



# Quelques notes grinçantes sur le transfert de connaissances

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# Et notre sens critique ?

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### A Stupidity-Based Theory of Organizations

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**ABSTRACT** In this paper we question the one-sided thesis that contemporary organizations rely on the mobilization of cognitive capacities. We suggest that severe restrictions on these capacities in the form of what we call functional stupidity are an equally important if under-recognized part of organizational life. Functional stupidity refers to an absence of reflexivity, a refusal to use intellectual capacities in other than myopic ways, and avoidance of justifications. We argue that functional stupidity is prevalent in contexts dominated by economy in persuasion which emphasizes image and symbolic manipulation. This gives rise to forms of stupidity management that repress or marginalize doubt and block communicative action. In turn, this structures individuals' internal conversations in ways that emphasize positive and coherent narratives and marginalize more negative or ambiguous ones. This can have productive outcomes such as providing a degree of certainty for individuals and organizations. But it can have corrosive consequences such as creating a sense of dissonance among individuals and the organization as a whole. The positive consequences can give rise to self-reinforcing stupidity. The negative consequences can spark dialogue, which may undermine functional stupidity.

**Keywords:** bounded rationality, identity, ignorance, knowledge, power

#### INTRODUCTION

An enormous body of writing on knowledge, information, competence, wisdom, resources, capabilities, talent, and learning in organizations has emerged in recent decades, in which there is a common assumption of 'smartness'. Although this term has not been used systematically in the study of organizations, it captures the underlying premise that a vital issue for contemporary organizations is their ability intelligently to mobilize cognitive capacities. This assumption is evident in claims that 'as the pace of change increases, knowledge development among the members of the company becomes the key to competitiveness, to remaining in the front line . . . Business has simply become

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« We can now offer a more comprehensive definition of our core concept – *functional stupidity*. For us functional stupidity is inability and/or unwillingness to use cognitive and reflective capacities in anything other than narrow and circumspect ways. It involves a *lack of reflexivity, a disinclination to require or provide justification, and avoidance of substantive reasoning* »

- Alvesson & Spicer (2012) p 1201

# Est-ce qu'on veut plus de KT?

« A good illustration of functional stupidity is the commitment to information in organizations. Feldman and March (1981), some time ago, noted an excessive interest and focus on information. People require it, talk about it, have strategies and tactics related to it, and complain about shortages of it. At the same time, they feel there is too much of it. People do not have the time and interest really to use it. In short, there is an over-interest in and under-use of information. »

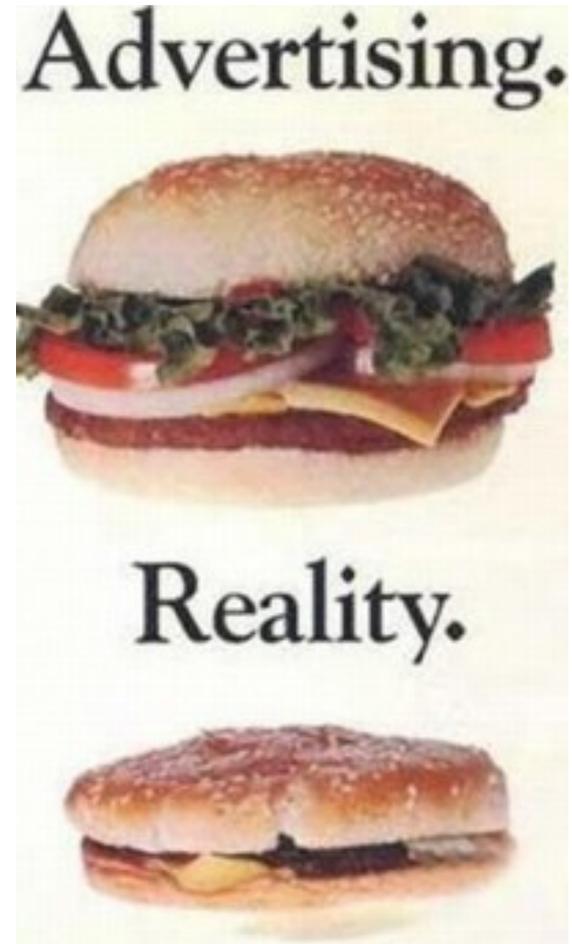
Alveson & Spicer (2012) p 1201

*« In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it. »*

- Simon, H. A. (1971). Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World. In M. Greenberger (Ed.), Computers, Communication, and the Public Interest. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. pp. 40-41) .

