



Non-linear Thinking and Humanistic Management: Views Colombia against high GINI Index in Colombia

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Abstract

Peter Senge (1994) argues that mental models are social constructions that normally are invisible for us, which explain why they are so difficult to change. Since they are founded on deep-seated beliefs, defensive responses are normally used by managers when change is needed. This paper dwells on this important topic in order to show that the emergence and introspection of the mental model present in a corporation by the top managers is extremely salient if a humanistic management is expected. Furthermore, and as an outcome of this, we also work on how traditional mental models, which in Latin America and Colombia are normally elitist, reinforce the growing trend of the informal economy present in these countries. Hence, the challenge is twofold: to change mental models towards a more life-conducive economy, and to change management practices toward a more humane workplace. As a third section of this paper, a Colombian company is researched in order to show in practice how a non-elitist mental model increase productivity and help decrease the GINI coefficient.

INTRODUCTION

João Vendramim, partner and former counselor of the Brazilian company SEMCO, acknowledged that 100 years ago slavery was seen as 'normal', but today almost nobody will frame it as acceptable. His vision is that in 10 to 20 years *command & control*

management techniques—Theory X—would be seen as unacceptable too¹. SEMCO is one of the 19 companies selected² by the *Humanistic Management Network* as best practices of companies that puts human at the center of their business while having good financial returns (von Kimakowitz et. al., 2010). These companies probably are part of a global group of the most sustainable ones.

The challenge is, as stated by Jim Collins (2001), that at the end of 20th Century more than 90% of the companies he has researched still practice hierarchical, centralized, and controlled type of management—*scientific* management or Theory X. Thus, if we want to have more humane workplaces in the coming decades, several changes ought to be done. Peter Senge et.al. (1994) talks about strengthening the five disciplines; Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg (2003) deal with the five minds of a manager that have to be synthesized into a *comprehensible whole*; McGuire & Jorgensen (2011) reviewed theory and practice of HRD in order to force practitioners to leave comfort zones toward a more multidisciplinary, discursive and dialogical zone; Paul Thompson (2011) deals with the *trouble with HRM* stressing the need of a more reflexive and balanced HR that departs from the shareholder logic, and Herzberg (1966, 2003), to name just a few, highlights the importance of recognition and empowerment against the KITA traditional management practice.

Although the list is longer and the analysis must cover other areas of knowledge, in this paper the goal is twofold: first, we want to highlight that the key element to achieve a sustained change towards a humanistic management is the apprehension of mental models,

¹ As part of his presentation at the International Conference “Corporate Sustainability”, November 2011, University of Incarnate Word & Universidad EAN. Bogotá, Colombia.

² Published in the book “Humanistic Management in Practice” (2010), Palgrave.
<http://www.palgrave.com/products/Title.aspx?pid=398632>

or the emergence, visibilization, interiorization, comprehension and change of traditional scientific managerial mindsets, and second, and as a consequence of the first one, to show that the more a company structure within its managerial practices a more humanistic management approach, the more likelihood that the social impact that will result of this approach will generate a less informal economy—represented for example is less informal job positions, less corruption, less unethical lobby, more decent jobs.

As Senge et.al. (1994:236) argue that mental models “are generally invisible for us” so we must “look for them”. However, on average, not only managers do not want to *look for them*, they just do not want to be confronted with them. The objectivation of reality in all social constructed processes ends up with ‘things have been done this way before’(Berger & Luckmann, 1967), so the emergent managerial identity is one of social approval and being “normal”, which by so-called nature generates a vulnerable human that do not want to engage in informal, non-linear management practices. Fear, as Annette Craven puts it (2010), is what blocks management minds to act differently.

Figure No. 1—Why Managers don't follow humanistic approaches



Source: done by the author

However, it is not clear how vulnerability and management are studied, and if different management frameworks agree that this ought to be a priority if change at the workplace is expected. For example, the relationship between management and humanism³ has been named under different umbrellas, understood within multiple paradigms, and scientifically studied with contradictory results (Lyons, 2006). Several authors agree upon the beginning of management with Taylor's Theory X, or scientific management, ideas that had a bifurcation in the 1920s with Elton Mayo and Henry S. Dennison (Bruce, 2006), and other mavericks like Douglas McGregor, Abraham Maslow, and Frederick Herzberg, just to name a few.

The list of scholars that works into the melting of management and participation/democracy/humanism is long, but we can mention some Authors that we have researched to come into the point of this paper: Participatory Management (Wu & Lee, 2001); Humanistic Management (Melé, 2003; von Kimakowitz, 2010; Largacha-Martínez, 2010); Human Relations Management (Bruce, 2006); Humanistic Psychology (Lyons, 2006; Cosgrove, 2007); Organizational Behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2008); Complex/Quantum Management (Wheatley, 1992); Third Force Management (Maslow, 1998); Intelligent Organizations (Senge, 2005); Family-Friendly Management (Hochschild, 1997); Self Directed Work Teams, SDWT (Fisher, 2000), and even the anti-management (Semler, 2003). How important is in these approaches how the managerial mental model leads to or *strengthens* vulnerability it is not clear, and to the best of our knowledge has not been thoroughly studied. This supports the first goal of this paper.

³ Or participation, democracy, commitment.

Are we close to change the command and control paradigm among the traditional management approaches and within some of these aforementioned approaches? Is this normal science, as Kuhn (2006) puts it, being challenged within the HR academics and practitioners enough so a scientific revolution in the field is coming? We can't answer this question. Somebody could? However, the social upheaval that we are living in the 21st Century—i.e. *indignados*, occupy wall street, etc.—shows that the problem is deeper than we thought. The system *is* now the problem, and the *mother* of the system is traditional reason, traditional western mindset.

In the following paragraphs, this paper present four sections. In the first one, we make a short review of what we call the *Modernitous*⁴ mental model (see Largacha-Martínez, 2011) and its relevant role to social fear, management vulnerability, and the mental barriers to change. Second, we review the link between non-linear mental models, diversity—or the apprehension of the identity of the other as a truly other, and the impact on a less informal economy. Third, we review a real company, ViewsColombia Ltd, that in its 5th year of creation, 30 full-time employees and more than U\$2 million sales in 2011 supports both arguments of this paper, and it is a successful business case in what we are trying to present as an exploratory hypothesis. Fourth, and last, we conclude, show the limitations of this paper, and what further research should be done to deepen and broaden this concept of humanistic management linked to humanistic development.

