# THE SUCCESSION OF ARTISTIC DIRECTORS IN CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY: A TYPOLOGICAL APPROACH.

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ABSTRACT
This communication is part of a doctoral research. It presents a typology of succession based on a matrix built out of predetermined dimensions: planning and change. Applied in four cultural organizations in Quebec (Canada), this typology highlights the various identity issues occurring in different forms of succession.
Keywords : succession, cultural organizations, organizational identity, typology.

## INTRODUCTION

Succession is considered as a crucial moment, for both an organization and it's workers. (Bah, 2009; Balser & Carmin, 2009; Giambatista, Rowe, & Riaz, 2005; Le Breton-Miller, Miller, & Steier, 2004). It constitutes a pivotal moment in the development of an organization and can bring up issues affecting organizational identity. (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Succession concerns all organizations, without regard to their size, range of activities or geographic location. (Ip & Jacobs, 2006). Yet, despite recognition of the importance of succession, knowledge about the phenomenon in cultural organizations remains limited (Carrier, 2011; Landry, 2011). This paper presents the results of doctoral level research highlighting the plurality of forms of succession and issues of identity which occur during a succession. This paper presents one of the results of thesis research developing a typological approach to succession in the cultural sector. The present article deals specifically with issues of identity and the logics behind different types of succession.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this current paper, succession is addressed through the lens of organizational identity, which can be understood as a self-referential structure of what is considered the heart of the organization, in the form of observable, distinctive, key characteristics and which present a certain continuity over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Corley et al., 2006; Glynn, 2008; Whetten, 2006). A polysemous concept marked by different approaches, organizational identity as defined in this article corresponds to one facet of organizational identity: professed identity. "The *professed* identity refers to what a group or an organization professes about itself. It is the answer, the statement(s) or the claim(s) the organizational members use to define their collective identity" (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002).

Transformations in organizational identity are possible (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Corley et al., 2006; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007). However, they should not be seen as altering the essence of the organization (Bouchikhi, 1998) or its core business (Hannan, Baron, & Hsu, 2006). Succession in different organizations may also reflect different logics (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, & Lester, 2011). Whether recognized for their hybrid identities (Glynn, 2000; Whetten, 2006) or marked by their differing rationales or worlds (Abdallah, 2007; Daigle & Rouleau, 2010), succession in cultural organizations are breeding grounds for the expression of different rationales and conflicts related to

organizational identity. In this research, Economy of Worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991) is used to identify the plurality of logics in a succession. Organizational identity issues are addressed using the concepts of paradoxical approach (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2008).

Defining some concepts

Different forms of succession: the phenomena of succession is multifaceted and complex. In this paper, based on other sections of doctoral research in progress, I propose to define succession considering two structural dimensions: planned or unplanned succession, and the nature of the change as either simple or complex (a simple change in which the succession is a process of human resources management or a complex change where the change in director is accompanied by numerous organizational changes.) This matrix approach allows us to describe four types of succession: classical succession (simple change, planned), the unexpected succession (simple change, unplanned), crisis succession (reorganization, unplanned) and the succession accompanied by reorganization (reorganization planned).

Identity stakes: a stake is defined as, "What you can win or lose."[1] Identity stakes, or issues of identity, become a problem in organizational identity when they are raised during succession. It is expressed in claims or justifications in which one or more players consider that the organization's distinctive and central characteristics, thought to have provided some continuity, are now deficient. Actors express identity stakes by what is inherently missing, by an affirmation of what they want to get or not lose, or by what they fear losing. Loss is perceived as causing or potentially causing a problem. To determine an identity stake, some paradoxical aspects of identity are used: aggregation/fragmentation, convergence/divergence (Bouchikhi and Kimberly, 2008). Different dimensions can coexist and are not exclusive, however they can at times be out of balance and cause dysfunction. Bouchikhi and Kimberly posit four dysfunctions (***narcissism, identity conflict, drift and fragmentation***) and define them. ***Narcissism*** is designated as an imbalance in the stakeholder's vision which is so clear, consistent and organizationally consensual that it causes difficulty in analyzing a changing environment and adapting to it. It has a strong group identity in which divergent and pluralist views are excluded. ***Identity conflicts*** occurs when different stakeholders possess clear but divergent and mutually exclusive visions. Organizational tensions regarding objectives, strategies and guiding organizational principles stem from these irreconcilable visions. ***Drift***, often unnoticed initially, is a progressive loss of that which, initially, was a clear vision of organizational identity. ***Fragmentation*** is a dysfunction that is associated with the presence of several visions cohabiting in the same organization resulting in a lack of cohesion.

