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ARTICLE INFO	Markus Gmür (2006). From charts and sails. Metaphors of management and organization in Germany and France. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, *4*(1)
RELEASED ON	Tuesday, 14 February 2006
JOURNAL	"Problems and Perspectives in Management"
FOUNDER	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”

NUMBER OF REFERENCES **0**

NUMBER OF FIGURES **0**

NUMBER OF TABLES **0**

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From Charts and Sails. Metaphors of Management and Organization in Germany and France

Markus Gmür

Abstract

Metaphors of organization rely on a set of assumptions about organizational reality. A comparison of dominant concepts of organization in Germany and France shows that the preference of scientists and practitioners for certain metaphors of organization is culturally determined. The history of organization science in research and practice determines the emergence of preferred metaphors. These find expression in German and French textbooks on organization as much as in the organizational structures of German and French companies. In essence, the differences between the underlying concepts of organization studies by German and French scientists and practitioners may be reduced to two metaphors: chart and sail. In German organization theory and practice, there is a dominant image of an organization as an essentially centripetal entity and structure for the efficient differentiation and integration of individual tasks with a view to a common, tangible goal. French organization theory and practice, however, are predominantly determined by an image of an organization as a temporary arrangement and common guiding image for its various interested parties towards the achievement of a given goal.

Key words: metaphor, organization theory, organizational structure, comparative studies, Germany, France.

Introduction

'If you want to build a ship, don't muster people to collect wood together and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.'

With this oft-quoted metaphor, the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is said to have expressed his vision of successful team organization. In so doing, he juxtaposed two images of organizing: organization through systematic allocation of tasks and organization through common guiding images. Even though Saint-Exupéry was not looking to represent intercultural differences through images of organization, the juxtaposition may be used to identify differences between dominant French and German images of organization and, in short, the question of whether a chart or a sail is more important for the attainment of a goal.

Metaphors of organization influence researchers in theory formulation and practitioners in shaping structures and processes. They are based on a set of paradigmatic assumptions about organizational reality (Morgan, 1980) and bring these together in a self-contained and consistent analogy. Gareth Morgan (1986) introduced a range of eight metaphors of organization, which he uses as a framework for ordering the whole of organization science: organizations as machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, and as instruments of domination. This set of organizational metaphors has since been extended repeatedly, e.g. by the theatre metaphor of Mangham and Overrington (1987) or the jazz metaphor of Weick (1998) and others. Subsequent debate around metaphors in organization research has concentrated mainly on two issues. Firstly, the fundamental question of the scientific status of the metaphor approach and its usefulness for organization science arises repeatedly, and is answered in very different ways (Reed, 1990; Grant and Oswick, 1996). The second and less disputed area of discussion focuses on the usage of metaphors in processes of organizational change and transformation (Sackmann, 1989; Marshak, 1996).

However, the question of how metaphors in organization science are actually established and the precise influence of national culture remain largely unexplained. So far, the epistemologi-

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cal debate of metaphors in organizational research would suggest that a metaphor could be interpreted primarily as a means of promoting creativity in organization science and as an instrument of promoting motivation in organizational practice. Nevertheless, Morgan also argues that each scientist – consciously or unconsciously – is influenced by images guiding him or her in the cognitive process: *'(...) all theories of organization and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see, understand, and manage organizations in distinctive yet partial ways.'* (Morgan, 1986: 4). It is unclear, however, how such distinction is actually achieved.

Using the example of organization science in Germany and France, this paper demonstrates the significance of cultural factors in the country-specific characteristics of metaphors of organization science. The basic premise here is that dominant metaphors of organization guiding scientists and practitioners can be differentiated by intercultural comparison. Through such comparison, the emphasis of organizational research and the patterns of organizational structures differ accordingly.

In an empirical study, Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (2001) have shown how images of teamwork differ through international comparison, and that the cultural dimensions of 'power distance' and 'individualism' (Hofstede, 1980) have a major bearing on the emergence of differing preferences for metaphors. For instance, the competition metaphor for teamwork is seen to dominate in individualistic cultures.

