

# Finding out Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity: introducing the SCOPRI Method

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## Abstract

The integration of individual and organizational interventions, with a focus on well-being and effectiveness/efficiency, currently represents a key area of development within both psychological and managerial disciplines. We propose to reunite these elements, traditionally treated separately, through a paradigm of subjectivity conceived as the way individuals make sense of their relationship with the world, functioning both at the intrapsychic level and as a negotiated construction across contextual settings. Drawing on a comprehensive review of the scientific literature, we will introduce the SOS approach – *Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity* – also introducing an intervention method that allows the integration of six strategic dimensions: the SCOPRI Method – *Significances, Competencies, Organization, Processes, Relationships, and Image*.

**Keywords:** organization, subjectivity, culture, corporate development, performance, well-being at work.

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## Introduction

Psychological and managerial disciplines have progressively valued the development of a perspective capable of integrating individual and organizational variables (Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2013; Tang *et al.*, 2024). These areas have often been considered separately in the past, with individual-level interventions focusing mainly on psychological health and organizational-level interventions focusing on optimizing processes and structures. However, the most recent scientific evidence shows that they are closely interconnected. Notably between job satisfaction and performance (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), employee well-being and business results (Grawitch *et al.*, 2006; Harter *et al.*, 2003), organizational effectiveness, work performance, work engagement, and job crafting (Bakker *et al.*, 2012; van Wingerden & Poell, 2017; Zhang & Parker, 2019), employee satisfaction and market value of the organization (Edmans, 2012; Huang *et al.*, 2021), individual motivation, sustainability, and organizational performance (Lorincová *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2024).

While acknowledging the relationships between these dimensions, there is a tendency to approach them separately, with clear repercussions for both disciplinary integration and the design and implementation of interventions.

From this standpoint, the dichotomies individual/organization – well-being/efficacy seem to refer to the two opposing formulations of subjectivity: on one hand, the classical intrapsychic model, which represents it as rooted in the cognitive structures of the individual and isolated from the environment (Miller, 1956; Neisser, 1967); on the other, Vygotsky's formulation (1978), according to which higher mental functions emerge from socially mediated activities. Language acts as a mediating tool that transforms external processes of dialogue into internalized forms of thought. It is therefore not merely a tool for individual expression, but a social phenomenon in which significances and identities are co-constructed: inner speech is nothing more than a reflection of internalized social dialogue, just as subjectivity is an organizer of experience that is continually regenerated through interaction with others (Bruner, 1990; Salvatore & Venuleo, 2013).

Semiotic mediation, initially theorized by Vygotsky (1978), describes how every cognitive act is made possible and structured by the

use of signs which, in the cultural paradigm, do not simply function as passive labels, but play an active role in the development of mental processes and actions (Valsiner, 1997), also modulating emotional regulation through symbolic models of interpretation and regulation of affective states (Salvatore, 2018; Valsiner, 2014).

Within the traditional intrapsychic paradigm, higher mental functions – such as memory, planning, and emotional regulation – have been studied as processes internal to the individual, mediated by specific brain structures and cognitive schemas (Schacter & Addis, 2007). This approach has made useful contributions to the understanding of stress, coping, and psychopathology (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Maslach & Leiter, 2000), but it has failed to capture the relational dimension of subjectivity.

Analogous to language – conceived both as *inner speech* and as a shared social practice (Vygotsky, 1978) – subjectivity extends along a continuum from the private to the public, from individual interiority to interpersonal and institutional contexts (Linell, 2009). Indeed, Edwards and Potter's (1992) discursive psychology already supports a view of identity and emotions as emerging from the fabric of everyday discourse: not from stable cognitive structures but as situated linguistic practices. The distributed cognition approach (Hutchins, 1995) further expands this conception, showing how cognitive processes are distributed across networks: thought is not localized in the brain but manifests itself in interaction. The mind is thus represented as an ecological product, emerging from participation in social dynamics (Marková, 2003; Salomon, 1993).

As proposed by Salvatore (2013), mind and environment cannot be conceived as separate entities interacting with each other; rather, they are descriptive forms – on different space-time planes – of the same dynamic of signification. From this viewpoint, the self and the context are simply two sides of the same coin. This entails a radical shift in perspective: from viewing the ontological quality of the world as the foundation of experiential continuity, to recognizing that the continuity of experience itself underpins the embodied sense of the world's ontological subsistence. This paradigm of subjectivity has significant implications for both research and intervention. On the methodological side, it requires qualitative and quantitative approaches that analyze representations and narratives (Nicolini, 2013). On the

application level, it requires interventions that can act simultaneously at the individual and organizational levels, recognizing that subjective transformations only occur if supported by coherent social practices (Valsiner, 2007).