The logics: to identify ***logics***, the concept of the World, developed in the theory of the Economy of Worth (EW) is used. According to Boltanski and Thévenot (1991), strong constraints and their often implicit foundations can be illuminated by constructions of political philosophy. Thus, "... according to the conventionalist framework, common worlds are institutionalized principles that are recognized as socially legitimate and referred to by individuals in evaluating the quality gold worth of objects and peoples. " (Daigle & Rouleau: 16-17). This plurality of the principles of legitimate order makes the justification operations listed in different Worlds possible. If the Worlds are detectable in the justifications, they are also present in objects and devices. A complex system, the seven Worlds [2] are here succinctly defined. The ***World of Inspiration*** is based on inspiration and imagination. It is often associated with artists. It's an often intangible world lightly anchored in objects and devices. This is the world of the certainty of inspiration. The ***Domestic World*** is built on personal and hierarchical relationships as well as tradition. It refers to a logic in which there are people in positions higher or lower ranks. The objects and devices are rituals and gifts that emphasize the links between people. The form of evidence is the example. The

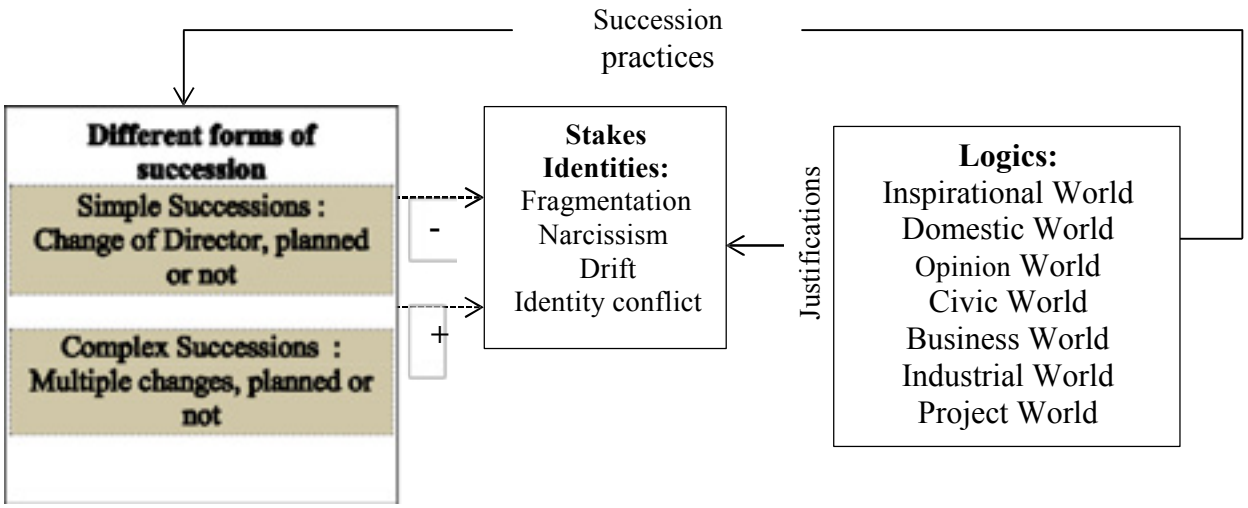
1 Grand Robert de la langue française, electronic dictionary
2 In « de la Justication », Boltanski and Thévenot proposed six Worlds. Later, Boltanski and Chiapello added a seventh , the World of the Project. These Worlds are complex systems described by thirteen criteria. In this article, four are used to describe a World : the principles of worth, the subjects, the objects and devices and the form of evidence.

*World of Opinion* is built on the precedence of the opinions of others, on the fame and reputation of a person. The topic of predilection is the Star and the objects or devices of this world are names, trademarks and messages. The form of evidence is recognition, success. The *Civic World* is that of representativeness. The subjects of this world are community, membership and the delegation. The objects and devices are legal forms, polls, and assemblies. The form of evidence is the written law. The *Business World* is built around the principles of competition and rivalry. The main topics are those of a business relationship: competitors or customers. Objects and devices are property and wealth. Evidence in this world takes the form of money and profit. The *Industrial World* is based on the principles of efficiency, performance and skills. The principle subjects are professionals. This world is anchored in objects and devices: techniques, protocols, procedures, standards. The form of evidence is the measure. The *World of the Project* rests on the principle of networks and links. The subject is the mediator or project head, the objects and devices, all which facilitates and allows connection.