This paper evaluates available studies on organizational theory and practice in Germany and France with the aim of isolating the respective dominant images of organization and to identify parallels between theory and practice. For this, three areas are examined:

- **Development of organization science** in theory and practice, tracing the history of the organization discipline within the framework of management science
- **Organization theory** through a comparison of German and French textbooks on organization science
- **Organization practice** on the basis of an evaluation and German-French comparison of available empirical studies of organization structures in practice

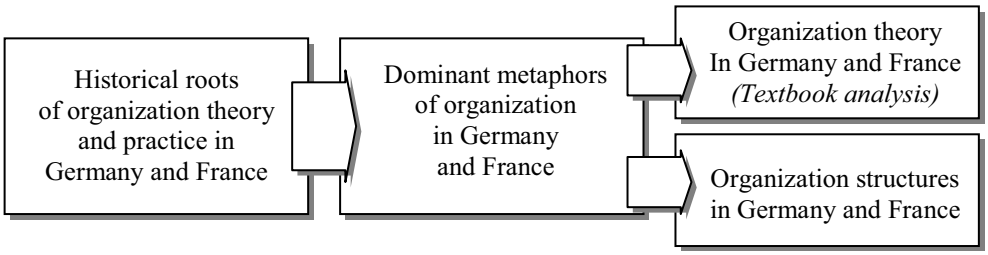

Fig. 1. Argument chain of the study

The differences between the images that underlie the way German and French scientists and practitioners approach organizations may basically be reduced to two metaphors: chart and sail. In German organization theory and practice there is a dominant image of an organization as an essentially centripetal entity and as a structure for the efficient differentiation and integration of individual tasks with a view to a common, tangible goal. French organization theory and practice, however, is predominantly determined by an image of an organization as a temporary arrangement and common guiding image for its various interested parties towards the achievement of a given goal.

Organization history: The development of organization science in Germany and France

The first publications to question business organization in Germany in the 1870s, as well as the specialist journal *Organisation* (today the *Zeitschrift für Führung und Organisation*) founded in 1898, are dominated by the engineering sciences. Although issues of commercial organization were increasingly discussed from 1900 onwards, a purely technical philosophy prevailed in practice-oriented organization science up until the 1930s, as seen in the USA (Taylor, 1911).

In parallel to this, organization science as an academic discipline was developing from the concurrent courses of philosophical idealism and national economics within the framework of business management science. The most important protagonists of the first school of thought are Plenge, who understood organization science as '*Willenswissenschaft*', a 'science of the will', and Nicklisch, with his ethical-normative position (Frese, 1987: 33-111; Nordsieck-Schroer, 1961). According to Plenge and Nicklisch, the task of organization lies in the shaping of a business community that through its activity expresses the common corporate goal. National economics sees organization as an economic cell within the national economy. The task of organization consists in creating optimal combinations of factors in order to maximize the company's success. Both schools of thought complement each other to describe organizations as gestalt, i.e. as distinct entities, with their own laws, independent of the actions of the people within them.

Between 1928 and 1934 the first monographs on business management were published, including two of particular note by Nordsieck: *Die schaubildliche Erfassung und Untersuchung der Betriebsorganisation* (Diagrammatic representation and study of business organization, 1932) and *Grundlagen der Organisationslehre* (Basics of organization science, 1934), which prepared the way for the later development of the subject. From WWII up until the 1980s, business management organization science moved between Ulrich's *Betriebswirtschaftliche Organisationslehre* (Business management organization science, 1949) and Kosiol's *Die Organisation der Unternehmung* (Business organization, 1962). These fundamental texts establish the framework for an organization science abstract in its theoretical constructs but guided by tangible aspects of organization. In this way it sets itself apart from the critical social-sciences-oriented industrial and organizational school emerging at the same time, which stemmed from viewing the individual in opposition to the company.