*SCPT – Semiotic Cultural Psychology Theory* (Cremaschi *et al.*, 2021; Salvatore, 2018; Salvatore & Venuleo, 2013) integrates cultural psychology and psychoanalysis, outlining a more general model of the relationship among mind, meaning, subject, behavior, and society, based on the psychoanalytic concept of subjectivity as an endogenous component of social action: the unconscious functioning of the mind is deeply intertwined with the organizational design, objectives, structure, and all the factors that determine the functional action of actors in the context. In this view, significance is not an intrinsic quality of the object, but rather the way of making specific elements of reality relevant by giving them meaning and making them emerge as contents of experience. Signification is therefore defined as *embodied*, since knowledge of the object does not consist solely in possessing a symbolic representation of it, but also in the propensity to enter a relationship with it through corporeality. Concepts and representations are therefore understood as patterns of bodily activation that are effectively comparable, from a sensorimotor standpoint to perception and movement. It follows that signification is a contingent process: it is continuously realized in the present moment, giving shape to a flow of signs whose significance is what happens in one of the infinite instants, what Salvatore and Cordella (2022) term the *instantaneous velocity of signification*. *Indexicality* refers to the principle according to which the semantic value of a sign is neither unique nor universal but is defined through its relationships with surrounding signs and their contextual combination (Sondheim, 1976).

The triadic nature of semiosis – in which the production of a new sign is based on the interpretative act of the previous sign – is intrinsically intersubjective<sup>1</sup>, as it simultaneously involves two signs and

<sup>1</sup> Intersubjectivity (Mead, 1934) describes the process through which subjects co-construct significances, intentions, and mental representations in a context of mutual interaction. This is not an aggregation of individual points of view, but rather a dynamic common field in which the actions, perceptions, and interpretations of each

the subject who interprets them (Deely, 1990). Signification is also *situated*: it is present and definable in context, although it does not coincide with a mere phenomenal precipitate.

Considering the theoretical premises outlined above, affects can be considered signs of a global character, hyper-generalizing and homogenizing. Since every sign constitutes a response shaped by the interpretation of the sign that precedes it, affects also take the form of signs: they are neurophysiological responses which, based on the hedonic value attributed to them by the individual, interpret and represent the unfolding of the signs that generated them. Within this framework, organization acts as an intersubjective semiotic field which – thanks to its pre-reflective self-evidence – shapes the mental landscape of the actors and acts as both a condition and a form for the regulation of social action (Salvatore & Cordella, 2022).

### **The SOS approach – *Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity***

Considering the theoretical framework outlined above, we assume subjectivity to be both internal to the individual and distributed across relationships. It therefore represents the way in which we give significance to our relationship with the world; a significance that is both internal to the individual and socially constructed within and through the conditions of contextual environments.

This approach offers the opportunity to bring together the dichotomies of individual/organization and well-being/efficacy, transforming them into dialectical and circular relationships. In this respect, well-being can be represented as the capacity to regulate one's relationship with the world in an evolutionary way (Carver & Scheier, 2001), implying empowerment (Ryan & Deci, 2001) as a means and form of self-realization. It follows that well-being is empowerment (Fisher, 2008; Serino *et al.*, 2012) and is achieved through and in terms of empowerment (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1981).

actor are continuously negotiated, regulated, and reformulated through communicative channels and shared practices. In this perspective, the mind is not an isolated entity but develops and manifests itself through meaningful relationships.

On the other hand, efficacy requires the ability to invest in action (Locke & Latham, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which can only be actualized when the individual sufficiently identifies with that action (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987), it as part of their conceivable horizon of well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Well-being therefore requires effectiveness (Ryff, 1989), which in turn is conceivable if it is capable of developing well-being (Antonovsky, 1987; Bandura, 2006; Seligman, 2011). On a further level, to promote empowerment and well-being at the individual level – considering action as a relationship between the individual and the environment (Lewin, 1936; Ramstead *et al.*, 2016; Valsiner, 2014) – we benefit from the design of resource-generative environments (Antonovsky, 1987; Ryan & Deci 2000). In such environments, the potential to be generative is realized through the subjects who inhabit them (Engeström, 2001; Panicia *et al.*, 2008; Patel *et al.*, 2017).