Articulation of the theoretical basis

The two approaches (logics and identity stakes) share a concept of identity which does not rest on the opposition of simple dualities, but rather on systems of multiple tensions. While not located within a perspective where the contradictions must be resolved, as is the case with contingent approaches (Smith and Lewis, 2011), these approaches address identity through dynamics that are placed under tension.
Addressing the notion of identity stakes, the present research rests on two principle propositions: 1 – in successions involving only a change of director (classic succession and unexpected succession), the emphasis is on continuity of organizational identity and identity stakes are low-intensity. 2 - during successions involving multiple changes (crisis succession and succession accompanied by reorganization), emphasis is placed on the transformations of organizational identity and identity stakes are high intensity (figure 1).

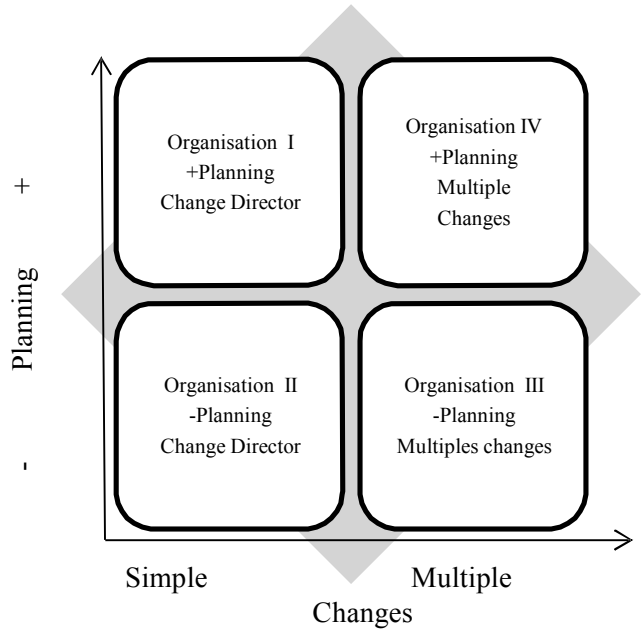
Figure 1: Conceptual framework



## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This qualitative study is based on four case studies of cultural organizations in Quebec. The sample by criteria (Patton, 2002) is constructed from two predetermined structural dimensions: planning and change (figure 2). This sample represents relatively extreme cases (planned or unplanned, successions with single or multiple changes), while possessing common characteristics (cultural NPO, in situations of succession, having specialized and separated the artistic and administrations directorates). Thirty-two interviews were the primary source of data. In organizations, the sitting directors (artistic and administrative), and a member of the board of directors were interviewed. When possible, previous artistic directors and founders were also interviewed. Observing meetings and public activities as well as a review of pertinent literature completed the collection of information. This variety of sources (interviews, observation and documentation) as well as the plurality of points of view (different stakeholders) ensured a richness and a depth of information, permitting a triangulation of information.

Figure 2: sample description




## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results are presented in two sections. In the first, estates and the identity stakes of each of the organizations are described. In the next, the logics of succession practices and the justifications given by stakeholders in each organization[3] are recounted.

Successions and Identity stakes
Organization I - Danza: Classic succession, a transmission by filiation affinity
Danza, founded over thirty years ago, is a presenter specializing in dance. The founder still occupies the director's post in collaboration with the one he identified as his successor. The transition process has been