Thus, the concept and science of organization in Germany are marked by their polarity: organization practice is traditionally dominated by a technical view, while organization science as an academic discipline develops from national economic and philosophical sources.

The roots of French organization science may be traced back to the 17th century (for detail of the following see especially Chevalier, 1953; Chanlat, 1994); linked not only to the French kingdom's mercantilist centralism, but also to the Enlightenment movement. In 1642, Pascal argued for the foundation of a science of human labour and its organization. In 1739, as a forerunner to Adam Smith, Perronnet carried out the first systematic study of the industrial division of labour in nail manufacturing. The notion of social-utopian Enlightenment was continued in 1829 by Fourier, who developed a concept of semi-autonomous work groups or '*phalanstères*'.

The Enlightenment concept was soon joined by a significant interest in issues of production technology, which later found expression in a much greater – compared to Germany – receptiveness to the Taylorist system of labour organization. Here, the most important publications are *L'organisation du travail* (1839) by Blanc and the 1870 work of the same title by the engineer and economist Le Play. Fittingly, Blanc, who saw himself as both organization scientist and social reformer, also made a name for himself through his active role in the removal of the July Monarchy.

The influence of Taylorism begins properly with the French translation of his book *Shop Management* in 1906. In *L'organisation à la française*, Rimailho applies Taylor's main principles to specifically French conditions. The strong impact of this approach on organization has already been pointed out in connection with the differences in organization forms. Together with Fayol's *Administration industrielle et générale* (1916) it constitutes the classic organization science institutionalized by Taylor's followers through the founding of the Centre d'Études Administratives in 1919 by some of Fayol's pupils, as well as the Conférence de l'Organisation Française in 1920 and the Comité National de l'Organisation Scientifique in 1926. Whilst the institutional development of organization science in Germany was only starting out at this stage, in France it had already reached an apogee from which it could go no further.

In France, therefore, the concept of organization has close historical links with the emancipatory goal of the Enlightenment. Organizations are seen as networks of participants trying to achieve their individual goals. On this basis, organization practice orientates itself towards the shaping principles of Taylorism.

The main difference between French and German historical development lies in the social-utopian (France) versus economic (Germany) orientation. In the case of France this leads to

the adoption of Taylorism and a concept of organization that owes more to the social sciences. In Germany organization science sets itself apart from both directions in favour of an economic-systematizing nature.

In Germany, the early idea of organization developed from an industrial production context emphasizing the function of coordinating complex, technical manufacturing processes. France was industrialized later and the issue of organization is only retrospectively introduced into this context. French organization finds its source in a time of fundamental social change: initiated in the 17th century by the Enlightenment and put into practice during the French Revolution. German organization science does contain philosophical strands allowing for the idea of organization beyond the context of industrial production – these are not put into practice, however; effectively remaining objects of merely academic consideration.

Linking the idea of organization in France with Enlightenment philosophy and social practice has two consequences. Firstly, organizing becomes an activity serving primarily to order social relations within companies, and only after this, tasks. Secondly, organizing is the realization of social progress. In Germany, on the other hand, the structuring and arrangement of tasks in organization science take precedence over shaping social relations. There is a complete lack of emancipatory base. The comparatively low significance of Taylorism for organization science in Germany may be explained by the German tradition of industrial workers around the turn of the 19th century being relatively highly qualified. This renders a Taylorist division of labour not only unnecessary, but also comparatively inefficient. Another explanation is that the euphoria of progress underlying the Taylorist concept, and informing the publications by Taylor and his colleagues, undermined their credibility to a certain extent: '*What [...] organization sciences emerged in America, France and other countries were as yet of little interest to business management science in Germany around 1930. Taylor was not taken seriously as a scientist, and Fayol was not known*' (Nordsieck-Schroer, 1961: 17 [Translation by the author]). From a French perspective, the programmatic nature of Taylorism must seem like a master key for the practical realization of a social project through business practice. Again and again, the emancipatory aspects of the Taylorist system, i.e. its core values, have been underrated in favour of its principles of labour organization. The significance of Taylorism in the context of the early 20th century emerges however in its reception by French organization science, which continues to bear its mark right up to the present date (Linhart, 1992).