We refer to this as the SOS approach – *Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity* – which values the opportunity to conceive, design, and implement interventions aimed at individuals through organizations and vice versa, in a dialectical and generative exchange.

## The SCOPRI Method

The SCOPRI Method – in italian, “*scopri*” means “find out” – offers a development perspective for the analysis, design, and implementation of interventions and services aimed at fostering and enhancing the synergy between organization and subjectivity. According to the SOS approach previously outlined, the SCOPRI Method offers the strategic opportunity to work in a way that generates a virtuous synergy between six dimensions: *Significances, Competencies, Organization, Processes, Relationships, Image*. This strategy is designed both for internal (employees, managers, stakeholders, etc.) and external (consultants, researchers, etc.) organizational actors, with the aim of developing organizational awareness and good practices within a systemic view of the organization.

These are the key points of the model we propose, which differentiates itself from other relevant proposals – such as Tavistock Model, General System Theory or Contingency Theory – while sharing and developing some of their assumptions.

Tavistock Model emphasizes the interdependence between social and technical subsystems within the organization, proposing the joint optimization of these systems as a universal goal (Govers & Van Amelsvoort, 2023; Trist & Bamforth, 1951). However, organizational life is inherently conflictual, as multiple perspectives and particular interests coexist within any organization. The mediation of such conflicts cannot be delegated to technical or regulatory interventions, which tend to focus primarily on the intra-organizational level, often neglecting the influence of institutional, cultural, and geopolitical factors that profoundly shape contemporary organizations. Effective mediation requires fostering dialogue among divergent positions in order to construct possible convergences by contextualizing conflicting viewpoints within the organizational processes and cultures of which they are an expression.

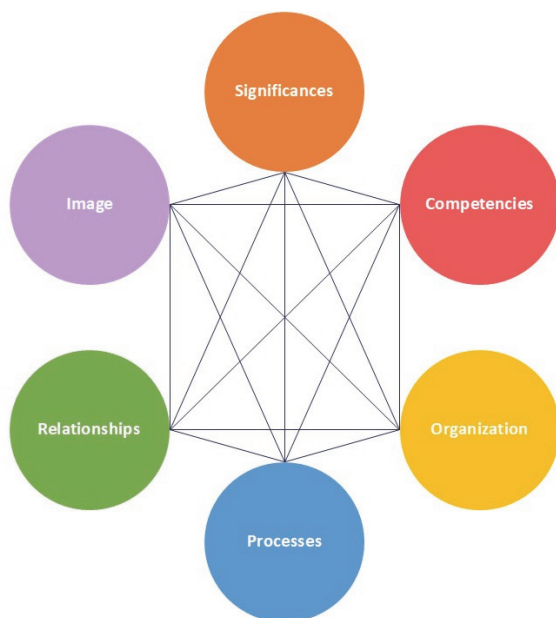
General System Theory provides broad concepts such as *interdependence*, *feedback*, *homeostasis*, but often at a level too theoretical and general to be directly applicable to organizational practice (Peery, 1975). This lack of specificity can make it difficult to translate into concrete management tools. It implicitly assumes a harmonious and self-regulating vision of systems, often neglecting the dynamics of conflict, inequality, resistance and power that run through real organizations. This can lead to an idealized and uncritical representation of organizational reality (Ulrich & Reynolds, 2010). Using critical events for development purposes requires considering them as sources of knowledge to be explored, developing organizational environments that can promote tolerance of uncertainty, cognitive openness, suspension of judgment and the competence to analyze and reflect. Furthermore, as already discussed, we consider organizations not only as functional systems but as symbolic and cultural constructions. General System Theory tends to neglect the subjective and symbolic dimension of organizational action, sometimes reducing social phenomena to mere input-output flows or regulation schemes (Meadows, 2008).

Contingency Theory posits that there is no single best way to organize. Instead, organizational effectiveness depends on the *fit* between internal structures and external environmental conditions (Donaldson, 2006). It also assumes that the environment largely determines organizational structure and functioning, taking risk of underestimating the strategic, interpretative and transformative capacity of organizational

actors, reducing the organization to a passive entity that adapts to external conditions (Child, 1972; Donaldson, 2006). Similarly, the model focuses on structural variables (technology, size, environment), neglecting the role of organizational cultures and shared meanings, elements that are today central to understanding the functioning of complex organizations. Furthermore, the theory relies on identifying *fits* between relatively stable variables, but in environments with high uncertainty, turbulence or ambiguity, such as digital or post-pandemic environments, conditions change too rapidly for the model to be applied effectively.

