archaic’, as some people said. The facilities were upgraded and lean manufacturing introduced. This included a huge reduction in employment of almost 20,000 people. Many of those who stayed, started working in Vauxhall dozens of years ago as apprentices.

### **3.2 Green field - Opel Polska plant**

After the expansion of General Motors into Europe in the 1920s, the company experienced rapid development and success on the European market. General Motors’ activity was nevertheless limited to Western Europe and America. Increased competition in the car industry as well as the saturation of these markets in the 1990s had forced many investors to search for new opportunities in other countries with potential for future success. General Motors decided to build four new plants in order to keep up with the emerging markets of Eastern and Central Europe. Poland was among the potentially cheap producers, with low labour costs and a convenient location in Central Europe, enabling a reduction in the transportation costs of cars sent to Western Europe (Opel Polska exports cars to Germany and England, amongst other countries). The Polish market, with its quickly developing economy, was itself a very important target for Opel cars.

Gliwice is a small town in the South of Poland, situated in the region where local employment used to be largely dependent on coal mining. It was strongly affected by the mining crisis of the 1990s when the region was left with no alternative industry capable of ‘absorbing’ the ex-miners. As a result of this, the local unemployment rate dropped below the national rate of 26.5% in 1997 (GUS, 1998). Poland, and especially the Silesia region, where Gliwice is located, had appeared as an ideal place for the General Motors’ plant.

“So the concept was that they would put four new plants up at once. One went to South America in Rosario in Argentina. Another one went to Shanghai in China.

Another one went to Thailand and we came to Poland. And each of those markets are new markets and areas of growth and development.”

*English Manager 1 (Nissan UK, GME, Opel Polska)*

All the four plants were set up simultaneously and based on the same template and principles of lean manufacturing. The first plant was built in Argentina and the second one was Poland, which became the best plant in Europe. The third was the plant in Thailand but unfortunately it did not succeed due to a big Asian crisis during the time the plant was due to be set up. This project was thus put on hold for about a year. The fourth plant was in Shanghai.

#### 4 THE JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY OF PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

There is a very strong Japanese influence in Opel Polska which is clearly visible in the philosophy brought by English managers. All of them, except one, were ex-Japanese managers trained at Toyota or Nissan with work experience from Japan.

“These plants [in the UK], which in themselves were started up only 15 years ago, and many of these people [English ISPs<sup>§</sup>] went through that start up experience. And we talked about the Japanese, who were effectively ISPs from there. They've been through the start up experience as the local employees, have learnt what the Japanese have taught them, which was interesting because then we were bringing it to Poland and teaching the local Polish workforce, what we 10 or 20 years ago had been taught by the Japanese. So in a way it's been a very strong filter.”

*English Manager 4 (Nissan UK, Vauxhall Luton, Opel Polska)*

English managers applied Japanese philosophy in the process of creating the culture of Opel Polska, by bringing in ideas, rules and objects derived from it, like the emphasis on informal structure, good communication across hierarchical levels, remuneration systems, equality of employees and objects related to this principle, like calling everyone by his/her name, common canteens for managers and shop floor employees, a hands-on managerial style, and encouraging innovation and creativity by instruments such as Kaizen. The Japanese influence is also present in the close cooperation between Opel Polska and Suzuki with the production of the Agila car, built by licence from the Japanese.

This influence on people management and its integration within business strategy and human resource development could be summarised as a ‘soft TQM’, a concept that was brought to Poland from Japan via England. This philosophy with a people focus and mutual respect ethos was well adopted in Poland and is often mentioned as an Opel Polska characteristic, making the plant unique and better than other companies in the area of Gliwice or other Polish car manufacturers from the past.