A side effect of concentrating on social relations, as is characteristic for the task of organization in France, is a sensitization towards power relations. This also stands closely connected with the historical roots of the organization concept. Power is a characteristic of social relations. The more dominant the social ordering function of organizations in respect of the coordination of tasks is, the more significant the accompanying attributes become for those with shaping tasks in organizations. In German organization science, social organization was originally only incidental to shaping task structures, and regarded as having a minimal impact on framework conditions. In French organization science, social relations and their power asymmetries form the organization's core structure, on a par with coordinating tasks in terms of significance.

Organization theory: A comparison of German and French organization textbooks

Textbooks on organizational design are written to convey the basics and central ideas of organization science to students and practitioners. Each author aims to present the central themes of their subject in a representative manner and will in most cases relegate their personal interests. The content discussed by most authors can be assumed to represent the culture-specific core of the subject. Whilst it should be noted that textbooks only reflect the academic view of organization science, beyond this they also contain valid indicators for the basic principles of organization practice, as shown later in the section on forms of organization.

This comparative textbook analysis is based on 10 German and 10 French textbooks for scientific training published between 1970 and 1993 (some in new editions), selected on the criterion of how far each text seeks a comprehensive overview of the subject of organization science.

Translations and same-language publications by Swiss, Austrian, francophone-Canadian or Belgian authors have been excluded. The full list of textbooks analysed appears in the appendix.

The analysis of these twenty textbooks follows a procedure comprising quantitatively descriptive and qualitatively interpreting parts. Two aspects of analysis are closely linked to the two main theses of this paper:

- The authors' concept of organization may be deduced from their understanding of organization, as well as from the textbooks' main thematic emphasis. This concept is characterized in the first place by the decision to present an institutional or instrumental idea of organization.
- The authors' image of people is linked to the role an individual plays in the organization: whether as an active and interested party involved in shaping, passive needs carrier, or as an object of the shaping process.

Nearly all textbooks contain a paragraph in which the authors express their own **understanding of organization**, featuring both instrumental and institutional approaches. This is illustrated by the following definitions from three French textbooks [translated by the author]. The first definition represents an instrumental approach, while the other two represent differing institutional concepts of organization.

'The organization tries to structure functions within the company in a logical way, to separate out support services, tasks and responsibilities and to maintain the necessary connections for a harmonious functioning of the whole.' (François, 1974 II: 59).

'Organization is the process whereby one devises in one's own way the whole that comprises and supports all interconnected and target-oriented actions [...] at the same time bringing out the fundamental quality of these wholes, in order to understand the arrangement of the relations between the individuals and the whole.' (Mélèse, 1979: 7).

'The company, its organization and its politics are not answers but constructed by their participants who see external constraints as elements of their strategies [...]. The organization is an ideology in the sense that the ideas of those responsible for shaping relations between people, are themselves shaping the structures.' (Bernoux, 1990: 115-123).

For François, organization is a means of putting order into companies. Mélèse envisages organization as a core element of each decision and each process occurring in a company. Finally, Bernoux views an organization as an arena comprising differing viewpoints and interests.

The definitions of organization not only differ through their institutional or instrumental approaches, they also show a different understanding of the whole construct of organization and its constituent parts. Bernoux starts out from the participants and their interests, which may (temporarily) cluster in the common construction of social structures. This approach emphasizes the elements rather than the whole. Mélèse deduces patterns of relationships and social behaviour from a system in equilibrium. He regards the whole, relegating individual elements to the background. These two definitions represent two theoretical approaches often used in French textbooks, but seldom in German ones: power and system. Both are closely linked in French texts, whilst in German organization science they lead to a decision either for a power-oriented approach (Krüger tends towards this direction) or a system-theoretical approach (Remer, 1989: 2).