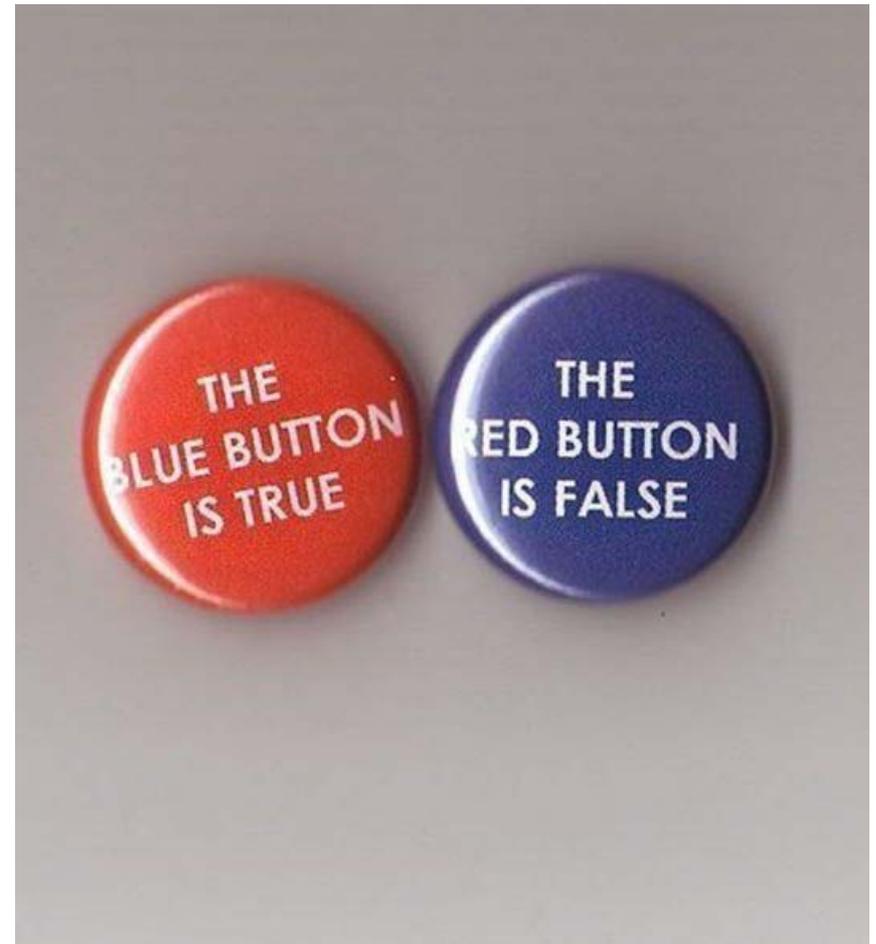
# Connaissances... vraiment ?

- Dans la pratique, beaucoup des efforts de TC visent la diffusion d'information dont
  - la validité interne
  - la validité externe
  - l'utilité finale
- Sont très faibles