The experience of learning Japanese management methods by European managers who went to Japan were described by them as being an ‘enlightening experience’, or ‘the way we should be doing things’ (English Manager 1). Having had experience of the traditional British car industry, they went through the same process the Poles went through later when

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<sup>§</sup> International Service Personnel: foreign managers temporarily employed by Opel Polska who belong to other parts of General Motors.

visiting the West, and tried to bring their methods to Poland. But English people had the organisational platform to bring their ideas from Japan, which Polish individuals did not have prior to 1990.

The idea of lean car manufacture and TQM travelled from Japan to the UK, Germany and other Western countries.

“When I went to Japan, I didn't find anything different about it, the process of building a car ... What I did find though was the huge differences in the way they manage their people. How they were organised, how they brought teams together, how they got empowerment into the people on the shop floor. That was the biggest culture shock I went through ... I firmly believe that if you treat people with respect, if you train them properly and you clearly tell them what you're trying to achieve, they will do it. And where this business has gone wrong in the past is where management has not stepped out to clearly set objectives, clearly explained what is expected, and management not knowing what's going on in their plant ... We need to listen to them and take to account their opinion, which traditionally in a lot of the older industries, you know, they're just workers, we don't need to talk to them, which is crazy.”

*English Manager 1 (Nissan UK, GME, Opel Polska)*

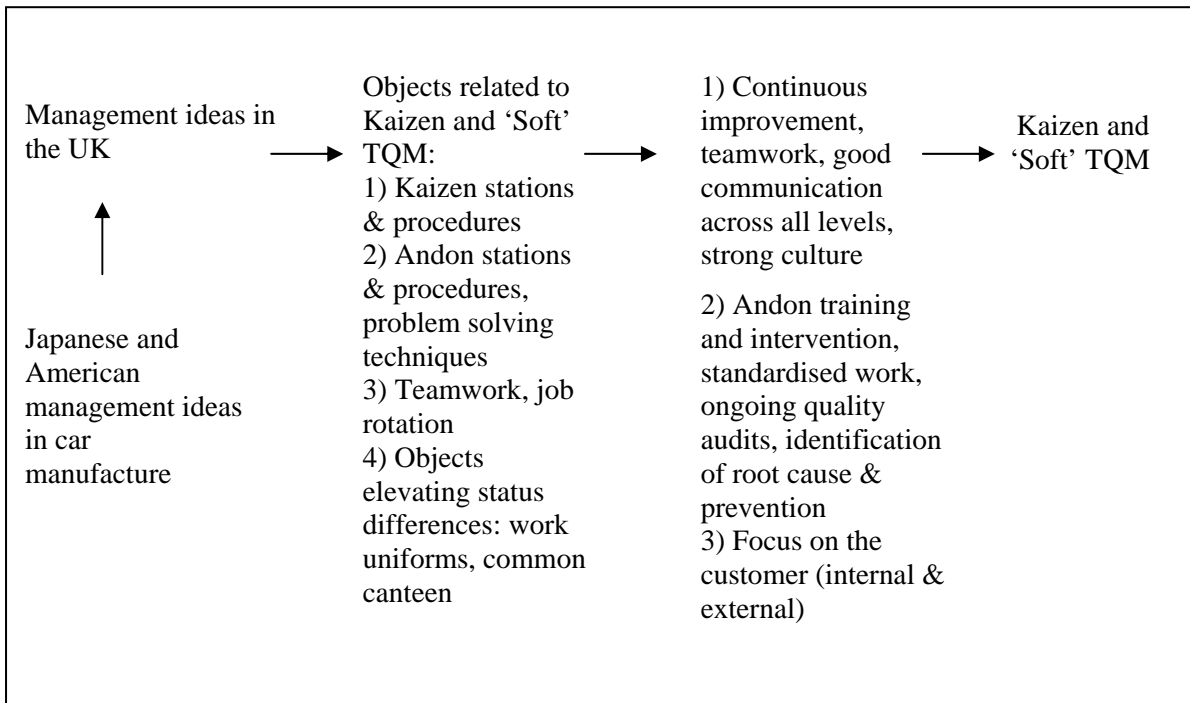
This philosophy and its ideas were brought to Poland in the form of objects and the English managers served as a medium for transfer, teaching people the actions associated with them and applying these ideas as they understood them. Hence, the Poles often say that the English came to Poland with a ‘vision’, which the Polish staff tried to implement as best they could.