Considering this scenario, we provide below an overview of the six dimensions composing SCOPRI Method, conceiving them not as hierarchical or sequential, but rather from the systemic perspective, as illustrated in Figure 1. We will propose some points for reflection on resources, critical issues and possible scenarios, without aiming to provide an exhaustive account which may be explored in greater methodological depth in future studies.

**Figure 1.** *Graphical representation of the SCOPRI Method*





Significance is a dynamic and relational construct. It mediates the relationship between the subject and the world (Salvatore, 2018): as a lens shapes and constrains what an individual sees, not generating it but defining its form, so the representation of reality occurs according to the significance attributed to it.

Furthermore, returning to Peirce's principle of the triadicity of the sign (1935), significance resides in the capacity of a sign to elicit a response in the interpreter, that is a further sign that establishes the relationship with the previous one. The sign, therefore, is not limited to the relationship between a signifier and the object to which it refers but implies a third element: the interpretative function of the interpreter (Salvatore *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, significances emerge from an infinite semiotic chain, within which *«each element is simultaneously the interpretation of the previous sequence, its realization in the present moment, and the elicitor of the next sign, which projects the sequence forward in time»* (Salvatore *et al.*, 2019, p. 216).

Geertz (1973) had already proposed considering culture as a system of significances. Moscovici (1984) introduced the concept of *social representations* to denote shared significances systems that influence perceptions and actions. These significances systems – or cultures – are formed, transformed and spread through everyday communication: they do not reside in the individual mind, but in the co-constructed intersubjective field. Significances then evolve with the child's development, who internalizes cultural tools – such as stories, games, rules – transforming them into mental structures that guide thought, emotion, and action (Cole, 1996; Luria, 1976).

According to semiotic-cultural psychology, affective signs ground and shape generalized significances that underlie the way human beings make sense of their being in the world, generating one vision rather than another. Such systems are latent global beliefs about self and reality, recognizable only indirectly through cognitive and pragmatic outputs (statements, evaluations, actions on specific issues) (Salvatore *et al.* 2019). Significances thus represent the way actors interpret the context. This system of significances, which is not necessarily explicit and recognized, structures the logic of value construction in terms of which organizations configure their actions, giving significance to

their relationship with the environment, strategies, methods, and operating modes (Salvatore, 2016).

Organizations are therefore action systems oriented by cultures, understood as generalized systems of significances that organize thought and action. From this perspective, subjectivity is a self-referential dynamic, prone to blind self-reproduction without stopping even in the face of potentially destructive scenarios. Even if the information available about the environment is cognitively grasped, this is not enough to change meaning systems. On the contrary, most of the time these systems assimilate information, paradoxically transforming it into nourishment for their own premises. Von Bertalanffy (1968) already pointed out that every organization preserves its identity through processes of exchange and regulation with the external environment. In this sense, Salvatore (2016) speaks of self-referentiality rather than self-preservation, concluding that merely recognizing the consequences of one's evaluations is not sufficient to change the affective scenario that fed them.

For this reason, especially in organizational interventions, working on significances is more effective than focusing solely on individual variables and behaviors (Valsiner, 2007). Furthermore, since significances are reproduced through interactions, any evolution of such systems – for example, the adoption of new models of work or well-being – requires symbolic renegotiation within the organizational community (Hall, 1997).

### *Competencies*

According to the contemporary perspective on learning and professional action, competencies are not seen as intrinsic qualities of the individual, but rather as criteria for action distributed across the contexts in which practices take place (Hutchins, 1995; Nerland & Jensen, 2014). We therefore assume competence as a cultural model for interpreting the relationship with the environment, which underpins the actor's purposive capacity (Salvatore, 2016). It requires the coherent and profitable orchestration of internal – cognitive and affective – and external resources (Pellerey, 2004).

Scientific literature draws an important distinction between skills

and competencies. The former are traditionally understood as specific operational and technical abilities, acquired through practice and repetition and typically assessable in isolation, through standardized exercises or objective tests (Spencer & Spencer, 2008). However, as early as 1995, Hutchins expanded the notion of skill to include the capacity to orchestrate material and collaborative resources, operating and distributing them among individuals and tools.

