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Prevalent concealed ignorance of low-moral careerist managers

Contextualization by a semi-native multi-site Strathernian ethnography

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Abstract

Purpose – Organizational research missed managerial ignorance concealment (MIC) and the low-moral careerism (L-MC) it served, leaving a lacuna in managerial stupidity research: MIC serving L-MC was not used to explain this stupidity. The purpose of this paper is to remedy this lacuna.

Design/methodology/approach – A semi-native longitudinal multi-site ethnography of automatic processing plants, their parent inter-kibbutz co-operatives (I-KC-Os) and their kibbutz field context enabled a Strathernian ethnography that contextualized the prevalence of MIC and L-MC.

Findings – I-KC-Os' oligarchic context encouraged outsider executives' MIC and L-MC that caused vicious distrust and ignorance cycles, stupidity and failures. A few high-moral knowledgeable mid-managers prevented total failures by vulnerable involvement that created virtuous trust and learning cycles. This, however, furthered dominance by ignorant ineffective L-MC executives and furthered use of MIC.

Practical implications – As managerial know-how portability is often illusory and causes negative dominance of ignorant outsider executives, new CEO succession norms and new yardsticks for assessing fitness of potential executives are required, proposed in the paper.

Social implications – Oligarchic contexts encourage MIC and L-MC, hence democratization is called for to counter this negative impact and promote efficiency, effectiveness and innovation.

Originality/value – Untangling and linking the neglected topics of MIC and L-MC explains, for the first time, the prevalence of these related phenomena and their unethical facets, particularly among outsider executives and managers, emphasizing the need for their phronetic ethnography to further explain the resulting mismanagement.

Keywords Managerial ignorance concealment, Low-moral careerism, Executive stupidity, Oligarchic fields, Strathernian ethnography, High/low-trust cultures

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In view of the business scandals of the last decade, managerial ethics has become a major topic of organization research and teaching (Ailon, 2015; Rhode, 2006), but this is not true of managers' low-moral careerism (L-MC), meaning advancing careers by immoral and unethical means such as bluffing, scapegoating and other abuses and subterfuges concealed as dark secrets, i.e., their very existence is secret, veiled on firms' dark side by conspiracies of silence (Dalton, 1959; Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Hase *et al.*, 2006; Jackall, 1988; Linstead *et al.*, 2014; Luthans, 1988; Shapira, 1987, 2013).

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Confirmation letter: I hereby declare that the submitted paper is original and my own creation, that it has not been published elsewhere and that it is not under review for any other publication. I am solely responsible for any errors of commission or omission in it.



L-MC is “seldom conducive to clear thinking or original thought” (Curtis, 2009, p. 505) although many authors, from Riesman (1950) and Dalton (1959) to Wilson (2011) and Hedges (2012), found that managers/officers advancing by immoral and unethical non-performance-based means were all too common (also Feldman and Weitz, 1991; Ficarrotta, 1988; Gabriel and Savage, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Mosier, 1988; Segal, 1981; Starbuck, 2007; Weissberg, 2002). Bratton and Kacmar (2004, p. 291) warn about “extreme careerism” as an ongoing but dark organizational side, and Wexler (2006, p. 138) adds: “[...] while lying is rarely overtly put on the menu, the job-getting industry condones [...] the use of deceptive [...] presentations of information.”

A logical explanation of L-MC that uses unethical means is incompetence due to managerial ignorance concealment (MIC), which protects one’s authority (Blau, 1955) but curbs learning and gaining of job competence, preventing career advance by performance. Few studied managerial ignorance though these few found it pervasive (Gannon, 1983; Hogan and Hogan, 2001; Shapira, 1987; Smithson, 1989; Wagner, 2002; Zbaracki, 1998). Managerial effectiveness research concurs, suggesting that MIC is common: ineffective managers advanced careers more than effective ones (Luthans, 1988); among Gallup-studied 80,000 managers only a few were effective (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999), as found by others as well (Baldoni, 2008; Curphy *et al.*, 2008; Dalton, 1959; Hogan and Hogan, 2001; Mehri, 2005). Many ethnographers, from Collins *et al.* (1946) to Orr (1996) and Mehri (2005), uncovered managerial ignorance of employees’ know-how and *phronesis* (Greek for practical wisdom; Flyvbjerg, 2006) required for effectiveness, as admitted by CEOs (Grove, 1996, p. 144; Robison, 2010) though ignored by management research (Roberts, 2013).