THE MODERNITOUS MENTAL MODEL

⁴ This term comes from Modernity, and it is preferred to Modern, since modern has a reduced interpretation and it is linked to technological advance.

The liberation from Medieval thought arrived with three important names, Newton—physics and the Great Machine, Galileo—experiments, measurements, and mathematics, and Descartes—*cogito ergo sum* (Capra, 2001:30; see Zukav, 1979). The mechanization of everyday life, the objectification of reality (see Berger and Luckmann, 1967), and the *independent nature* of reality were all a part of the classical way of thinking (see Capra, 2001). The result was the separation of human beings from their social constructions, or alienation, as Marx (1990: 203) would put it later. This separation is also known as dualism, and is considered another pillar of traditional western mental model. This dualism is analyzed by Pope Benedictus XVI (2009:[6]) when he argues that *caritas in veritate* demands a “convergence of these two cognitive fields” that are “at the same time the truth of faith and of reason”. Reason and faith can’t be divorced.

There are several examples of the non-holistic or specialized mental models that pervade western social institutions. One is medicine. If two people go to a western traditional medical doctor with a headache, it is highly likely that both will be given acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin. If the same two people go to a holistic medical “doctor”⁵ i.e. bioenergetics, homeopathic, kinesiology, acupuncturist, there is very likely that both will be given two different treatments, since doctors do not ask for symptoms based on a specialized cause-effect reductionistic analyses. Holistic doctors ask more questions to ‘*non related*’ areas of the body that a traditional western linear-rational specialized doctor. An edition of *Fortune* magazine (2004: 77ff), for example, contends that we are losing the *War on Cancer* because the research methods that have been used are deterministic, reductionistic, and with cause-effect analysis, disregarding holistic

⁵ For some people it is a esoteric human being, which explains the quotes.

approaches⁶. The fragmentation of knowledge and a non-systemic view is preferred. Mainstream modernity is here, since for Clinton Leaf (Ibid.), the researcher for Fortune 500 magazine, “The narrower the research niche, it sometimes seems, the greater the rewards the researcher is likely to attain.” Hence, researchers with holistic approaches “often can’t get funding” (Ibid.).

As stated, if society really wants a deep and structural change, it must work on a *paradigm shift* and a *deconstruction of anthropological-historical ideologies*—like power, control and/or authority. The deconstruction of anthropological ideologies is a key element, because if not taken into account one couldn’t explain why Asian corporations, which have holistic mental models (see Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), are highly authoritarian (see Creffield, 2007). Thus, both structures, the paradigm/mental model and the historical ideologies must be deconstructed.

This specialization comes with objectivation, which means that social institutions and social experiences have a reality on their own—*sui generis*. Berger & Luckmann frame this process when society is seen as an “objective reality” (1967:47), explaining the origins of institutionalization⁷ and objectivation (Ibid.:53ff). In a very creative manner, Berger & Luckmann use the analogy of two ‘people’, A and B, who come from different cultures and met in an uninhabited island. From that *quasi*-social interaction, patterns of conducts start

⁶ Clifton Leaf made a thorough review of the research on cancer. Accordingly, he (2004: 82) wrote that “According to PubMed, the NCI’s online database, the cancer research community has published 1.56 million papers—that’s right: 1.56 million!—largely on this circuitry and its related genes in hundreds of journals over the years. Many of the findings are shared at the 100-plus international congresses, symposiums, and conventions held each year. Yet somehow, along the way, something important has gotten lost. The search for knowledge has become an end unto itself rather than the means to an end. And the research has become increasingly narrow, so much so that physician-scientists who want to think systemically about cancer or the organism as a whole--or who might have completely new approaches--often can’t get funding.” Fortune Magazine, Vol. 149, No. 6, March 22, 2004.

⁷ “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1989 [1967]: 54).

to emerge, converting them into social roles and customs. As stated “the most important gain is that each will be able to predict the other’s actions” (Ibid.:57). With prediction, a foundational pillar of modernity and the scientific method, a division of labor is possible, which evolves into the objectification of history. At the end, Berger and Luckmann (Ibid.:54) argue that “institutions further imply historicity and control”. The historical inertia of this process leads to traditions that are embedded in the social institutions which have a coercive power linked to their social control and legitimacy given by this objectification.

The vicious circle is completed. Ideologies and structures emerged. This helps to explain why it is hard to change them. However, if these ideologies, historicities, and structures are not deconstructed, humanistic management will be less likely to emerge because questioning is constrained and curtailed. That is why a *non-ideological stance* is one pillar of a humanistic corporation (Largacha-Martínez, 2010), since in Berger & Luckmann’s island example the “There I go again”, converts into “There we go again”, ending into “This is how these things are done”. Hence, for Ricardo Semler (2003:5) asking why, or the *whyway*, is an “absolute necessity”. Letting workers ask why is about sharing control, being democratic, and being participative. Semco is against the “blind, irrational authoritarianism” (1994:4) that permeates the majority of organizations.

Specialization and objectivation comes paired with imitation or the result of social pressure—comparison, which can be called *ideological normalization*⁸. Among all the possible patterns of social interaction, competition and coercion are nowadays the paramount ways of constructing reality (see Berger and Luckmann, 1967). In fact, they override cooperation and non-exploitative exchange. Accordingly, Carl Jung (1976: 103)

⁸ Normalization makes reference to the *normal* curve in statistics—the Gaussian distribution, the Bell Curve.

argues that “Human beings have one faculty which, though it is of the greatest utility for collective purposes, is most pernicious for individuation, and that is the faculty of imitation. ... Society is organized, indeed, less by law than by the propensity to imitation, implying equally suggestibility, suggestion, and mental contagion”. Cooperation, in this sense, is only considered from a cost-benefit viewpoint. In order to support this style of competition, hierarchical worldviews are assumed to be ‘natural’ rather than as a byproduct of competitive interaction. Therefore, hierarchies become ideological and global. Imitation, comparison and social pressure are against alterity, explaining the hardening of traditional mental models where command and control is seen as the ‘only’ possible way of managing a corporation and/or organization. Hence, by the aforementioned outcomes, it is imperative to have and create more organizational milieus where intrinsic motivators can flourish. This type of organizational environment is a keystone to humanistic management.