3 The names of the organizations are fictive.

on-going for more than six years. Although the successor shares the title of co-director with the founder, and has assumed more and more responsibility, and is piloting major projects, the departing director is still fully involved in the artistic dossiers and no date of retirement has been advanced. The last phase of the process of succession, disengagement, has not yet been achieved and nothing suggests that it will be in the short term.
At Danza, organizational identity is based on the founder and his values. It is expressed by a frequent recounting of the "stories" that have marked the organization, a certain mythologizing of the people. In the interviews with the various stakeholders, the founder remains the reference point, the heart of the organization. There is a fusion between the organizational identity and personal identity of the founder. The tension in the organization is not the result of stress between two visions, but a strong convergence and aggregation of organizational identity. On this aspect, the imbalance is similar to organizational narcissism. However, it is not so much the difficulty to adapt to changes in the environment which is the problem, but rather the difficulty in separating the identity of founder from that of the organization. The layering of personal and organizational identities has caused paralysis of the succession process.
In the propositions, it is predicted that in a classic succession, there are few identity stakes or if there are, they are of low intensity and the emphasis is on the continuity of organizational identity. Danza fits this proposition. The continuity of organizational identity is strong and it is based on an idea of passing the torch and shared affinities. On the other hand, if the identity issues are not organizational or interpersonal high intensity crises, there are subtle identity issues.
Organization II - Theater Here Now: the unexpected succession, a strategic selection process
The Theatre Here and Now (THN) was founded over thirty years ago. With its own theatre and offering an annual program, it has known several successions for the position of artistic director. After the announcement of the departure of the artistic director, the position was offered to an identified successor. After he declined the offer, the Board of Directors and the administrative director set up a committee to find a new director. A public job offer is launched and a new director is chosen on the basis of his experience, his fame and the vision of the theatre, implying both respect for the mission of the organization, but also a path for renewal.
At THN, organizational identity is rooted in a recognized and shared mission. The key, perennial characteristics of the organization are affirmed and consensual. However, in a transforming environment, it is the features which distinguish the organization from others which are questioned and which lead the search and selection of a successor who is seen as someone who can initiate an update of the 'artistic mission.' Organizational identity is not a source of conflict, but becomes an anchor around which the members of the organization can regroup around a project, a vision of the organization updated by the arrival of a new director.

In the proposition, it is anticipated that in a unexpected succession, there are few identity stakes, or that they are of low intensity and that emphasis is placed on continuity of organizational identity. The THN corresponds to this proposition, with some nuance. Organizational identity is not an issue, in the sense of a loss or a fear of loss. Organizational identity is a gain, a lever which allows one to project into the future. In this sense the organizational identity of THN takes one of the characteristics of the Professed Identity: "... as a statement of identity, the professed identity can be future-oriented, programmatic» (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002: 18). There are no negative identity stakes or issues. On the contrary, the identity is rather positive (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2009). A positive identity implying that, "... the change result in net positive return in regard to emotional energy ' (Corley & Harrison: 378)

Organization III - The Wall of Sound: the succession of crisis, a game of tactical and circumstantial alliances
The Wall of Sound (WoS) is a group of artists dedicated to the integration of new media. Founded twenty years ago the centre experienced in recent years difficulties in replacing the founder of the organization who, while remaining linked to the activities of the organization, has gradually withdrawn. Different formulas are put in place, including the hiring of an artistic director who had never worked with a collective. As a result of this hiring several employees are unhappy and form an informal coalition. They no longer recognize their organization. The director did not understand the organization and its specificities, nor did he participate in its traditions and ways of doing things. An employee of the organization who is involved in the informal coalition, is considered to be the one who can restore order and return the organization to a more perfect image of itself. Following an informal consultation of employees, the board of directors ends the contract with the artistic director. The employee is then hired as general director and while assuming all the functions of artistic director, he does not bear the title.
At WoS, organizational identity has become a major issue leading to the departure of the artistic director and major organizational changes (redefinition of positions, repartitioning of powers, transformation of the organogram, reorientation of programming, amendments to the general regulations). The organizational changes are carried out with the objective to put an end to the internal crisis, but also establish decision-making protocols that promote collective decision-making and a more participatory management, principles considered central to the members of the organization.

To understand the crisis situation at the WoS, we must locate it in a time frame broader than the single succession, which is the issue here, and take into account the presence of the founder. Since the departure of the founder from his permanent position, different tracks have been introduced and none was considered satisfactory. For a few years, "... there was many small, clear gestures, but they traced a fuzzy drawing," : from a relatively clear mission, the meaning was gradually lost. The arrival of an artistic director with a specific project but considered as not matching, "... what we are...", has led to a conflict of identity in which different divergent and incompatible views clashed and gave birth to a latent conflict. At WoS, the last director, reaffirming a project for the future, based on the organization's past success, was able to create consensus and bring a positive inclusive vision. However this consensus could be created only by coalitions and by isolating and excluding the previous artistic direction.
In the research propositions, it is anticipated that within a crisis succession the identity stakes would be intense and that emphasis would be placed on the transformation of the organizational identity. The WoS corresponds partially to this proposition. Indeed, high intensity identity issues were expressed within interpersonal conflicts and caused an end of a contract, the establishment of a new artistic director and major organizational changes. However, the organizational transformations were made by invoking the need to reaffirm and reintroduce the values and modes of operation of the past, prior to the previous director. It was the modes of management and creation and the values associated with the past and carried by the founder which were reintroduced. He works in collaboration with an artists committee and his title is general director and artistic coordinator.