According to Schön (1983, p. 49) “our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing,” and Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 362) suggested that learning “*phronesis* requires *experience*” (original emphasis). Many alluded to managerial skills deficiency of many who advanced from the ranks (e.g. Peterson and Van Fleet, 2004) but ignored tacit know-how and *phronesis* deficiency of one who took charge of unfamiliar functions/units inexperienced of their problems and having no feel for their stuff (Fine, 2012; Klein, 1998, 2004), especially if s/he is an outsider (Bower, 2007; Khurana, 2002; Johnson, 2008; Shapira, 1995b); s/he may learn the processes by which the products or services are produced, but might not learn how these processes function (Brown and Duguid, 2001). Many studies have found that a lack of experience-based tacit know-how and *phronesis*, required for honing broader abilities into sharper ones in narrow domains, causes managerial stupidity (Gouldner, 1954; Harvey *et al.*, 2001; Johnson, 2008; Klein, 1998, 2004; Mehri, 2005; Orlikowski, 2002; Townley, 2002; Tsoukas, 2005; Wagner, 2002). But learning such tacit know-how and *phronesis* require engaging problem-solving efforts by assimilation and indwelling in them (Tsoukas, 2005, p. 149) as “[...] it is not the generalized knowledge of science that is required in prudently leading people and handling human affairs, but a special sensitivity to the unique contours of the circumstances in which leaders happen to operate” (e.g. Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014, p. 240; Fine, 2012; Klein, 1998; Orr, 1996). Missing such contours and such tacit know-how and *phronesis* due to avoiding such assimilation and indwelling results in common incorrect formulations and ill-definitions of managerial problems which usually lack a single correct answer; only cooperative efforts with specialists generate correct formulations and solutions (Bennis, 1991, pp. 17-19; Wagner, 2002, pp. 50-51). These require trustful relations engendered by vulnerable involvement in problem-solving efforts that expose one’s ignorance (Fox, 1974; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Shapira, 2013; Zand, 1972), but as such exposure threatens

one's authority (Blau, 1955) MIC is often preferred. It causes ineffectiveness, mistakes, wrongs and failures and curbs performance-based career advancement, encouraging L-MC and unethical use of authority defense means (Dalton, 1959; Hase *et al.*, 2006; Jackall, 1988; Linstead *et al.*, 2014; Mehri, 2005; Shapira, 1987). The contrary etiologies are summarized thus:

Promotion or coming from the outside puts executives in charge of inter alia unfamiliar units/functions; deficient of their know-how and phronesis they choose either

Ignorance-exposing vulnerable involvement that enhances learning and successful functioning that



Enhances career advance by performance



Discouraging unethical means and L-MC

or Managerial ignorance concealment (MIC) that engenders mistakes, wrongs and failures that



Shatter career advance by performance,



Encouraging unethical means and L-MC

The L-MC studies cited did not use MIC to explain it. This may be because “specifying ignorance is possible only in those organizational contexts in which dialogue and inquiry into unknowns is an established cultural norm” (Harvey *et al.*, 2001, p. 451), but such contexts seem rare; managers were mostly “gamesmen” (Maccoby, 1976) and many of them practiced L-MC as cited, presumably using MIC. Use of MIC is especially attractive for outsiders who suffer larger knowledge gaps than insiders (Bower, 2007; Groysberg *et al.*, 2006; Kotter, 1982; Townley, 2002). Outsiders are common: 58 percent of US executives were outsiders (Campbell *et al.*, 1995), as were 33 percent CEOs of the 500 S&P firms (Bower, 2007); their headhunters and importing directors or/and executives rarely considered their knowledge gaps and many failed (Groysberg *et al.*, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Khurana, 2002). Outsiders tend to seek early wins to build credible authority (Watkins, 2003), but it may take years to succeed by trust-creating vulnerable involvement in problem solving that exposes ignorance and enables learning by indwelling and assimilating in local practitioner communities (Guest, 1962; Thomas *et al.*, 2009; Tsoukas, 2005; Washburn, 2011; Zand, 1972). Hence, outsiders tend to use MIC, either through seductive-coercive involvement (Dalton, 1959; Gittel, 2000; Gouldner, 1954; Kipnis, 1976) or by detachment, a subterfuge missed by distance research (e.g. Antonakis and Atwater, 2002; Cole *et al.*, 2009; Collinson, 2005).