With these aforementioned elements—among a longer list⁹, western traditional mental models are built, socialized, and structured. Thus, people can’t see alternatives, can’t interiorize or comprehend new possible routes. Their paradigm does not allow them to see it (Kuhn, 1996), although there are plenty of examples that confirm their proven existence—i.e. Athens, as a highly developed and civilized democracy (see Manville & Ober, 2003), Robert Owen in the 18th Century in England and his writings of the ‘new men’ (see Owen, 1948 [1826]), and the 19 companies presented in the book “Humanistic Management in Practice” (von Kimakowitz, et.al, 2010), where a Brazilian company called Semco (see Semler 1994; 2003), is one of the best examples.

⁹ To sum up: mechanism, neutrality, dualism, materialism, objectivity, rational-logical linearity, ideologies, comparison and imitation. For a more detailed analysis of the outcomes of modernity and its deconstruction, (see Largacha-Martínez, 2011).

However, the question that ought to be made is why people don't follow or imitate these alternative paradigms, these proven participatory-humanistic examples? Annette Craven has a possible answer: fear¹⁰—also related as vulnerability or *nontrust*. Their mental models, a *modernitous* one for several of top managers, constrain their vision. When they try to follow, the development of their selves has been an outcome of a socialization that privileges all the traditional facets of modernity, thus their identity is not able to manage participatory approaches. Fear and rejection are their feelings and attitudes. Fear of looking 'outside of the box', outside of the mainstream paradigm. Fear of placing themselves outside their *safe* identities. Fear of not knowing how to act in a different setting, which demands sharing power, in contrast of *command & control*. Vulnerability of losing my power, of looking disempowered, of making the fool, etc.

Thomas S. Kuhn (1996:x,4) wrote a challenging book for the scientific community, since he found that "An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time". This statement erodes neutrality, objectivity, dualism, mechanism, to say, it deconstructs, in a way, the scientific method¹¹. For Kuhn (Ibid.) paradigms are "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners". Only within these boxes or paradigms the solutions are found. Some decades earlier, Kurt Gödel, an Austrian-

¹⁰ From the conference "State of the art in human resources management", April 2010, Universidad EAN, Bogotá, Colombia. Dr. Annette Craven is professor from the University of the Incarnate Word (US). She suggests that fear can come of losing power with their subordinates; or fear because I could look foolish to his/her subordinates; fear by not projecting an image of the "boss", who in traditional terms, should know all the answers, if not, 'why is he the boss?'; and finally, fear because if s(he) lets their subordinates to have "too much" voice, s(he) can took me out and take my position.

¹¹ A parallel critique, in a different time, was given by Fritjov Capra in his "Tao of Physics" (2000), when he stated that there are several correspondences between modern physics (quantum and complex) and Eastern mysticism. Both Kuhn and Capra, at their times, were ostracized for some years, until the scientific community's paradigm started to accept the relativity of knowledge.

American logician and mathematician was challenging even further the shortcomings of the scientific method *demonstrating mathematically* that a set of axioms cannot, *in principle*, explain the theory embedded in these set of axioms. You need always to use other out-of-the-box axioms—*meta-axioms*—to have a sound theory¹². Such ‘undecidability’ was, in another context, proven in a lab when the *entanglement principle* was demonstrated—the Bell Theorem.

From the management arena, Peter Senge researched the latest discoveries around learning organizations—and the sociology of knowledge. Two elements of his fifth discipline are akin of what has been described here, which are: systemic thinking and mental models. Senge (2005:17) defines mental models as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, and images that influence our way of understanding the world and act”. Systemic thinking deals with finding and “seeing” patterns instead of causal-deterministic ‘x-rays’ of events (Ibid:91). Developing a systemic thinking in a organization demands to re-socialize workers’ linear thinking, since they will have to see the structures/patterns that fall behind complex situations (Ibid:92). Senge summarizes at the beginning of his book “The Fifth Discipline”, what we have been addressing in this section, the need to deconstruct linear-rational mental models, since for Senge (Ibid:11)

From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences

¹² Gödel’s theorem showed that “Any such precise (‘formal’) mathematical system of axioms and rules of procedure whatever, provided that it is broad enough to contain descriptions of simple arithmetical propositions ... and provided that it is free from contradiction, must contain some statements which are neither provable nor disprovable by the means allowed within the system. The truth of such statements is thus ‘undecidable’ by the approved procedures” (as stated by Penrose, 1999: 133).

of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole. When we then try to “see the big picture”, we try to reassemble the fragments in our minds, to list and organize all the pieces. But, as physicist David Bohm says, the task is futile—similar to trying to reassemble the fragments of a broken mirror to see a true reflection. Thus, after a while we give up trying to see the whole altogether.

And “giving up” seeing the whole has other problems. One, our deepest problems are never solved (Ibid.:15) and, second, the failure of the best ideas within an organization (Ibid.:222). Also, and linked with what was written before, giving up to have a holistic vision creates a manager fearful of sharing the power with his/her subordinates, and fearful of allowing a new labor environment in the company which makes life-fulfillment possible, hence, a humanistic environment it is hardly difficult to emerge. Peter Senge links systemic thinking with the importance of acting towards the emergence of the organizational mental models, and once understood, have a clear understanding between what is said vis-à-vis what is thought, since sometimes we believe that “learning” something is having a new language with novel concepts, but behavior does not change (Ibid.:222ff, 256).

The impact of mental models is really high, since mental models are active, shaping our acts and affecting what we see—selective perception (Ibid.: 223). One of the challenges with mental models, argue Senge (225), is that normally they are tacit, so bringing them to the “surface” requires an open, non-hierarchical, respectful communication. However, facing mental models produces even more fear. Thus, we need to get deeper into this vulnerability. This will lead us to explore the identity crisis. Thus, diversity, non-elitist, or

non-linear mindsets must be developed. As will be shown later, at Viewscolombia Ltd. the development of sustainable mental models is a top priority, where vulnerability is diminished by creating an environment of trust, of open communication, of transparency in everything they do, and by having a respectful milieu. Besides that, they allow every member to fulfill their dreams and to be as unique as possible, this challenging the identity paradigm. Homogeneity is challenged. The next section, before looking for Views case study, deals with the importance of allowing diversity or non-elitists approaches to flourish in the workplace, not only in terms of Otherness and humanness, but in the importance of being so competitive that no informal job positions are created, zero, and in creating a policy of zero tolerance for corruption which is another pillar for the Informal Economy.