The objects brought by the English representing the Japanese influence were in the form of manuals, scripts, procedures and technology, such as Andon or Kaizen stations. Their adaptation led to the effective institutionalisation of the Japanese concept of people management in Poland. The chain of this institutionalisation process is shown in Figure 1.

## **5 EMPOWERMENT THROUGH KAIZEN AND POLISH CREATIVITY – A CASE OF VALUES TRANSFORMATION**

The idea of Kaizen, as understood in Western car manufacture, travelled within General Motors to different countries along with other concepts. The Japanese philosophy of people management includes empowerment of people through Kaizen.

The philosophy of Kaizen, also known under the name of continuous improvement, is based on values such as progress and innovation. However, for an idea of innovation to become a reality i.e. an institution, scientific tests of the applicability of the idea need to be carried out. Kaizen incorporates innovative spirit and careful organisation and measurement of work, principles based on values of progress and organisation.



**Figure 1. The Japanese influence in General Motors.**

The successful marriage of these two values has always been problematic in Poland, if not impossible, as Poles possess several characteristics in their ‘national character’ that might seriously impede attempts to introduce a systematic organised approach to work. The statement of one of the Polish managers reflects on the practices of organisation and discipline in the German Opel plant and is a good reflection of the possible interpretation of these aspects by the average Pole.

“They all work homogeneously so that their progress has added value. And this is what I liked there. The approach to their duties involves reliability but without exaggeration in diligence. If anyone ever tells me that Germans are hard-working, I will ridicule them. They are merely systematic to the verge of idiocy, to the averagely imaginative Pole. You might say they are sad drones at work. All they do at work is work, nothing else!”

*Polish Manager 3 (Opel Polska)*

Poles like to see themselves as people with a free spirit and a great sense of style. The aforementioned ‘*fantazja*’ - ‘imaginativeness’ - popularly referred to as ‘*Ułanska fantazja*’, (translated as ‘Cavalryman’s swagger’) is a trait valued greatly by Poles, which provides an outlet for the creativity of an individual. This trait is in direct contrast with being systematic and well organised - the traits traditionally considered as redundant, boring and typical of Poland’s western neighbour. Eva Hoffman beautifully captured this aspect of Polish culture.

“The best compliment that a school exercise can receive is that it has *polot* – a word that combines the meanings of dash, inspiration, and flying. *Polot* is what everyone wants to have in personality as well. Being correct and dull is a horrid misfortune.”



(Hoffman, 1998: 71)

However, although *polot* and *fantazja* can be beneficial in the process of continuous improvement, where creativity and innovation are important, other characteristics, such as the Polish tendency to be disorganised and their chaotic approach to work, might prove devastating. It is important to note that *polot* and *fantazja* are the constructs that imply not only creativity and free spirit, but also independence and being almost unsubjected. These values are in direct contrast to organisation and planning which might require not only self-discipline, but also obedience. The origins of the lack of organisation and planning can be partially explained in the following passage.

“Life has been irrational enough for them [post WWII generation of Poles] to believe in the power of the gamble – in games of luck and risk – more than in orderly progress. Anyway, there is no such thing as orderly progress in the Socialist People’s Republic. It’s clear enough to everybody that you don’t get anywhere by trying. Working hard in your ‘chosen profession’, when the profession is most often chosen for you, where there’s no reward and no possibility of improving your conditions, and when anything may happen tomorrow, is for fools and schlemiels. The System – compounded by the Poles’ perennial scepticism about all systems – produces a nation of ironists and gamblers”.

(Hoffman, 1998: 15)

Orderly progress was something that Poles not only lacked and did not attempt to implement but also, paradoxically, ascribed to the economic success of other Western countries. Perhaps the best way to explain this seeming contradiction is by giving voice to Barbara Czarniawska.