However, both practices enhance employees' distrust and secrecy and retain outsiders' ignorance (Shapira, 1987, 1995b). Recent organization studies rediscovered the concept of practice; major advantage of the “practice lens” is its critical power (Gherardi, 2009) but organizational ethnography has not used this “lens” to analyze executives' practices and their career choices as it failed to study them (Welker *et al.*, 2011, p. S5). Import of outsider executives became an institutionalized practice in recent decades, with specialized institutions such as headhunting (Khurana, 2002). Institutionalization of a new practice is not necessarily due to its superiority over an old one, only enough that contextual pressures join internal processes to cause it (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011). Can internal processes, contextual pressures and institutionalized practices explain the prevalence of importing outsider managers, and

mostly outsiders opting for MIC and L-MC, rather than promoting promising insiders? Can studying outsiders' coping with ignorance fill the stupidity research's lacuna concerning MIC by explaining outsider executives' preference for importing managers despite their large knowledge gaps and tendency to MIC and L-MC, engendering mismanagement?

Orr's (1996) acclaimed ethnography exposed Xerox higher-ups' ignorance of technicians' problem solving of machine defects, which could have helped improving machines (Orr, 1996, pp. 24-28, 81-87, 92). Unable to explain this ignoring of major resource he recommended "ethnography of managers [...] to understand their perspectives, including why they view the technicians' knowledge as they do" (Orr, 2006, p. 1818). Jarzabkowski *et al.* (2010, p. 1195) recommend "[a] practice epistemology [that] focusses squarely on the use of knowledge," but exploring stupidity due to MIC requires a focus on knowledge abuse and other subterfuges by ethnographing managers, "learning their language, tendencies and dispositions and participating in their practices and rituals" (e.g. Rasche and Chia, 2009, p. 713; Collinson, 2005; Dalton, 1959; Diefenbach, 2013; Mehri, 2005).

The paper does this in five sections: first, methods and the case studies; second, MIC; third, managers' L-MC; fourth, a Strathernian contextualization of MIC and L-MC; and fifth, discussion, conclusions and further research.

2. Methods and the case studies: overcoming anthropology's achilles heel concerning executives by semi-native longitudinal field-work

Anthropologists have rarely studied executives (Welker *et al.*, 2011) as they face a major barrier: they cannot be executives in order to heed advice given by sages of old: "don't judge others until you have stood in their shoes"; field-work as a line employee cannot achieve this. For example, Mehri (2005, p. 199), an engineer-ethnographer at Toyota's R&D department, found that its new manager was "incompetent and spineless" and that the previous careerist manager put "his puppet in [his] place so he [could] keep pulling the strings from another department", but untangled nothing about higher-ups' role in the fiasco and whether their ignorance and L-MC explained it. To untangle these, an anthropologist needs managerial education (Yanow, 2004), relevant experience (Klein, 1998), interactional expertise (Collins and Evans, 2007), languages of practices (Collins, 2011), referred expertise (Collins and Sanders, 2007) and becoming an insider-outsider (Gioia *et al.*, 2010) who discerns executives' and managers' expertise levels (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 10-16) by witnessing their functioning in various situations and by interviewing colleagues, subordinates and ex-employees free to criticize ex-superiors. A prolonged field-work is also required to gain full trust, openness and managers' genuine rapport to expose their dark secrets not achievable by a provisional employee, the anthropologist's usual status. Moreover, when managers are outsiders and practice MIC and L-MC secrecy prevails since even speaking of one's knowledge may have negative effects by generating pressure to reveal knowledge which superiors can use against one's interests (Mehri, 2005). Hence, much knowledge is a dark secret and even an anthropologist may need years to become trusted enough to gain access to local secrets.