On the competence side, Billett (2001) documents how they are formed through participation in organizational activities, where artifacts, rules, and division of labor distribute criteria for action among group members. They are therefore individual and situated, developing through active involvement in real social activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Eraut (2004) highlights the emergence of skills in the flow of everyday action, arguing that they cannot be reduced to lists of skills. This is particularly visible in work contexts, where situational awareness guides the choice and integration of skills according to the objectives, resources, and constraints. For example, a candidate may demonstrate strong quantitative reasoning skills in a psychometric test but show poor competence if they are unable to negotiate shared solutions with the work group or interpret incomplete data in the business context (Fleishman, 1975; Spencer & Spencer, 2008).

In this regard, Tardif (2006) proposes the use of authentic assessment tools – portfolios, in-situ observations, reflective interviews – since reduced-content tests, or skill tests cannot capture the ability to orchestrate resources in real situations. Whereas skill is measured by the accuracy and speed of operations, competence requires metacognitive integration and application in complex contexts (Schoenfeld, 2016). Consequently, the design of learning and development contexts becomes crucial: they must offer authentic problems, multiple resources, support for reflection, and opportunities for social negotiation to foster competence development (Jonassen, 1999). This necessarily entails a shift in focus (Mulder *et al.*, 2007): from teaching skills (instructions, isolated technical exercises, tutorials) to accompanying and supporting the emergence of competence through reflective, project-based, and community practices.

## Organization

Organization is the way in which a certain system of action defines, maintains, and adaptively regulates its relationship with the environment (Engeström, 1987; Valsiner, 2014). In this way, this relationship is regulated through cycles of interpretation and action that allow meaning and order to be derived (Weick, 1979). In addition to ordinary generalizations, organization includes hyper-generalization, affective fields of meaning capable of guiding action in novel contexts, enabling the system to anticipate possible scenarios and regulate itself in unpredictable situations while preserving internal coherence. It follows that organization is not a given fact, but a continuous process of semantic autopoiesis<sup>2</sup>, in which the system constantly redefines its own rules and tools in response to contradictions emerging with the environment (Valsiner, 2014).

Organizational forms are therefore not simply containers for activities but participate – directly or indirectly – in determining the capacity and methods for successful action. This generates particular forms of dialectic between action and environment, historically analyzed by organizational thinking and management theory through two divergent paradigms (Aldrich, 2008; Bonazzi, 1999; Braun *et al.*, 2012; Rogelberg, 2007; Salvatore *et al.*, 2019): on the one hand, the action-centered regulation model, and on the other, the environment-centered regulation model.

Action-centered regulation is based on the idea that it is the constraints and operating conditions of the activity that define the regulatory framework within which the organization interacts with the (internal and external) environment (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Stewart, 2000). This translates into placing the entire production process and the technical constraints that determine its effectiveness at the center: technical specifications, standardized procedures, expected output levels. The individuals involved, both inside and outside the organization, are represented functionally according to production needs, assuming the

<sup>2</sup> Semantic autopoiesis is an extension of the concept of biological autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela, 1980) which includes not only the capacity of a system to self-produce and maintain its own organization, but also to self-define and self-regulate a symbolic domain endowed with causal efficacy in the dynamics of the system itself (Stewart, 2000; Valsiner, 2007).

role of resources to be optimized in terms of efficiency and operational performance (Taylor, 1911). The value of an action is therefore defined by its ability to meet internal standards of technical quality, cost, and time. These measurable criteria guide decision-making and control practices, reducing organizational complexity to quantifiable elements (Simon, 1947). As a result, elements such as social or environmental externalities and the perceived usefulness to the end user are not included in the assessment of organizational success. As an example, consider a production model in which concrete operating principles (setup times, inventory levels, line quality) serve as the sole normative criterion: the rules – and their verification system – arise directly from the need to maintain constant, waste-free production flows. A further example of this model is “*technicality*” (Carli & Paniccia, 1999), understood in both a conceptual and operational sense, which takes as its normative criterion for the relationship between action and environment the technical parameters that regulate the expert’s activity.

Environment-centered regulation reversed this logic: action no longer defines the rules but is shaped by the characteristics and stimuli of the environment (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). In this view, organizational actors are guided by an external constraint, while resource allocation and strategic decisions are aimed at maximizing the capacity of action to conform to environmental demands (Thompson, 2003). The parameter for success is therefore the alignment between operational practices and environmental constraints, rather than mere compliance with internal standards. In these organizations, it is the boundary functions – such as marketing and sales – that play a crucial role. These departments are responsible for constantly monitoring critical external variables (market demand, regulations, competitor actions) and, based on this information, defining the criteria that guide the entire organization. This does not mean completely neglecting internal requirements: these remain relevant, even if they do not prescribe action but define the best possible adaptation to the environment. As an example, consider an organization that bases its governance on the demands of consumers, communities, and institutional stakeholders, integrating environmental metrics (CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, water use) and social metrics (working conditions in the supply chain) into the decision-making process. The success criterion is the satisfaction of external standards defined at the macro-organizational level.