“The unabated record of successful resistance to much stronger enemies makes Poles proud of themselves, whereas the historical fact of not being able to survive autonomously for any longer period of time makes them painfully aware of continuing failure. The constant close contact with other cultures, historically imposed, results in ambiguous attitudes: for example, an admiration of Prussian efficiency clashes with the fact that for many years, sabotage and not efficient work was a patriotic virtue ... The resulting image is that of a nation capable of the most heroic collective efforts in times of emergency, and incapable of living prosperously in quieter times, due to extreme individualism and a fatal tendency to anarchy. Looking at other countries, Poles tend to attribute their successes to what is lacking in the ‘Polish character’: order, efficiency, method. Therefore, the system is a myth.”

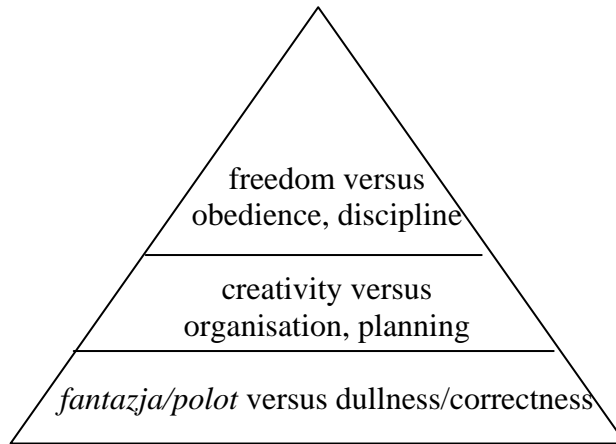
(Czarniawska, 1986: 15)

The system myth was also something that Polish managers believed in, especially after their visits to the German Opel plant.

“...and everywhere I came to the same conclusion, that there aren’t any extraordinary people who have advantages distinguishing them from people in Poland. They’re the same rough diamonds, only it’s a matter of cutting and presenting them as polished jewels: a question of having people who know how to shape them, and teach the same to others, in an appropriately systematic way.”

*Polish Manager 3 (Opel Polska)*

However, shaping the rough diamonds that have great amounts of *fantazja* and *polot* into diamonds which are continuously improving their work in a systematic, planned and measured way could seem impossible, particularly when one considers the constructs in use with their opposite ends and underlying values. Using the pyramid of constructs and their underlying core constructs and values, it is possible to describe the relationship between the values of organisation and creativity in the traditional Polish construct system in the following way. The construct that is at the bottom of the pyramid i.e. *fantazja* versus dullness/correctness is commonly and explicitly present in Polish culture and literature. By moving up the construct hierarchy ladder, we can reach further meanings that this construct is underlined with. And so one can see that under the word *fantazja* there are further meanings, such as creativity and freedom, whereas dullness/correctness implies organisation and obedience. By laddering further up, we can eventually reach the core level and see the core construct of chaos versus order (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Pyramid of values related to creativity in Poland.**

As we can see, the elements of creativity and organisation are at opposing ends of this construct. However, in the philosophy of Kaizen, these two elements need to coexist, for they are both necessary for the implementation of new ideas in the system of TQM.

The incorporation of both elements of this construct requires not only expansion of the current construct system, for example, splitting the construct into two, but also leading the people through the experience cycle - proving the new constructs to be a successful and fruitful alternative to the old ones. Only then can change at the level of core constructs and values take place.

Opel Polska is a place where the change in the value system of its employees was successfully conducted. The philosophy of Kaizen proved to be an effective vent for the Polish *polot* and *fantazja*, allowing people to be creative. Nevertheless, in order for their ideas to be brought to life and institutionalised, they had to work in an organised and planned manner. Only those ideas that are systematically designed and tested can be implemented. Implementation leads to financial reward for the idea creator. General Motors linked creativity with order, and introduced this combination as a rewarding practice without any alternative. This encouraged people to implement new practices, and also

provided the only way to achieve good results and rewards. The system myth became a reality.