Both French and German authors' definitions reveal a broad distribution between institutional and instrumental approaches, as well as between approaches that emphasize the whole or elements of the whole. Looking at the content that follows, however, there is a distinct shift in emphasis, with German textbooks showing a significant move towards the holistic view. Although appearing occasionally, the participant perspective in particular always becomes subservient to an overview of the structure as a whole. French textbooks appear vice versa, with a stronger orientation towards participants and the shaping instruments available to them in practice. Most French textbooks emphasize practical implementation more strongly in their later stages, with the introductory theoretical framework assuming an ordering function. In German textbooks, on the other hand, the theoretical approach tends to be less ambitious, but consistent throughout the following content, maintaining a level of abstraction and distance from practice-oriented representations.

As regards the organization concept, German organization science shares the idea of organization as an instrument for the systematic structuring of companies as a bundle of production factors (tangible organization). This perspective of order is scrutinized with great attention to detail. French organization science on the other hand tends to envisage an organization as a construct of relations following its own rules (systemic approach) or characterized by the participants' interests (participant-based approach). This is the starting point for an analysis more oriented towards shaping.

The authors' **image of people** may be deduced from the emphasis given in their textbooks to people as shaping subjects or objects of organization measures, and which theories are applied. Amongst the German textbooks, only Jakob and Krüger explicitly examine the relationship between the individual and organization at an early stage in the text. Jakob understands people as the constituent element of an institutional organization concept, while Krüger (1984: 13) refers to organization as a management instrument '*in the hands of the people and institutions influencing the individual business process*'. These two textbooks also contain separate chapters on issues of power and the realization of interests in the organization, although these do not form an integral part of the overall analysis. Similarly, Kieser and Kubicek extend the 3rd edition of their book by a chapter on the subjective perception of organizations by their members (p. 449ff.) without changing their textbook concepts. In a chapter titled '*People and their natural needs*', Schanz (1982: 73ff.) stresses the requirements of people from an organization and the resulting resistance to change. In general it becomes clear that German business management organization science places the structure at the centre of analysis. The influence of people on its genesis and change is only very occasionally touched on, and then as a peripheral concern. Most concepts only accord people a passive role, determined by structure, or leave them completely invisible.

French organization science gives more space to people as shaping participants. This is demonstrated by the term '*Concertation*', which has no equivalent in German organization science. *Concertation* is used for processes of bargaining and aligning individual interests in respect of the aims of the organization. Foglierini-Carneiro and Mélèse use the term to discuss instruments governing communication relations, other authors use it when discussing the coordination of various roles. Although none of the textbooks contain an in-depth systematic discussion of the structures and processes of *concertation*, these are still referenced at various points in most textbooks. All French authors discuss theories and concepts of staff management and group processes, as well as the importance of power and communication. Finally, most discuss the issue of co-responsibility of staff for company policy. It emerges that French texts accord participants in the organization a central role and see actions and structures in close interdependency, whereas German texts tend to deal with them as separate issues. Furthermore, several French authors to a greater or lesser extent have developed their own approaches drawing upon structuralism. As yet, these have no particular systematic orientation. The active role people play in an organization is most clearly expressed in the works of Bernoux and Lussato: for the former they are first and foremost interest carriers for the organization (similarly Mélèse and Liu), while for the latter they are information carriers. Bernoux (1990: 116) actually criticizes the influences of motivational theory, which to his mind looks at people primarily as needs carriers for whom the organization has to offer suitable incentives, disregarding their own shaping role in the organization.

The **image of people** in German and French literature differs in that German organization science concentrates on the organization as a construct in its own right. People hardly figure as shaping agents. Formal and social aspects of organization are separated by disciplines (business management or sociology). In French organization science the shaping participant (as an individual or in a group) is given more space. Here, the transition to a sociological analysis is a gradual one.