These two paradigms propose a static model of the relationship between action and environment, opposite instantiations of the same interpretative framework, which precludes the identification of effective solutions when there is no possible compatibility between the demands of the action and the modalities in which the environment presents itself. Action-centered regulation and environment-centered regulation share the assumption that, in order for interaction to be possible, one of the two components must assume a dominant and binding position over the other, in order to ensure their mutual compatibility. This makes the relationship inherently conflictual and asymmetrical. The dynamic model (Salvatore *et al.*, 2019) offers an alternative to this static conception of the relationship between action and environment, providing an interpretative and methodological framework for devising value-creation strategies in contexts characterized by critical levels of turbulence. This model is characterized by three core dimensions: it is evolutionary (it considers the characteristics of the contractors as a function of the exchange between action and environment – they evolve together, through and because of this exchange), recursive (it considers the characteristics of the contractors and the interaction between them as simultaneously cause and effect of each other) and dialectical (it considers possible synthesis not as a search for common ground between thesis and antithesis, but as a higher-order solution capable of capturing and developing both, enhancing their mutual otherness). By way of example (though not exhaustively), for organizations, regulating the relationship with the environment in a dynamic way is possible through certain methodological criteria: strategic vision, by modulating daily behavior based on the interpretation of contingent events within the medium-term temporal and semantic horizon in which strategic objectives are pursued; incrementalism, by valuing the construction of the relationship with the environment as the result of a recursive evolutionary process, fueled by the ability to use the results achieved as subsequent inputs; compatibility, by assuming the relationship between action and environment as cooperation between mutually autonomous subjects, valuing the search for perspectives that are sufficiently abstract to be shared by each of the actors; perspectivism, by recognizing the project of environmental stakeholders, their core identity, as a non-negotiable aspect but also as a perspective of meaning and an evolutionary lever for exchange.

Processes emerge from the situated interaction among everyday practices integrated by shared significances, evolving in accordance with the environment (Orlikowski, 1996; Pentland & Feldman, 2005). The process is therefore the smallest unit of dynamic relationship between meaningful activities, intertwining the ostensive aspect (the ideal form) and the performative aspect (the concrete execution of the activity) (Cremaschi *et al.*, 2021; Feldman, & Pentland, 2003).

Although by definition abstract, taking the form of a network of relationships between effects (Beer, 1979), the process is also a concrete fact with decision-making and symbolic implications, as it attributes value and functional meaning. As an example, consider a company that is in the process of marketing a new product: clarifying whether the process in place is driven by financial profit rather than by building customer relationships will generate radically different positions and practices. In this sense, the organization defines – and proposes – its identity by mapping and prioritizing, explicitly or implicitly, certain processes over others (Gioia *et al.*, 2013; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Krücken & Meier, 2024; Pratt *et al.*, 2016).

It follows that reorganization of processes is an operational aspect that concerns procedures, but above all an element of strategic importance. Consider the radical difference between a customer-oriented organization and a service-oriented organization. The former will take as its normative criteria the preferences and behaviors of the customer, considered as a fundamental corporate asset. Organizational success will consequently be measured through indicators such as customer satisfaction (“*The customer is always right!*”), wallet share, and propensity for positive word of mouth (Griffin, 2002). In contrast, service orientation proposes a vision of the product as a process co-constructed in the interaction between provider and user, who is represented as a partner in the production process, transforming customer dependence into a lever for generating value (Norman, 1986; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Success is evaluated in terms of perceived quality and the company’s ability to orchestrate tangible and intangible resources when needed (Grönroos, 2015).

Organizations constitute autonomous entities thanks to the human fabric that animates them. This inherently implies the challenge of survival when that fabric becomes rigid or breaks. This apparent contradiction reflects the paradoxical nature of organizational systems: on the one hand, they emerge from daily interactions between individuals, who together generate significances and interpretations that shape organizational identity, shaping shared roles, norms, and cultures (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1979); on the other hand, they develop structures and procedures that can overload or conflict with individuals, imposing constraints that transcend individual will (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Vaara, & Whittington, 2012). In this sense, organizations can be seen as parts of vital worlds lent to a purpose and constantly oscillating between two extremes: total assimilation into vital worlds and full incorporation of the organization's abstract purpose.