## 6 DISCUSSION

It can be argued that for successful knowledge translation and the creation of new practices, the formation of new constructs is necessary, followed by successful validation. In this way, new ideas prove to provide a useful alternative for an individual allowing him/her to deal with a particular event in a more successful manner. The reconstruction is more difficult to achieve the higher the level of construing involved. However, the same rules determine the change at this level, and the case of values conversion in Opel Polska illustrates the change at the core level of construing.

Each idea, which was institutionalised differently in Poland than in the West, such as TQM, had to be carefully translated in a way that would not conflict with the values embedded within this idea in Poland. Some ideas brought by General Motors offered invaluable alternatives to the practices in existence. A good example of this was the organisation and planning of one’s work. Despite a strong tradition in Polish industry in the past towards the opposite – chaos, which implied personal freedom - the Poles in Opel Polska accepted these new concepts as they offered the fulfilment of the individual and national ambition to succeed. If this need was to be satisfied, the Poles had to change some elements of their core construct system and link the idea of organisation to pride and fulfilment. This was possible due to the alternative idea of organisation and planning offered in comparison with the traditional, chaotic approach to work.

This example illustrates the fact that new ideas brought to any new location need to offer a useful alternative to those ideas already in existence. Only ideas that can lead to the fulfilment of functions that are considered important and correspond with the appropriate value will be accepted.

The process that leads to the final acceptance and adoption of an idea needs to involve negotiation over meaning, which gives both parties the opportunity to understand each other and elaborate one’s construct system. This aspect is especially important in cross-cultural management where some objects and ideas can convey different meanings and values in different cultures. The negotiation over meaning, which took place in Poland before the institutionalisation and development of certain practices, was crucial for the future success of the process of translation. This stage enabled both parties to learn what their understanding of some concepts was, and together develop ways of fulfilling some functions that would be acceptable for the local culture and give the desired end result. This process often required some degree of reconstruction at the personal value level of the parties involved. As seen on the example of the practices of planning and organising, the adoption of them would not have been possible without a great deal of reconstruction on the Polish side.

The need to address the cultural assumptions when introducing new ideas is not only complicated but also time consuming. However, without negotiation and understanding on both sides, the creative translation and development of new practices could not be successful. Only those ideas that correspond with the preferred pole of values and core constructs could be accepted and institutionalised.

The research conducted and described in this paper demonstrated the powerful potential of ethnographic research combined with the Repertory Grid Technique. The complimentary character of these two methods, along with other advantages this methodological approach offers, can serve as an invaluable tool for exploring organisational cultures and the values embedded in them. This demonstrates the potential this technique has for knowledge management and organisational development practices.

The process of knowledge transfer described in this article was successful due to the change that took place at a deeper level of the organisational culture in Opel Polska. We looked at the way in which a shift in a personal construct system occurs, leading to reconstruction, that is, change in the person’s core constructs and values. This process of reconstruction plays a crucial role in the successful outcome of the cross-cultural knowledge transfer and should therefore be taken into account when facilitating organisational change and development processes.

These elements shed a new light upon the process of ideas translation to Eastern Europe. As seen through the case example of General Motors, even the most complex type of translation is possible if the new idea provides a useful alternative to the existing one, and if it becomes successfully validated by the organisational actors. This kind of transfer, as shown by means of the example of Kaizen, can contribute not only to the increased efficiency and quality results of the company, but also to a new shape for the local identity of the individuals involved in this process.

There is great scope and need for research combining the ethnographic methods with those derived from PCP in the exploration of organisational and local cultures if the research is to reveal the meaningful description of values and shared assumptions in the particular culture studied. It is important that the future research into the process of translation will focus on the actual process of values and practices creation in addition to the study of cultures of the parties involved in the process.

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