Organization concepts in German textbooks mostly represent a science of tangible and rational order creation in companies. French textbooks on the other hand create a multi-layered but also ambivalent image of organization and locate the task of organizing between the power of participants and the logic of the system. Links to neighbouring areas of function are more frequently established, and the transition between the description and explanation of social science and the shaping nature of business management is more gradual.

Organization practice: Forms of organization in German and French companies

Daubigney and Silvestre's (1972) study on the significance of hierarchy is the first to examine and compare organization structures in German and French companies. Since then there have been repeated individual comparative studies, but to date a lack of final summary. The results from direct comparisons have too many gaps for a comprehensive picture, which is why indirect comparisons are also essential (e.g. from studies examining the differences between Germany or France and Great Britain).

International comparative studies show significant differences in organizational hierarchy between German and French companies. French companies show higher vertical and horizontal degrees of differentiation:

- Vertical differentiation is the delimitation between hierarchical levels. It is expressed most of all in steep hierarchies with little upward mobility. Power distance is accordingly high.
- Horizontal differentiation finds expression in specialized functions contributing to a common task in the division of labour.

Daubigney and Silvestre (1972) examine differences in the **hierarchies** of small and medium-sized German and French companies. Their study shows not only a significantly steeper salary gradient for France, but also on average almost double the number of hierarchical levels. This analysis is confirmed by Lutz (1981), who finds a span of control for French companies, especially for middle management, that is some 50% lower and has a steeper hierarchical structure. For German industrial companies, especially at the lowest management echelons, Maurice et al. (1980) also find significantly higher control spans than in comparable French companies. Correspondingly, d'Iribarne (1991) describes the hierarchical principle as the most important core element of integration in French culture and society.

Vertical differentiation also emerges from the willingness of managers to **delegate**. This again depends on the perceived power distance between a superior and his or her staff. For Hofstede (1980), the greatest differences between German and French subjects lie in the dimension of power distance. In his comparison of 39 countries, France occupies 8th place and Germany 29th place. France also records an exceptionally high score when ranked within the group of Western industrialized countries (Barsoux and Lawrence, 1990). Inzerilli and Laurent (1983) confirm in their survey that French managers, compared to their American colleagues for instance, place strong emphasis on positional **power distance** as well as trying to maintain a skill advantage over their fellow employees. Several studies (Clark, 1979; Child and Kieser, 1979; Heller and Wilpert, 1981; Banai and Levick, 1988; Naulleau and Harper, 1993) show a high degree of **centralization** for both Germany and France compared to Great Britain. Banai and Levick show that whilst centralization in Germany is somewhat relativized by the wide range of participation models in management relations, in France it is based on a deep mistrust between upper and middle management, which the authors attribute to differing socialization between the two countries. An analysis of teamwork concepts at German and French car manufacturers (Jansen and Kissler, 1987; Greifenstein et al., 1993: 309ff) arrives at the conclusion that in both German and French companies there is little tradition of delegation compared to Anglo-Saxon culture.

The contradiction arising from significantly higher power distances in France compared to Germany, yet relatively small differences in the degrees of centralization, may be resolved if forms of participation are included in the equation. The concept of co-operative management (Wunderer and Grunwald, 1980), and the model involving some extent of company co-determination similarly geared towards co-operation in German companies, close the gap between centralization and low power distance. A direct equivalent of co-operative management does not exist in French management science, where forms involving some extent of company co-determination, for which the foundations were being laid down in Germany in the 1920s, have only been around since the 1980s.

Finally, significant differences appear in **communication styles** between management staff and their employees: all studies concur that the tangible focus of communication in Germany contrasts with the personality-oriented approach to communication in France. German managers view organizations as coordinated networks of rational individuals pursuing tangible goals; social

relations are regarded as a potentially disruptive factor. French managers, on the other hand, see organizations more as networks of power positions for attaining personal goals (Schmidt, 1993: 91; Banai and Levick, 1988: 125ff.; Laurent, 1985: 51; Calori and Atamer, 1990). Heller and Wilpert (1981) consider the question of the motives behind the willingness of senior management staff to participate. Whilst in Germany the improvement of decision quality emerged as the primary motive, French respondents emphasized improved communication and staff development; decision quality only came in third place.