Both scenarios are doomed to failure. On one side, this dynamic opens the door to the perverse use of the organization for reproducing vital worlds, thus becoming a place of interpersonal conflict. Take, for example, family businesses or moments of generational transition within a company. Lansberg (1999) showed how personal and family dynamics (favoritism, expectations of loyalty, etc.) can shape company procedures, generating interpersonal conflict between members of different generations or between founders and external managers.

On the other side, there is a risk of impoverishing the "warm" dimension of subjective engagement in the organizational context, in a fantasy of hyper-rationalization that necessarily pits subjectivity against rationality. Consider the extreme rationalization of work activities through the breakdown of tasks, the study of times and movements, and the standardization of methods (Taylor, 1911). In this view, production efficiency becomes the absolute normative criterion, to the detriment of the subjective and relational dimension of work, fragmenting the production process into elementary operations regulated by mechanical procedures.

The growth of organizations therefore lies in their ability to configure themselves as intermediate processes (Cremaschi *et al.*, 2021): a social-practice context founded on meaningful interpersonal bonds, organized around the pursuit of meta-interpersonal (almost universal) goals, rather than according to self-referential logics. This allows



subjectivity to be put into practice, while at the same time finding opportunities for elaboration thanks to the meta-interpersonal purpose. Consequently, in an intermediate context, the representation of the systemic dimension of organizational life integrates with individual subjectivity, acquiring personal connotations. By placing itself in a position to operate in an intermediate dimension, the organization can increase its possibilities for growth, allowing individuals to experience the system as a concrete and meaningful entity in their existence.

## *Image*

Organization's image plays a fundamental role in determining how the environment – customers, suppliers, employees, institutions, local communities – relates to the organization itself (Cornelissen, 2004). More precisely, it is not so much the internal reality of the company that shapes external expectations, but rather the perception that the environment develops on the basis of visual, narrative, and behavioral signals: brand identity, sustainability reports, communication campaigns and the behavior of senior management (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). This attribution process is based on two main mechanisms. First, selective amplification: the public tends to pay attention to those elements of the image that confirm their prior expectations, thus creating a *reputational echo chamber* (Hatch & Schultz, 2008). Second, the phenomenon of social legitimation: an organization gains credibility and trust to the extent that it aligns its image with the values and norms of its context (Deegan, 2019; Suchman, 1995). From a managerial point of view, this calls for reflection on two types of intervention. The first concerns strategic alignment between internal culture and external identity: it is not enough to communicate an attractive positioning if the system of operating practices does not embody its values (Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Rohmanue & Jacobi, 2024). The second involves proactive image monitoring through data and insights obtained by continuous tracking, which serve both to detect in a timely manner any divergences between stakeholder perceptions and organizational intentions and to optimize decision-making processes, thereby enhancing the organization's capacity to adapt to crises and sudden changes (Cornelissen, 2004; Nuortimo *et al.*, 2024).

Ultimately, image is not simply a mirror of the organization but rather an interpretative filter through which the relationship with the environment is enacted and developed into a circular process. Consciously managing this filter means safeguarding the company's ability to attract relational capital and maintain its legitimacy over time. In this sense, image is not only what is represented but also the structure of representation that determines the evolutionary conditions and possible forms of representation of the organization. For example, through narrative analysis of user-generated social content (posts, videos, reviews), a beauty company can identify recurring archetypes (healing, empowerment, etc.) to be leveraged through marketing, making the brand an integral part of individual stories (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2020). Similarly, consider a company that does not merely sell products but offers usage scenarios and aspirational significances: customers engage not to purchase an object but to experience a value-laden narrative (Schmitt, 1999).

## Implications for intervention and professionals

In scientific literature and professional practice, significances, competencies, organization, processes, relationships and image generally operate separately from one another, even though their various interconnections are recognized. This occurs in research as well as in the analysis, design, and implementation of organizational interventions.

Within the SOS approach – *Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity* – which promotes the generative value of the organization-subjectivity dialectic, the *SCOPRI* Method highlights the coexistence of *significances, competencies, organization, processes, relationships, and image* in the structure and development possibilities of organizational contexts. This makes it pertinent and relevant – albeit in a modulated way – to activate scenarios that could integrate these dimensions.