DIVERSITY, NON-ELITIST APPROACHES AND HUMANE WORKPLACES:
the case for Colombia, Latin America and its relation to GINI coefficient and informal economy reduction.

When Steve Jobs had the idea of creating the iPod, he structured a team that will have the goal of portable music everywhere in a digital and easy-to-go format. Job's approach to innovation was unique and is a good way to show how diversity is challenged from the very deep foundations of linear mindsets. The scheme for this team was somehow unusual: 1. they will work isolated from every other person or team; 2. they will not have time pressures, although they will present advances to Jobs; 3. they will allow every idea to be possible¹³. The important point here is the rationale behind the first principle, which was that if they allow the team to socialize their emergent ideas, failure would have been at the

¹³ See innovation at Management TV www.managementtv.com

Submission number: 15161

corner, because everybody would have start criticizing their innovations. Why, you may ask? It is just because everybody want to participate, which is true, but the real belief/behavior behind this is that we have been socialized to measure everything.

The act of measuring is believed to be a harmless process. However, measurement resides in an act of comparison, which is sustained in the Gauss curve. The “normal” curve is the epitome of comparability. Hence, everything must conform to the norm. We tend to see reality as conforming to the norm. A linear mindset, as explained before, is a socially constructed reality that is founded in normal mindsets, which explains why top managers doesn't like, on average, *non-normal* ideas. In order to create a humane workplace, vulnerability and non-comparability must be embedded into the mental model of top management. Instead of identity, diversity must be the norm. Identity is a notion that was created as an outcome of the need of building nation states (see Choi & Murphy, 2009), thus a short review of some thinkers about how to become aware of this reality, and how to transcend it will be helpful to enhance the importance of non-linear mental models in having a humanistic management reality.

The example we take is the development in Canada, since everybody know that they have not been able to create a harmonious *polynation* between English, Quebecois and indigenous population. A parallel will be made later using national identity debate into the workplace, a diverse workplace. For example, in SEMCO they created a group called “Are you nuts?”, where everybody, voluntarily, can go. And second, they allow everybody to ask WHY as many times as they wish—as mentioned before. Bottom line, the outcomes of truly understanding the other as part of my mindset does help, as it will be shown, to reduce marginalization, discrimination, and to reduce, in some way, the causes of Latin American informal economy.

Canadians need to transcend oppositions and dichotomies, not only because they “hinder us from pursuing more promising political paths” as Kernerman (2005: 4) argues, but also because they provide a platform that, *in principle*, cannot handle diversity.¹⁴ True multiculturalism must transcend dualism and dichotomies, but this change is impossible within the Western mindset. Modernity and true multiculturalism are theoretically opposed, with minimal intersections. No wonder that there has not been a real solution, *despite their desire to do so*. Kernerman, Taylor, Kymlicka are approaching the solution—deep diversity, differentiated citizenship¹⁵—but have not yet arrived at this point. Non-linear thinking is a theoretical framework compatible with radical multiculturalism that can lead to the development of an inclusive workplace—with an emphasis on the integration of contrasting but complementary elements. Although the “intertwined” visions present in the “new Canada” have made impressive improvements, the effects of modernity—and *modernitous* thinking—are still present. In this regard, Kernerman (Ibid.: 6) argues that

These nationalisms [Québécois, pan-Canadian, Aboriginal, or other “nations”] have some conception of the parts and the whole, and so they operate according to a logic of identity [of Modernity]. Here, diversity is conceived of as an assortment of different identities, and difference is understood superficially to mean difference among the various identity categories. An identity is, in effect, a unit of difference. The logic of identity

¹⁴ Kymlicka’s position culminates in what might be called unity in dominance, whereby various cultures exist within a single, dominant cultural framework. As a result, many cultures are treated as equal, while one or two others are assumed to embody the dominant norms. Accordingly, the result is that English speakers believe that any claims made by the French are automatically a threat to social harmony. See also footnote number 316.

¹⁵ Kernerman (2005:7) argues that the “Canadian School’s rejection of the equality script and its insistence on the coexistence of unity and diversity within a framework of differentiated citizenship has captivated a multitude of scholars, students, politicians, bureaucrats, and activists in Canada and beyond”.

is grounded in a refusal of alterity, a denial of complexity, in favor of reified and simplified identity categories.

Kernerman (Ibid.) has clearly delineated the problem: *The logic¹⁶ of identity is grounded in a refusal of alterity, a denial of complexity.* Alterity and complexity, as should be noted, are central to non-linear thinking. Nonetheless, Kernerman (Ibid.:17) contends that the *embrace of diversity* in the Canadian conversation is inevitably troubled, “since the challenge of diversity is premised on a threatening other, no matter how this other is embraced and celebrated”, as the example with the iPod’s team creating atmosphere. In short, the other is not seen as a truly Other. The imperative of unity, or “the quest for identity in nonidentity”, as Kernerman (Ibid.:18) puts it, “cultivates even greater anxiety over the basis for national cohesion”.

Without non-linear thinking, or a kin framework, this anxiety cannot be solved since it mirrors the need “to determine how the various parts relate to one another, and to the whole, and especially how these parts will be kept together in the form of a whole” (Ibid.). The idea here is that a humanistic workplace does not need to create a ‘national cohesion’, a *group cohesion* in the traditional sense. What is needed, as Senge (2005) puts it, is to develop a shared vision that does not imply renouncing to your uniqueness, to your diversity, rather is a process of articulating workers’ “common stories—around vision, purpose, values, why their work matters, and how it fits in the larger world” (Senge, 1994:298).