Organization IV – Groundhog Theatre, a succession accompanied by reorganization, a process of strategic organizational transformation which has played out in time
Groundhog Theatre (GT) was founded over thirty years ago by several producers to develop a facility of production and dissemination. It has already experienced several successions to the position of artistic director. At an annual general meeting organizational conflict between the director and the users of organization's services explodes. Following a formal consultation with users of the organization's services the board of directors, proceeds with organizational transformations, including the reaffirmation of the presence of an artists committee to work with the artistic director. Some of the proposed transformations cancel the director's current and future plans and conflict with his vision. Unable to come to a satisfactory agreement, the artistic director announces his departure. The board of directors and

general administration continue organizational transformations including a change in the role, mandate and power of the artistic direction. A job offer is launched for the position of artistic coordinator. A successor is chosen who then rises to the artistic director's position based on his ability to fulfill the mandate as defined. He works in collaboration with an artists committee.

At the GT, organizational identity is the major issue which lead to the departure of the sitting artistic director and major organizational changes (redefinition of positions, division of powers, transformation of the organogram, reorientation of programming, amendments to the general regulations). For the outgoing artistic director, transformations that she advocated as necessary for the organization to survive in the new environmental realities, constituted, for the users, a loss of the founding mission. Organizational changes were carried out with the objective of putting an end to the crisis among the users of the organization's services. By changing the decision-making structures, stakeholders promoted a return to what is considered essential: "Restore the theatre to its members," and through "increased member participation," reaffirm a "democratic life" and a "legal framework".

Identity stakes correspond to the conflict of identity in which two irreconcilable visions clashed. The conflict ended with the departure of the sitting artistic director and the implementation of organizational transformations based a vision defended by the organization's users, and to which the members of the board of directors adhered. The future of the organization is being built with reference to the founding mission and by anchoring in new regulations the mechanisms for the maintenance of that mission. Organizational identity has not only been clarified and reaffirmed through its historical foundations, it has became enshrined in organizational by-laws.

In the propositions, it is anticipated that with a succession accompanied by reorganization, there are identity stakes of high intensity and that emphasis is placed on the transformation of organizational identity. GT partially matches this proposal. Indeed, identity stakes are intense and express themselves in the conflicts between the different visions, up to the departure of the artistic director, the hiring of a new director and major organizational changes. However, the organizational transformations are made by invoking the need to reintroduce and reaffirm the values and modes of operation existent prior to the previous director. It is the modes of management and creation and the values associated with the past, resembling those of the founding members, that are reintroduced.

## LOGICS AND JUSTIFICATIONS

Danza, a succession anchored in the Domestic World

At Danza, the organization is a loved "baby" that can be given up for adoption. The founder is considered to be the living "soul," the memory, the guardian of the organization and the successor his heir apparent. The heir acquired a large part of his professional experience in the organization and shares the visions and values of the founder.

The practices of succession and justifications are based on domestic logic in which the relationship between the people remains central and implies a respect for an existing tradition and filiation. The Classic Succession is a "passing of the torch," an inheritance, an adoption process. The successor adheres to the mission of the organization making the central project of the founder of the organization their own. Emphasis is placed on the transmission of values and the continuity of the vision of the outgoing leader. The successor rises to the position of artistic director by sticking to the founder's vision and because he is identified as part of its continuity. Stakeholders justify this transmission of role through the respect and commitment they have for the founder.

The Theatre Here and Now, a succession anchored in the World of Industry

The THN is a concrete entity, a pillar, a "House," that grows and can be orientated in a proactive manner in such a way that it remains relevant in its era and milieu. The outgoing artistic director is considered as a participant in the history of the organization. He contributes to the on-going growth. The successor is