An important foundation for vertical differentiation is provided by **differences in qualification** between hierarchical levels. French companies are often characterized more by a dividing line between academic, management work and non-academic, non-management activity. Upward mobility is therefore low compared to horizontal mobility along the higher management echelons. Qualification profiles in German companies differ less, and rising through several hierarchic ranks within a company occurs more often. In German industrial companies, technical knowledge, for instance, is more spread across the lower and middle management levels, whereas in France it is concentrated at the lower levels (Lane, 1989: 44). Linked to this is the dominance of middle management in Germany alongside the relatively strong authority of the foreman or woman. The comparatively high level of professional competence of this position finds no real equivalent in French companies (Maurice et al., 1980: 68ff.).

In French organizations, the **degree of vertical differentiation** is higher than in German equivalents. It rests upon a greater power distance and represents a steeper hierarchy with lower span of control, as well as lower willingness to participate. Differentiation corresponds to differing qualification profiles between hierarchic levels. In France, objectively existing differentiation goes hand in hand with a higher sensibility for differences in power.

Horizontal differentiation may be determined from the degree of **specialization** on all hierarchic levels. Of particular significance here are the principles of the Taylorist system. In an analysis of the consequences of Taylorism on shaping organization in France, Linhart (1992) arrives at the conclusion that in no other country has it brought about such problematic results (p. 52). Feudalism, centralism and bureaucratization combine with Taylorist principles to highly differentiated systems both vertically and horizontally. The emphasis on vertical management relations and Taylorist control principles, argues the study, allows for little lateral co-operation. Although no other Western European country has practised as many **team concepts** as France since the socialist period of government in the 1980s, Linhart shows that its effect as an instrument of integration is still limited. He attributes this to the relatively low levels of qualification of industrial workers and the efforts by experts at delineating a planning elite versus non-management workforce (p. 55ff.). Maurice's (1979) German-French comparison already points to the more widespread distribution of Taylorist principles in France, while he credits Germany not only with a higher level of qualification but also with a broader profile (p. 53). Equally different are the aims of multiple qualifications: Maurice notes that in Germany these are geared towards forming semi-autonomous teams, whilst in French companies the cushioning of lost time and fluctuation dominate (Maurice, 1979: 348; Lane, 1989: 168ff.; for team concepts in France see also Jenkins, 1988).

In a comparative study with Great Britain, Horovitz (1978: 18) is the only author to arrive at the conclusion that the degree of specialization in both Germany and France is generally very high. However, his verdict refers less to individual qualification profiles than to the responsibilities of entire company divisions.

The degree of specialization at **management level** is the object of a study by Banai and Levick (1988: 122ff.). Starting from a typology of management functions according to their differentiation and integration effects, the authors study the distribution of the relevant manager types as functional specialists and integrators. British companies are characterized by the dominance of functional specialists in decentralized structures. On the other hand, both German and French companies typically show a vertical differentiation in integrator roles on the upper hierarchic levels and specialist roles on the lower hierarchic levels. There is however an important difference connected with the country-specific career patterns: managers in German companies are recruited predominantly as functional specialists or have risen through the ranks as such within the company. Only later do these managers assume integrator roles, so that both functions may co-exist

with varying degrees of overlap between the two. In France, the degree of specialization is high even at lower management levels. The upper management levels are filled externally and are mostly industry-specific rather than function-specific, while lower management is geared towards the integration function (see also Bauer and Bertin-Mourot, 1990).

In French organizations the **degree of horizontal differentiation** is higher. Specialization is more pronounced, apart from at the highest management levels, with little development of lateral co-operation. Thus, compared to Germany, the significance of team concepts is low, despite strong political promotion.