¹⁶ The “unity imperative”, as Kernerman (Ibid.:15) calls it, pervades the debate, obscuring the environment and impeding reaching a solution. The “we the people” parable of the *unity imperative* has not been transcended because “the logic remains: diversity represents a challenge (or dilemma, problem, or threat, etc.) to the unity (stability, harmony, peace, or existence, etc.) of the country (or nation, community, or people, etc.) because it always has the potential to produce division (or dissent, conflict, antagonism, or violence, etc.)” (Ibid.:16). Modernity, identity, national identity will almost always lead to such a conclusion.

Senge continues with his view of a shared vision, which is a “vehicle for building a shared meaning” (Ibid.). The relevance here is that in order to have a non-formal workplace that leads to a less informal business, which leads to a less informal industrial sector, hence, a less informal economy, the linear-rational—*modernituous*—way of thinking must be deconstructed since it does not takes us to a place where diversity is privileged and strengthen, neither the emergence of fulfilling lives, of *shared-meaning* realities. Here is where the limits of the corporation and other social institutions become blurred and must be rethought. Senge (Ibid.:300) argues that new organizational structures are emerging so the shared vision will be a reality. These new imageries are more akin to “a set of overlapping communities formed around shared meaning”, which some scholars like Juanita Brown, David Isaacs (1994) and Domenec Melé (2003) had been researching.

Brown and Isaacs made a very enlightening exercise using semantics where they asked people about what pops into their minds when they hear the words ‘corporation’ and later ‘communities’ (see Senge, 1994:508)¹⁷. All answers where almost antonyms. For corporation: “authority, bureaucracy, competition, power, and profit”, and for community¹⁸: “commitment, team spirit, and fun ... always evoke a richer, more involved sense of ourselves in relationship to a larger whole” (Ibid.). Brown and Isaacs believe that in order to restructure corporations, work should be focused on “capability, commitment, contribution, continuity, collaboration, and conscience” (Ibid.:512). It is revealing that this list highly correlates with the table created by Fritjov Capra (2001) when he mentioned the

¹⁷ Senge’s ideas about the “degree of active involvement” (1994:314), where the last stage is “co-creating” has a theoretical link with quantum mechanics (a branch of the complex thinking). This co-creation process is a very humane, non-linear one.

¹⁸ Domenec Melé wrote the article “The Challenge of Humanistic Management” at the Journal of Business Ethics where he argues that there has been three approaches towards humanistic management, but only the third one will full grasp the meaning of the human being, which “considers a business enterprise as a real community of persons” (2003:77).

difference of the western mindset and the non-linear, complex one (see Table 1). This argumentation support the main idea—exploratory hypothesis—here in this paper which is that linear-rational thinking is one of the main sources of the type of jungle-capitalism we have, which is one of the main sources of a dehumanized workplace, challenged society and informal economy.

Table 1. Comparison of Mental Models

THINKING/KNOWLEDGE		VALUES	
<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Integrative</i>	<i>Assertive</i>	<i>Integrative</i>
Rational	Intuitive	Expansion	Conservation
Analytic	Synthesizer	Competition	Cooperation
Reductionistic	Holistic	Quantity	Quality
Linear	Non-linear	Domination	Association

Source: *La trama de la vida*, Fritjof Capra (2001:31).

Pursuing deeper about identity vis-à-vis diversity, the ideas of Roberto DaMatta about the Brazilian reality complement what was presented. In *polysegmented* nations, DaMatta argues (2000:175) that “we do not find the conception of society as *societas*”. Thus, the individuation of society is not possible, and the sociopolitical analysis of citizenship and national-identity as independent variables does not reflect the reality in polynations. Identity has to be understood as the entanglement between the individual and the person, in DaMatta’s sense; hence, any methodological approach to this topic must face this characteristic typical of *traditional* societies (Ibid). For DaMatta, when researchers speak of the individual as a “Western elaboration, the part is more important than the whole¹⁹” (Ibid, 173). In his definition of the person, he argues that the whole—this social

¹⁹ And he continues by saying that “the generally accepted notion is that society should be in the service of the individual. The contrary would be an “injustice” to be corrected.” (173)

elaborated person—can only exist as a result of *being-constituted* by the complementarity of the parts. “Here, instead of society being contained in or encompassed by the individual, the individual is contained, immersed, or encompassed by society,” (173), similar to Latin American and the Caribbean polynations.

Table 2. The individual (identity) vis-à-vis the Person (diversity, non-elitist)

Individual ²⁰	Person
Free. Has a right to its own space.	Submerged in the totality to which it is necessarily bound.
Equal and parallel to all others.	Complementarity to all others.
Has choices which are seen as part and parcel of its fundamental rights.	Does not have choices, but moral dilemmas.
Has “private” (or inner) emotions or feelings.	Has “public” indignation.
Its consciousness is individualized.	Its consciousness is relational and collective. The totality takes precedence.
The novel and short story, intimate and individualistic works by an author, are essential part of its universe.	Mythology and other forms of paradigmatic formulations of the world are basic forms of expression.
Makes the rules of the world in which it lives. The rules are conceived of as explicit and capable of being changed at will.	It is given the rules of the world in which it lives.
No mediation between it and the totality.	Segmentation and multiple mediation is the rule.

Source: Roberto DaMatta “*Carnival, Rogues, and Heroes*” (1991)

The individual, the person, the human being, the collectivity, the society, the culture, the nation, the nation-state, are all intermingled, entangled, immanent to one another, and inherent to the life-world of each part of the whole. Therefore, “it is as if the totality were penetrating the individualized element to eliminate its inner space and incorporate it once and for all into the collectivity and the whole” (DaMatta:175). This interpenetrability of the human and the whole, among all the material and energetic parts of the universe, cannot be understood as a physical penetration, in the traditional sense, rather as “connecting threads between worlds or realities” (Morales, 1998:21). In sum, as stated

²⁰ DaMatta in chapter 4 of his book, “*Do you know who you’re talking to?!*”. *The distinction between the Individual and Person in Brazil*, provides a summary of that distinction, which is important to this paper.

by Morales, the self²¹ is now plural and can be transformed in many ways (see Caro and Murphy, 2002). Holism changes the way a polynation is seen, not as diverted from the nation-state, but interconnected at the same level²².

