

■ Research Paper

Changing Paradigm for Knowledge Metaphors from Dynamics to Thermodynamics

Constantin Bratianu*

Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

The aim of the paper is to analyse dominant metaphors in knowledge management thinking, show their limitations by analysing their source domains, and then offer a better alternative. It has been demonstrated that metaphors play an important role in defining the concept of knowledge. In knowledge management important ideas incorporated into the SECI model and other extended knowledge dynamics models are based on the metaphors that have their source domain in Newtonian dynamics. These metaphors have limitations coming from some characteristics of the source domain that cannot be mapped onto the target domain, like the conservation law and linearity. The other limitation is that these metaphors hide the fact that knowledge and emotion go together. In order to integrate emotion into the knowledge concept we need a different set of four metaphors that have as a source domain the paradigm of thermodynamics. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords cognitive knowledge; emotional knowledge; energy; knowledge metaphor; thermodynamics

INTRODUCTION

In a seminal key address delivered to the 8th European Conference on Knowledge Management held on 6 and 7 September 2007 in Barcelona, Consorci Escola Industrial de Barcelona, Spain, Daniel Andriessen demonstrated how powerful it is metaphorical analysis in understanding the conceptual nature of *knowledge* (Andriessen, 2007).

There is practically an infinite spectrum of potential metaphors we can use since knowledge has got a very complex and dynamic field of meanings. There is no wonder that there are so many different views about the nature and content of this semantic attractor we call *knowledge*, since authors position themselves in different segments of this spectrum when they present their research. As Andriessen emphasized, '...the unconscious choice of metaphor has enormous impact on how we reason about knowledge, what is highlighted and what is hidden, what is seen in the organization as

*Correspondence to: Constantin Bratianu, Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest, Str. Matei Basarab, no.48, Sector 3, 060674 Bucharest, Romania.
E-mail: cbratianu@yahoo.com

Metaphors And The Dynamics Of Knowledge

Yicheng Fang



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