By way of example, below are some possible scenarios for intervention using this methodology, highlighting the dimensions directly involved and assuming the others as conditions, resources, and implicit beneficiaries. Consider the value of an organizational intervention capable of promoting and enhancing the exploration of corporate

image as a way of activating reflective processes on organizational culture and ways of relating. This would allow for integrated intervention on image, significances, and relationships, necessarily involving the redefinition and development of competencies, processes, and organization. In this perspective, the analysis of processes in interaction with the development of competencies – which vary in relation to process dynamics (Argyris & Schön, 1978) – as well as the revision of the organizational design to reorient the culture.

There are therefore many opportunities for the proposed synergy, which is capable of activating a virtuous cycle between the dimensions at play.

A further advantage, relevant to professional practice, concerns the possibility of attributing value to psychological intervention in the organizational environment. In this context, psychological intervention has historically focused on the use of psychometric tools for recruitment, performance evaluation and climate analysis (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Although these methodologies provide objective and repeatable data, exclusive reliance on tests and questionnaires risks limiting psychological action to a merely diagnostic level, neglecting the dynamic dimension of subjective and organizational processes (Spector, 2021). This results in a fragmentation of discipline and intervention, in which competencies, motivations, and relationships appear isolated rather than integrated into a broader organizational development plan. On the contrary, the synergistic perspective outlined above is achieved through the implementation of co-constructed interventions with a transformative perspective which – while also taking advantage of psychometric resources – represent the user as a strategic partner.

## **Concluding remarks and future directions**

In a world characterized by rapid technological evolution, growing organizational complexity, and high social, environmental, economic, and political uncertainty, companies – and professionals – tend to move increasingly toward strengthening efficacy and efficiency, valuing performance through indices and methods that nevertheless risk

marginalizing the human factor. On the contrary, the review and proposition advanced in this paper argue for the importance of strengthening organizational structures by reclaiming the value of subjectivity within and across organizations. With the presentation of the SOS approach – *Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity* – and the articulation of the SCOPRI Method – *Significances, Competencies, Organization, Processes, Relationships, Image* – we propose an integrated perspective capable of reconciling well-being and performance in a continuous dialectical exchange, overcoming the traditional dichotomy between organizational and individual interventions. From a theoretical point of view, the subjectivity paradigm serves as a unifying element between intrapsychic dimensions and the environment, highlighting the co-construction dynamics of meaning.

In strategic terms, the SCOPRI Method offers a way to generate virtuous synergy among the six dimensions: significances, competencies, organization, processes, relationships and image. This synergy allows the alignment of corporate mission and vision with the expectations and values of members, external stakeholders and the environment, fostering (Kahn, 1990) a climate of trust and participation at the basis of job crafting (Petrou *et al.*, 2012). This also becomes a tool for employer branding and identity cohesion, generating value and capacity for the organization to attract talent, reduce turnover, and improve its overall reputation (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Although based on a review of scientific literature, this approach requires experimental implementation in organizational contexts that are able to challenge themselves with this ambitious and resourceful proposal. Longitudinal studies could also be useful to validate the predictive capacity of the SCOPRI Method's dimensions against indicators such as turnover, engagement, and productivity, as well as for examining their moderating effects during phases of digital transformation, generational transition, or organizational crisis management. Furthermore, the flexibility of the SOS approach opens up possibilities for integration with emerging approaches such as organizational ambidexterity<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Organizational ambidexterity is the capacity of an organization to simultaneously pursue two seemingly opposing strategies: exploitation, namely the optimization and refinement of existing competences and processes, and exploration, that is

In conclusion, the complexity of the topic at hand and the current organizational context offer an opportunity to find new syntheses and strengthen structures through the human factor. This is not merely a slogan, but a strategic advantage for organizations.

The SOS approach – *Synergy between Organization and Subjectivity* – and the SCOPRI Method – *Significances, Competencies, Organization, Processes, Relationships, Image* – provide a compass for guiding organizational interventions capable of combining well-being and performance. Investing in significances, competencies, and relationships means building more agile, resilient and cohesive organizations, in which efficacy and efficiency emerge not at the expense of, but through, the full enhancement of human capital.

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the search for new opportunities, innovations, and radical changes (March, 1991). This dual approach is crucial in contexts characterized by rapid technological change and increasingly volatile markets, where organizations must maintain operational efficiency without sacrificing their capacity to adapt and renew themselves (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004). Empirical evidence suggests that organizational ambidexterity is positively correlated with innovative and financial performance, as it allows companies to exploit the advantages of routine while exploring new market frontiers (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). However, achieving a balance between exploitation and exploration is challenging: it requires investment in human capital, continuous learning processes, and effective coordination mechanisms to prevent conflicts and organizational overload (He & Wong, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2023).

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