As Sökefeld (1999:427) argues, “the two [culture and self] cannot really be separated”. He goes even further stating that “agency, reflexivity, and the self go hand in hand, each requiring both the others” (430). And since for him identity and culture are a dialectical process, the person and nation are unified. Martín Sökefeld, in his article “Debating Self, Identity and Culture in Anthropology” (1999), points out that identity in the Western tradition was understood as *one*. This approach “was destroyed by poststructuralist deconstruction” (417), specifically Foucault. The non-traditional approaches talk about multiple identities, and fragmented selves, and the core idea now is not identification, but rather *differentiation* (Ibid:418). Accordingly, in what Sökefeld called ‘plural societies’, “there can be identity only if there is more than one identity, and in this sense difference constitutes and precedes identity” (Ibid).

History matters in building the ethos of a corporation, but the concept of identity cannot work properly for a different mindset. Within the identity vis-à-vis diversity debate, what is needed is Barth’s (1998) idea of the emergence of ethnic distinctiveness; García-Canclini’s (1995) idea of the transculturation process; DaMatta’s (1991) idea of polysegmentation, and Sökefeld’s (1999) idea of differentiation preceding identity. In sum, the traditional rendition of identity is problematic. If diversity is to be understood, a more humanistic, holistic, transdisciplinary, and non-traditional approach must be employed.

²¹ Not to mention the “Theravāda Buddhist theory of no-self” (Kopf, 2002) where writers such as Nishida Kitarō reject the idea of a fixed identity, thus paralleling post-modernist and existentialist approaches the self.

²² In a quantum holism there are no hierarchies, “reality is an undivided wholeness” (Herbert, 1987:18).

Having developed the argument of identity vis-à-vis diversity, now we link this element to inequality in Latin America, as part of the cultural mindset that permeates the proliferation of the informal economy and denigrating workplaces. Latin American history has been shaped, not only because of the cruel conquest (see Dussel, 1992), but because Spaniards went there to “invent” America, rather than to embrace what already existed (Arciniégas, 2004). However, they brought their mindset and applied to Latin America. The result, as it is shown below, was the creation of the elitist “hacienda” in an effort to simulate a kingship, where the ‘*hacendado*’ was the so-called king, and his workers, the *peons*, were just the leftovers of the conquest (see Guillén, 2003). Therefore, Orlando Fals-Borda (1968:191) argues that in order to understand Colombia and Latin America, the researcher should adopt novel and different methodological approaches that sometimes require heterodox stances, broader frameworks of knowledge, and even what appears to be illogical systematizations.

From the time of the conquest, the attempt has been made to apply the principles of rationality and unity throughout Latin America, even in situations where cultural and ethnic diversity have been thriving. And given this propensity for an all-encompassing reason, and the accompanying uniformity, judging this area of the world to be inherently backward and, thus, underdeveloped was almost inevitable. On the other hand, to comprehend the potential of the human being, particularly the emergent possibilities in Latin America, the real rather than mythical project of development and nation building must be grasped. This more realistic image, notes Tovar (2000: 203), must no longer overlook the ethnic diversity, linguistic pluralism, and dispersion of dogma that are clearly operative. He argues convincingly that these traits are central to the genuine socially constructed reality in Latin

America, as opposed to the rendition fostered by the conquest that is synonymous with elitism and exclusion.

The French historian, Francois-Xavier Guerra (2000: 272), offers an image of the nation similar to Tovar when he says that a nation embodies an ensemble of persons. Similarly, Ingrid Bolívar (2002: 18) recognizes that the nation in Latin America “gathers together the wills of distinct people, and thus represents a temporal, even somewhat accidental, organization of persons.” Nowadays the diversity found among Latin Americans is unmistakable, and in many respects reveals the presence of a multitude of different worlds living side by side—several Culture-Worlds. This hybridism, in other words, is not subtle. In this regard, advises Bolívar (2002: 69), the social sciences should reject the “French utopian vision, the unified and indivisible republic... [that] is unreachable ideal.”

The hybridation process that occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean is described in the seminal work “El Espejo Enterrado” written by Carlos Fuentes (2002), where he acknowledges what has been described. What it is important is the complex reality of Latin America and at the same time the common pattern where “Spain embraces us all” (Ibid.:21-22; Guillén, 2003). It is important to review a relevant paragraph by Carlos Fuentes

A través de España las Américas recibieron en toda su fuerza a la tradición mediterránea. Porque si España es no solo cristiana, sino árabe y judía, también es griega, cartaginense, romana tanto gótica como gitana. Quizás tengamos una tradición indígena más poderosa en México, Guatemala, Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia, o una presencia europea

más fuerte en Argentina y en Chile. La tradición negra es más fuerte en el Caribe, Venezuela y en Colombia, que en México o Paraguay. Pero España nos abraza a todos....

La España que llegó al Nuevo Mundo en los barcos de los descubridores y conquistadores nos dio, por lo menos, la mitad de nuestro ser... nos ha tomado tiempo darnos cuenta de que nuestra relación con España es tan conflictiva como nuestra relación con nosotros mismos. (Fuentes, 2002:21-22).²³

Hence, although there is a common pattern, it does not exist a single action to change the inequality reality for all Latin American countries, since "Ten of the fifteen most unequal countries in the world are in Latin America", said Head of UNDP, Helen Clark at the Fourth Latin America Ministerial Forum on Development on May 25th, 2011²⁴. Parallel to this reality, is the common pattern in Latin America of a continuing increase in the rate of underemployment where "an additional cost of economic decline has been the losses in terms of working time, which can be seen in increased underemployment" (ECLAC/ILO, 2009) as stated in the bulletin "The employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean", issued by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the

²³ A rough translation done by the authors: Through Spain, the Americas received the Mediterranean tradition in all its strength. Spain is not only Christian, but Arab and Jew, and Greek, cartaginense, and Roman as well as gothic and gipsy. Maybe we have amore powerful indigenous tradition in Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, or a stronger European presence in Argentina and Chile. The black tradition is stronger in the Caribbean, Venezuela and Colombia than in Mexico or Paraguay. But Spain embraces us all....

The Spain that arrived in the New World aboard the ships of the conquistadors and discoverers gave us, at least, half of our being.... it has taken us a while to realize that our relation to Spain is as conflictive as our relation with ourselves. (Fuentes, 2000:21-22).

²⁴ <http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/ourperspective/ourperspectivearticles/2011/05/25/pulling-latin-america-out-of-the-inequality-trap-.html>, surfed at December 2011.