considered as someone bringing new blood into the organization, who, while respecting the mission, refreshes it. Succession is regarded as a new phase, "A breath of fresh air," a leap onto a "...train that is already running."
The practices of succession are based on an industrial logic in which one seeks a formal process to identify a new artistic director chosen for his skills, expertise and his ability to respond to the mandate, without having to be "trained" and gradually integrated. In the case of the THN the role of the successor's fame in the selection process indicates that this succession shares the principles related to the World of Opinion.
The Wall of Sound, a succession revealing multiple anchors
At WoS, the organization is an entity crossed by various currents that coexist in a more or less assertive manner. It is a "hybrid organizational model," "...an atom composed of different electrons revolving around its centre." However, there are tacit rules that one does not cross at the risk of being excluded; an "invisible line" from various coalitions are built. Succession is considered as a return to an original state, a restart on the right road. The founder is still present in the organization and the artistic director who finds his own role is considered as subscribing to the mission of the organization as it has been instilled by the founder.
Succession is a qualifying event during which the position of artistic director is unofficially challenged. The selection without any competition, of an internal candidate, a member of the coalition claiming a return to the previous ways of doing things, is, in fact, a process based on the filiation between persons and, as such, belongs to the Domestic World. On the other hand, the justifications evoked (the importance of a return to collegial relations and collective projects), as well as the constitution of a steering committee for artistic direction formalized by written regulations highlight the anchors in the Civic World. The designation of the role of artistic director as agent of liaison and connection between various stakeholders reveals the criteria of the Project World. The successor accedes to the position of artistic director based on his ability to gather around his directorate influential stakeholders of the organization and by fully assuming without delay the director position and by reaffirming the original mission.
The Groundhog Theatre, a succession with anchors in the Industrial World and the Civic World
The GT, the organization is a machine that can be adjusted to strategic visions, with the aim of achieving the objectives or respond to a mission. The outgoing leader is considered as having induced a derivative identity and having failed to meet the needs of stakeholders. The successor is recognized for its capabilities and skills to complete the restructuring or integrate. It is considered to be one has the skills and abilities that enable the achievement of organizational objectives.
The succession constitutes a test of qualifications by which the post of artistic director is officially disputed. These practices of succession have their foundation the Civic World: exposure of the conflict of identity in a general assembly, use of consultants to understand the needs of members-users, and the decision to include in the general bylaws an obligatory artistic steering committee means this succession belongs to the Civic World. These practices of succession (job offers, interviews, rapid integration of a person capable of performing the required functions without having come from or been trained by the organization), meet the Logics of Industry. Emphasis is placed on a strategic vision of the organization, in which new leadership is part of organizational transformations. The proposed changes constitute an organizational response, orchestrated by the board of directions to a previously identified problem.

## CONCLUSION

This study explores a sample of organizations which correspond to the four ideal-types (*classic* succession, *unexpected* succession, the succession of *crisis* and succession *accompanied by reorganization*), different practices of succession and their anchorages in different logics. This study shows that the succession of crisis and those accompanied by restructuring have intensive identity stakes (derivative and identity conflict) and are related to situations of organizational conflict. In these two cases, the organizational changes introduced during the process of succession, by the boards of directors, respond to the desire to regain or reaffirm an organizational identity that had been eroded or which might have been lost. In both cases, it was the user-members or employees who provoked, by their arguments, the process of succession. One can see that the transformation of the central characteristics of an organization does not go smoothly.
As Glynn stated, identity appears as a, "... resonant chord that they endure in their vibration, becoming almost indestructible," (Glynn, 2008: 427). However, identity stakes are not limited to successions with multiple changes. At Danza, the identity stakes have taken the form, akin to a form of corporate narcissism, of a fusion of personal and organizational identities which paralyzes the succession process. Identity stakes do not, however, lead necessarily to dysfunction. As shown in the case of the Theater Here and Now, the ability to create

consensus, in the context of succession, around the renewal of the mission of an organization, becomes a lever which can be used to visualize the future.
If the forms of succession are different, the logics at work behind the practices are also numerous and fit into different Worlds. The emergence of the Civic World in practices of succession could mark a social transformation that takes root in the social currents demanding greater transparency in decision-making processes and a return to more assertive democratic principles. The small space accorded to the Inspired World could also be linked to a weakening of the artistic critique (Chiapello, 1998). If the talent of artistic directors is mentioned, the focus is placed more on their recognition by peers and their ability to be catalysts and to create connections.
The typological approach developed in this study promotes a comprehensive and integrated approach to the phenomenon of succession. By defining the phenomenon in its various forms and by exposing the logics that are present, it encourages and enables reflexivity while facilitating discussion between the stakeholders involved in the process. The small sample size is the main limit of this research.

This study is part of the on-going research into the phenomena of succession and attempts to account for what happens on the ground, and to recognize that, "To hear is to understand. Accept and learn from this understanding rather than try to explain to these same players why they do not know what they are doing."(Amblard, Bernoux, Herreros, & Livian, 1996)

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