Although most empirical studies were carried out in the 1970s and therefore in principle have only limited value in representing today's organization structures, current publications confirm traditional differences in comparison. The number of hierarchic levels and the level of specialization may have fallen in German and French companies, but the relative divergence appears to have remained. This conclusion also tallies with the results of Kogut et al. (2002) who, in a comparative study of organizational diversification in the largest OECD countries, also find consistent differences in international comparison.

Figure 2 summarizes the main characteristics of German and French organization science. A glance at the characteristics of organization science in both countries shows **parallels between organization theory and practice**:

- The predominantly instrumental organization philosophy in German organization science has technical-economic roots. Organization problems are therefore viewed as tangible problems. Competence for organization shaping is linked to professional qualification. Against this, organization in French philosophy refers mainly to social relationships in the company characterized by imbalances of power. Competence for organization shaping is linked more to position in the hierarchy, which finds expression in a lower willingness to delegate and a more pronounced differentiation of the levels.
- Organization forms in Germany show less internal differentiation, horizontally as well as vertically. The analytical interest in organization theory is directed towards increasing differentiation. In France, structures in practice are more differentiated and make the problem of integration in organization science appear comparatively low.

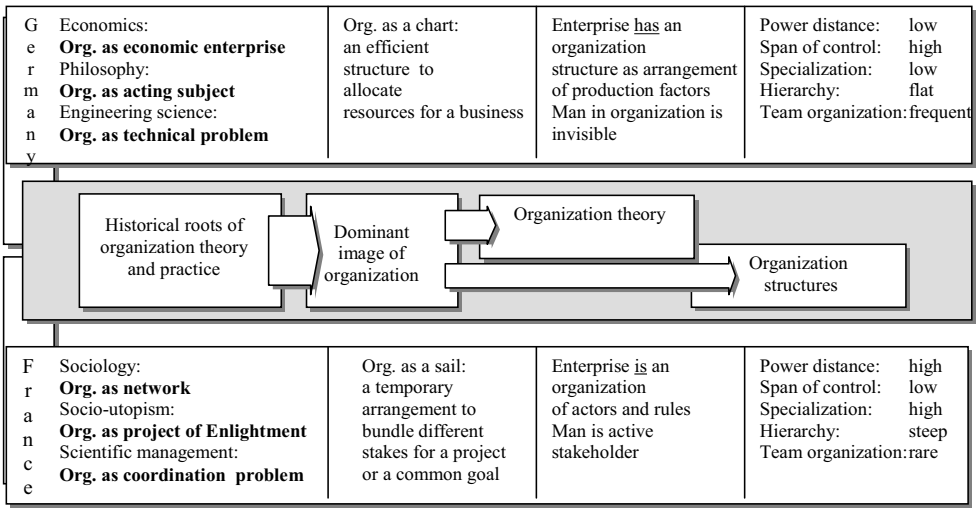

Fig. 2. Images of organization for theory and practice in Germany and France

Conclusion

The approach of Gareth Morgan has often faced the criticism that images of organization lead to an arbitrariness of organization research, because it can easily give the impression that scientists and

practitioners are in principle free in the selection of their preferred images of organization. So far, the cultural determination of the genesis of images of organization has received little attention.

Organization science in Germany and France mostly developed separately; not least due to linguistic barriers, but also due to opposed fundamental assumptions about the characteristics of organizations. Mutual reception of organization science has seen little development: differing dominant images of organization lead to the scientists of a country discovering few connection points in another country's publications to the issues they are themselves pursuing. The most recent studies on organization structures of companies in international comparison find little common ground, and it seems fairly improbable that organization science in Germany and France are converging.

To the extent that North American organization science is now becoming the worldwide reference for non-English language research as well, institutionalized pressure and isomorphism (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) may create a rapprochement 'towards a third point' whereby German and French scientists may increasingly publish in North American journals. They may also, as entrance tickets, so to speak, adopt the dominant images of organization from North American research: '*If you want to build a ship, formulate a strategy for your vision, introduce a balanced scorecard and offer a transparent system of incentives with individual bonuses!*'

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Appendix: List of analysed textbooks

Germany:

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France:

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