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Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in September 2009²⁵. Furthermore, and we would expect this to happen as a pattern in other Latin American countries, in Colombia only 24% of workers have a untimed/unlimited labor contract, as shown in Portafolio, the biggest economic newspaper in Colombia on November 16th, 2011²⁶, and 41% of industry labor has short-term contracts. Not surprisingly, Colombia has 12 million informal workers!²⁷

Although these are only to consequences of the Latin American mindset, they are also part several other factors that are not elaborated here—see Dependency Theory (Cardoso & Falleto, 1979), and part of the Global economic system—the issue of January of *The Economist* shows that “inequality is rising” worldwide, with few exceptions. However, as part of the second goal of this paper, if we deconstruct the ‘*hacendado*’ elitist mindset in top management in Latin America, we are opening the space for a reduction in inequality, underemployment, and at the same time, opening the space for more humanistic management practices in companies, at it is shown below in the ViewsColombia case. At the end, this will help reduce the informal economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. We have been researching three more companies in Colombia—one public²⁸, and so far we have found the same pattern: a mindset that accept mistakes, a non-elitist mental model, and a fuzzy thinking. Here we only present Views because of space and it is the more advanced case so far.

²⁵ The report can be downloaded at <http://www.oitchile.cl/oit-cepal/oc-09-in.pdf>. Surfed at December 2011.

²⁶ <http://www.portafolio.co/economia/colombia-solo-el-24-tiene-contrato-termino-indefinido>, surfed at December 2011.

²⁷ <http://www.portafolio.co/economia/colombia-tiene-12-millones-trabajadores-informales> January 9th 2012.

²⁸ The Companies are: Bancoldex (the governmental development agency, 350 employees), Acción Fiduciaria (financial sector, 125 employees, ranked No. 1 in Colombia by ROE), and City Parking (a parking lot management company). All there three companies, plus Views Colombia, are part of the funding given by Universidad EAN.

The inequality mental model is so ingrained in Colombia and Latin American countries that are seen as “normal”, which explains the high gini coefficients. Humanistic management can put a drop in this change by showing workers that this is wrong and that things have to be changed. The informal economy, thus, is in part sustained and maintained in Colombia and Latin America/Caribbean because of this inequality-*hacendado* mental model. Companies like Views, among others, are making a huge contribution to change that path of *undercivilization*²⁹.

In order to support even more this argument, just take a look at the history of the only country invaded by Spain that is not located in America, and you will find a lot of similarities. It is in Asia: the Philipines (see the Federal Research Comision, 1993). From Spain they have Catholicism as the main religion—82% are Catholic (FDR, 1993), an unequal land tenure structure, a *friarocracy*³⁰, a rural-urban dichotomy, an agricultural production, and a patron-client rural social interaction—which has been transferred to the cities. From USA they have a dependent economy, agribusiness, military bases, and an international debt. From Japan they have a *maquila*-type economic relationship—which is more of their geographical vicinity than from their invasion, however.

Because of limited space, this explains some of the causes of the high GINI coefficients in Latin America. Colombia, for example, is number three after Haiti and Angola, in the 2011 Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)³¹. as stated in The World Bank website, the “Gini-coefficient of inequality: This is the most commonly used measure of inequality. The coefficient varies

²⁹ We prefer not to use the so-called under-developmentness of Latin America (see Escobar, 1995).

³⁰ From Friar. The Roman Catholic priests have huge power and political leverage in the Philipines.

³¹ The report can be downloaded at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>. For a Colombian news see http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/ARTICULO-WEB-NEW_NOTA_INTERIOR-10693875.html

between 0, which reflects complete equality and 1, which indicates complete inequality (one person has all the income or consumption, all others have none)³².

With all this stated, showed, research, and data supported, now we can look to one out of thousands of good and humane companies that exist in Colombia and Latin America, but that cannot change the trend, and won't do it never if this is not accompanied by Governmental structural changes. That is what we turn on in the next section, to show the case of Views Colombia Ltd.

CASE STUDY: VIEWS COLOMBIA LTD.

Views Colombia started as an idea of two young men who, in their quest for independence, decide to create a company that would not only cover their economic needs at the time, but would also give them the opportunity to fulfill their personal mission. With their own experience as a starting point, they decided to identify the basic values upon which the company would be founded. This list included parameters such as fulfillment at work, flexible hours, a sense of respect, and fair wages should be included in their short wish list. Felipe and Daniel—the first two founders—finally decided upon three well-defined tenets, which to this day are threaded into the basic fabric of the company: *being happy, being robust, and giving back*.

The two great and life-long friends wanted to create a new kind of company. A company that considered it's people as an end, as an objective in and of itself. To be happy, they thought that to be to be robust—big, there had to be growth not only for the

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<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,.contentMDK:20238991~menuPK:492138~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:430367.00.html>

company, but for the participants, the people themselves. And being big, they thought, is more than simply achieving high returns. To be big they needed to generate sustainable growth that could impact a large number of people and society. Though their proposals initially seemed utopian, bit by bit they have strengthened them and made them part of a corporate culture full of innovative ideas that definitively break with the current paradigms. Being happy definitively has to come with a completely innovative enterprise culture. Views proposed not only a challenge to the traditional models of administration, but in addition, they tried to disseminate their business model to the involved ones, in order to create a broader impact.

The company has taken upon itself the definition of certain values, which are considered as indispensable for the construction of what they called “Views Culture”. Respect, for example, and the ability to accept and treat others as human beings, form part of the *Views* identity. Daniel argues that “Here we are all equal, and we treat each other as such. I am not better or worse than any of the people that make up this company.”³³ They have managed to establish an open, diverse and inclusive environment that is based on respect, maintaining the principle of *alterity* (see von Kimakowitz et.al. 2010; Largacha-Martínez, 2010). As part of this trustfulness, respect given generates high levels of participation, a sense of belonging and in consequence high rates of achievements and fulfillment of organizational objectives.

Another of the deepest values of culture, *kindness*, is represented in one of the three pillars of the corporate culture, which is "Giving Back". Companies nowadays seek to be socially responsible with the purpose of have a positive image, obtain benefits and reductions in tax obligations or get a special remuneration for its “Social Responsible

³³ Interview done by Laura Maldonado at Views Headquarters in Bogotá (Colombia) on October 2011.