Anthropologists enter fields to explain their cultures without choosing a research design in advance as do other qualitative researchers (e.g. Creswell, 2007). They interpret cultures by seeking thick descriptions based on variegated data collected that includes participation in local life and sensing subjects' feelings, building mutual trust with informants and achieving openness so that full, reliable, accurate and

sincere information will lead them to the right analysis (Dalton, 1964; Fine, 2012; Geertz, 1973; Marx, 1985; Orr, 1996). I achieved this by a unique semi-native longitudinal anthropology: a native anthropologist studies his/her own people and being too close to them s/he may adopt their views, while outsider ethnographers often miss locals' sincere views and/or other decisive knowledge (Gioia *et al.*, 2013, p. 19). I have avoided both by studying five cotton gin plants and their parent inter-kibbutz co-operatives (I-KC-Os), each owned by dozens of kibbutzim and managed by their members called *pe'ilim* (singular: *pa'il*). Like them I was a kibbutz member, had a managerial education and had experienced for 18 years management of automatic process plant similar to the plants studied, hence enjoying referred expertise (Collins and Sanders, 2007); I knew some *pe'ilim* even before the study, as well as the kibbutz context that socialized them (Shapira, 2012); other organizational ethnographers mostly lacked such knowledge (Yanow, 2004). I approached *pe'ilim* as their peer and interviews turned into openly discussed common problems with almost all of them and I gained access to their documents.

2.1 *The case studies*

I frequently visited the focal gin plant and its I-KC-O's nice, well-kept industrial park for five years, during which I held both many casual talks and lengthy open interviews of up to an hour and a half with 47 executives and managers and 141 employees and ex-employees, both *pe'ilim* and hired employees, as well as cotton growers, some of them more than once (interviews recorded in writing, many were home interviews with a protocol of 565 folio pages). Intensive participant observation was made as a shift worker along the focal plant's three-and-a-half month high season when it operated non-stop 24/7 and included visits to the other shifts. My registrar job enabled me some writing and further details were added after each shift, resulting in 791 pages observation journal. Then I toured four other gin plants, observed their premises and interviewed 63 present and past executives and managers (331 page protocol).

The longitudinal ethnographing, with free access to documents and 251 interviewees of all echelons plus many informal talks with others, made it possible to thoroughly check all major information and assertions, avoiding outsiders' naivety (e.g. Gioia *et al.*, 2013, p. 19). It enabled thick descriptions of managers' practices (Geertz, 1973), judging them as if I stood in their shoes. Moreover, I analyzed and re-analyzed my data several times over the last 30 years, repeatedly returning from aggregate dimensions to first order concepts (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). The concepts of MIC and L-MC are absent from previous publications (e.g. Shapira, 1987, 1995a, b, 2012, 2013), signaling a re-analysis; this paper is "another beginning," is "[...] discovery occurs as one writes [...] identifies remaining gaps, inconsistencies and questions require further exploration" (Bansal and Corley, 2012, p. 512). The fact that many I-KC-Os' *pe'ilim* have read my previous publications and none questioned any of my findings points to their robustness.

The focal high-capacity automatic cotton gin plant had two processing units, each in a 2,500 square meter hall full of large noisy machines connected by huge pipes and operated by some 240 electric motors of some 3,000 horse power. The two together processed 650-700 tons of raw cotton daily during the high season, September-December. Raw cotton was brought to the yard and then to processing units in compressed stacks of eight ton on 6 × 2.5 meter metal stretches which stood on six one-meter long iron legs transported by specially built tractor-pulled hydraulic carriages. The main product, bales of quarter-ton cotton fibers, were stored in three stores, some 2,000 square meters each, until shipped to spinning mills, mostly abroad, while the other product (seeds) was lorry-transported to oil extraction plants.