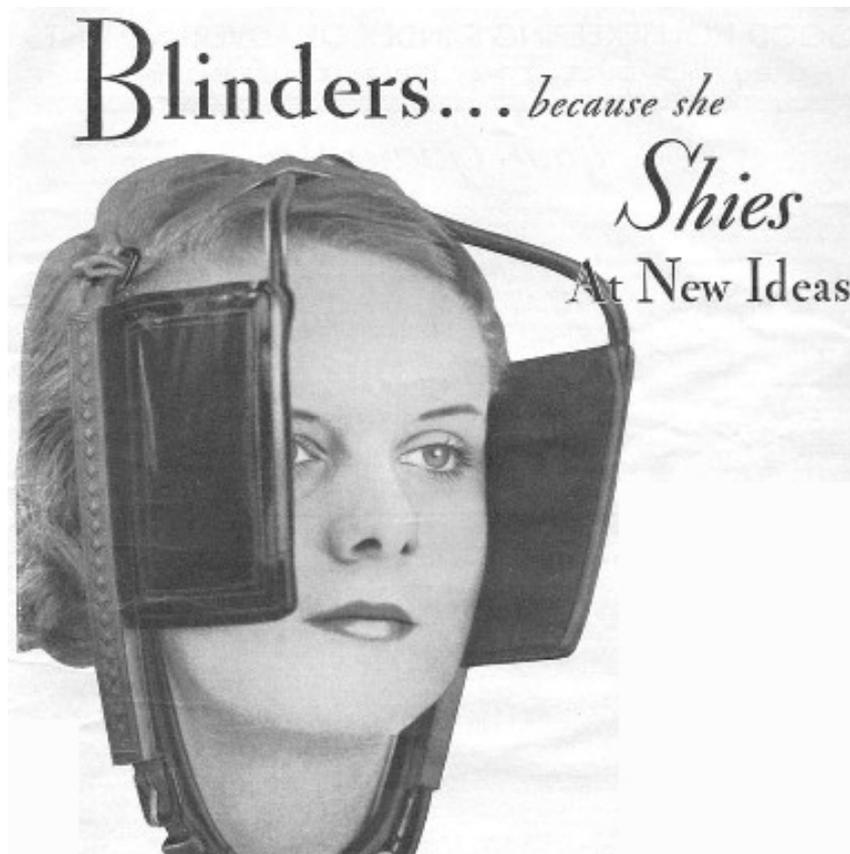


# Catch 22 du TC / EBP

- Ce que l'on sait bien faire ne marche pas
  - L'efficacité des interventions de TC va de nulle à minime
- On ne sait pas faire ce qui marche
  - Jouer sur les ressources
  - Modifier la culture



# Quelques questions avant de faire des efforts de transfert de connaissances



- Quelle portion des pratiques sous-optimales est due à un manque de connaissances ?
  - Gouvernance
  - Pratiques de gestion
  - Motivation

# Au-delà de la provocation

Приветствуем всех солдат, освобождающих!

Т.И. КОММУНИСТИЧЕСКАЯ ПАРТИЯ СОСОВИЕТСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ 26 марта 1943

## LIBERATION D'HELSINKI PAR L'ARMEE ROUGE



*Destruyer allennahd sambraht au large d'Helssinka*

C'EST AVEC EMOTION QUE NOUS ANNONCIONS QUE TOUT DANGER EST MAINTENANT ECARTE POUR LE PEUPLE FINLANDAIS. APRES DES SEMAINES DE COMBAT, NOS TROUPES ET NOS VALEUREUX SOLDATS ONT ENFIN PU LIBERER CE PEUPLE FRERE DE

POURSUIVIT PAR LA FLOTTE DU NORD, COMMANDEE PAR LE CAMARADE BOJEDENSKIY, LES QUELQUES BÂTIMENTS RESCAPES ADVERSES N'ONT DUT LEUR SALUT QUE DANS LA FUITE. NOTRE VALEUREUSE MARINE ALLAIT TOUTEFOIS SE RETROUVER CONFRONTEE A LA 1. REICHSFLOTTE VANDHEIM PLACEE SOUS LE COMMANDEMENT DU VICEAMIRAL WOLFRANG LITH.



*Le Camarade Strahe devant le peuple d'Helssinki*

« AVEC LA LIBERATION D'HELSINKI, C'EST LE DEBUT D'UNE MARCHÉ EN AVANT, LA MARCHÉ D'UN PROLETARIAT QUI FINIRA PAR LIBERER TOUTE L'EUROPE DE L'OPPRESSION IMPERIALISTE. »

LE CAMARADE DU JOUR :

- Est-ce que les efforts institutionnels pour soutenir le TC sont désirables ?
- Est-ce une raison suffisante pour se priver de tout sens critique ?
- Est-ce qu'il est plausible de croire qu'ils auront des effets significatifs à moyen terme ?