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Management" (see McGuire & Jorgensen, 2011). On the other hand, Views has established several ways to demonstrate that *giving back*, means going beyond the political correctness of CSR (see Pirson & Turnbull, 2011), what Paul Dembinsky (2010) refers as the difference between relation and transaction.

An example of it, is the act of forgiving. In the year 2010 the company was victim of a theft realized by workers of the company, who using resources, time and some clients of the company, create a similar organization. One of every four employees was a thief. In this moment, what to do?, what to think?, how to respond?. According to what we expected to happen, the logical sequence of this story might end with a dismissal of employees and quite possible start legal proceedings, however Views surprised with an authentic reaction. The managers decided to forgive and to offer a new opportunity. But, why? Across this research, a large explanation of mental models concept has been developed. We have stand out how our mental models determine the way of acting, So, here is where the whole theoretical background lines up with what we call a *non-linear management* and/or the *informal* management.

In attainment to the mental models of the leaders, that is to say the mental shared model of Views, the response for the thief situation was hardly consistent with Company's mission. The discovery of the theft brings up many obvious alternatives which are expected to be in the "normal curve", but the answer was no so obvious because they decided to be authentic, these means to respond with a not awaited alternative. To forgive means accept mistakes, accept other one as a human being, vulnerable to commit mistakes. Giving back, means offer a new opportunity, return dignity, not to judge and, instead, create an organizational environment based on learning from problem situations. As Daniel remarks "They were deserved to be excused, I committed many mistakes and took second

opportunities, we could not interfere in their dreams because of a mistake, they have their family and more than that, they are humans who can commit mistakes".

Views culture, goes far beyond of what would be expect to be received from a "normal" company. *Giving back*, crosses the limits of simply offer an economic aid. One of the programs that promote the above mentioned discipline is the construction of social interest houses. Though the initiative was raised initially between the executives of the company, currently they involve not only the employees, but also their families, leading a drag effect, because the impact of what in the company is conceived as "do the good thing" has been spread up reaching a broader impact, so culture and values have been translated into actions.

This is an example of how an informal management can go against an informal economy. Albeit small, the impact in the workers and familie's workers mental models, where a company that want to give back to society and be financially sustainable is possible is a strong one. Also, that these social programs help people in need transcend the typical and political-correctness model of Corporate Social Responsibility. In order to reduce the increase of the informal economy in Colombia and in Latin America, is to start "giving back" by companies and 'people', normal people. It is interesting to show that all the 30 workers of Views have full benefits and untimed/unlimited type of contract, which is a totally uncommon pattern for Colombian companies—as showed before, but mainly for marketing companies that have to work on 'projects', thus presenting times of low projects.

Another clearly evidence of humanistic management practice is seen in the department meetings held every Monday morning. Each area manager is responsible for carrying out a session of about 40 minutes with all members of each department in order to share the experiences of the weekend. The weekend? Yes the weekend. Perceive employee

as human being, means recognize the importance of his family, know about his “real life”, and be part of his relation with social environment.

ViewsColombia has clearly define that the endless of the company are the employees, so, all the efforts are aimed to create an environment of transparency in everything they do, and as it is possible go beyond the law, i.e. offer more than even the *viewers* could even expect. At views they not only fulfill with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) required by law³⁴, they provide more than material needs. Why? Because they have already discovered that “*being happy*” go far away from a mere salary. Since Daniel thought about the reason of have a company he established that “ La razón de ser empresario es, que por medio de mi empresa las personas logren ser felices”. The non-linear thinking of the top manager brakes up with the current economic paradigm that puts economic motive not alongside but above all other objectives of the human action. (Von Kimakowitz, 2010)

In sum, offer opportunities to study, establish training environments, learning from errors as a practice for life, create an environment of trust, aligned company aims with member’s dreams and take care of every detail that could affect the respectful milieu of the company, definitely demonstrate that *Views* is an example of a nontraditional firm. Juan Camilo, for example, one respondent of the company, was selected to travel to San Andres Island in order to make some important marketing research for a client. What we want to highlight is that Juan Camilo who is 23 years old, has never seen the sea before. For him, was an impossible dream, as he said “ I hope my children could someday visit it , because I’m already resigned”. It was not only a good treat with a client the main reason for the trip,

³⁴ In Colombia it is known as “ Aportes Parafiscales” . It includes a percentage Contribution for the state (ICBF “ Colombian Child care service” and SENA “National Educational Service) and for the well-being of the employee (Health, occupational hazards, and Family benefit Fund)

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was the fact that Juan Camilo was happy reaching his dream and for *Views*, it was important.

As a practice of “*giving back*” the salary is 20% more, than what a employee really works. The 8 working hours that by law are legally described as standard for working, have been reduced in the company because they think that if the *viewer* gives his time to work and offer his time for the company, they can also give him back with time. They give the opportunity to spend this “extra” time with his family or basically doing things that makes him being *happy*. The commitment with employees has not only to be with a correct and just payment, it has to be aligned with the aims of the company in order to be an Authentic company, that has not a traditional scientific managerial mindset, leading members to be unique as possible providing them aims that have to be not only with an economic benefit but with *viewers* life dreams.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In the now famous documentary “*Inside Job*”, the producers show remarkably how being human is part of the problem, being ‘that’ kind of human, a greedy, elitist, lust type of animal-human being. That was mentioned almost 40 years ago by E.F. Schumacher (1975) in his seminal work “*Small is Beautiful*”, where he showed the unethical capitalistic approach of an unlimited accumulation, and presented the ironic element presented by the most respected economist of the first half of the 20th Century, Keynes, where he argued that we needed to be greedy and selfish for a little more time (Ibid.). This is incredible.

This paper has shown a revision of literature, data and past research about management, humanistic management, diversity, otherness and the importance of deconstructing

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traditional mental models that self-sustain these discriminatory mindsets, which at the end help to produce a more informal economy. However, the topic is too broad to be developed in one paper, and with limited space. Hence, we wrote about two of the most salient elements, as far as our knowledge and research has gone through, which are mental models and elitist managerial practices—which are an outcome of the first. More research is needed to enhance these exploratory hypotheses.

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