The Memory in the Celebration of Organizational Identity

Sandro Serpa

CICS.UAc
Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences
University of Azores

CICS.NOVA
INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTRE
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY
OF AZORES

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Interdisciplinary Social Sciences

Eleventh International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social
Sciences
Imperial College London | London, UK
2-5 August 2016 | Twitter: #ICISS16

Background

Legitimacy is essential for the perpetuation of an organization.

This legitimization process can be achieved through the building of an organizational identity as expression of a collective destiny (Whetten, 2006).

The identity of an organization is never guaranteed, requiring it to be cultivated, especially on the part of its leadership (Perrenoud, 1994; Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew, 1987; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001; Prados, 2010; Tavares, 2004) through the management of memories (Halbwachs, 1990) selectively shaping what is memorable (Zerubavel, 2003) even in situations of (self)celebration (Mejía, & Álvarez, 2005; Serpa, 2015, 2016).

Research question

What is the relevance ascribed to the mobilization of memory by the leadership in the (self)celebration of organizational identity by the centenary of *Asilo de Infância Desvalida da Horta*?

Methods:

- organizational case study (Yin, 2009) of a boarding school for disadvantaged young girls with a lay Board of Directors and managed by Religious Sisters;
- focuses on the celebration of the centenary: from December 25 to 28, 1958;
- inductive qualitative document analysis (formal and informal documents of / on the organization and publications in a local newspaper) (Bardin, 1995).

Preliminary results:

- a) record for posterity** a) a manuscript with written and photographic records, in which the author, the President of the Asylum's Board of Directors, "condensed the secular history of the Institution in countless details" (*O Telégrafo*, 1958).
- b) conveyance of a positive external image** b) delivery of the program of these celebrations to the visitors, which includes photographs that highlight the improvement of the facilities;
 - "Symbolizing the 326 children who have lived in the Asylum since its establishment and, by intention of the founders, patrons and brothers of the same Asylum, 326 alms [bread and meat] will be distributed, after dinner" (Asilo de Infância Desvalida da Horta, 1958).
- c) legitimation of the leadership's action** c) parallelism of memory, "similarly to what was done in 1858, when this Asylum was established, the President of the Administrative Board shall be accompanied by six children to be admitted in this day" (Asilo de Infância Desvalida da Horta, 1958).
- d) promotion of internal cohesion** d) Resolution of the Board of Directors to associate the celebration of the 25 years of presence of the Religious sisters in the Asylum with the celebrations of the centenary, "One of the first Sisters who served in this institution will unveil the portrait of the Rev. Mother General of the Congregation of the Portuguese Hospitaller Franciscan Sisters" (Asilo de Infância Desvalida, 1958).

Conclusion

This mobilization of memory by the leadership has several goals:

- leave a record for posterity;
- convey a positive image to the exterior;
- legitimize its action in this organization;
- foster internal cohesion.

This commemoration was a celebration of the success of this organization, embodied in its corporate identity, assuming the memory mobilization by leadership as a key resource in this process of legitimation.

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