The plant's permanent staff included ten *pe'ilim* and 17 hired employees, supplemented by some 70 hired workers in the high season, when operations continued 24/7. Seven *pe'ilim* managed the plant: the plant manager, his deputy, the technical manager, his deputy, the stores manager, garage manager and office manager. The plant was a part of Merkaz Regional Enterprises I-KC-O (a pseudonym, as are all names hereafter) owned by some 40 kibbutzim with some 12,000 inhabitants and handling much of their agricultural input and output in six plants with some US\$350 million sales (e.g. Niv and Bar-On, 1992). It was administered by some, 200 *pe'ilim* and operated by some 650 hired employees. Kibbutzim received uniform salaries for *pe'ilim*'s work whose formal term of office was five years, in accord with the supposedly egalitarian *rotatzia* (rotation) norm at kibbutzim. *Rotatzia* stipulated fixed office tenures of three to five years, but senior *pe'ilim* violated it, retaining jobs for decades or moving from one I-KC-O job to another (Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 1995a, 2005; Shure, 2001). Merkaz CEOs boasted *rotatzia* but kept jobs eight to ten years and allowed loyal executives such tenures vs five years of formal *pe'ilim*'s terms and two to three years terms of kibbutz managers (Shapira, 2005).

I commenced my research by interviewing the Merkaz CEO and 23 executives who portrayed themselves as servants of the kibbutzim, repeating the mantra: "The Regional Enterprises are the extended arm of the kibbutzim." However, I discerned obliviousness to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness, preference of growth and technological virtuosity to obtain power, prestige, privileges and tenure (Galbraith, 1971). While 33 local kibbutz plants' executives studied earlier sought effectiveness, efficiency and innovation to succeed in competitive markets (Shapira, 1979, 1980), Merkaz plants had no competition, marketing their produce through national marketers and mostly supplied by owner-kibbutzim obliged to use their services. All ten Israeli cotton gin plants belonged to regional I-KC-Os, and kibbutzim paid using a "cost plus" system known for its encouraging inefficiency.

I studied Merkaz cotton gin plant intensively and four other gin plants less, as depicted. Four years of interviews and intermittent observations raised the suspicion that managers were ignorant of plant's uncertainty domains (Crozier, 1964) of technical, technological, operational and skilled manpower problems, as other I-KC-Os assumed responsibility for other major functions. Coping with these problems was learned exclusively on the job, hence I held mini-seminars with nationally renowned ginning experts, learned the problems and acquired considerable "know-that" before learning plant's "know-how" (Brown and Duguid, 2001) by participant observation as registrar. Then I was so knowledgeable that technicians and foremen asked me why I would not succeed their intelligent and educated but ignorant plant manager, a successful low-moral careerist *pa'il* whom I called Shavit.

3. MIC by most *pe'ilim*

Participant observation untangled that in accord with the Jewish saying "A mute fool is reputed to be wise," plant manager Shavit concealed his ignorance, defended his job and advanced his career by detachment that permitted muteness, causing mistakes and failures from which we employees suffered heavily: he rarely visited the shop-floor, and when visiting rarely spoke to knowledgeable staff and never discussed technical and operational problems with them. He asked only trivial questions, listened only to escorting technical manager *pa'il* Avi and a loyalist ignorant foreman, ignoring comments of expert others and not trying to find out the truth when they contradicted Avi and the loyalist. His rare comments exposed that by his fourth year, he did not know certain ginning basics I had learned in my first week of work.

For example, Avi falsely asserted that his mistaken design of the contour of the 30 inch pipe connecting the new SGH cleaner to the previous machine only marginally impacted the, recurring clogging that halted the ginning for 30-35 minutes every two to three hours. When we cleared blockings of compressed hot cotton (75-80°C) from the sharp saws, operators showed that the mistaken contour had caused clogging by unequal dispersion of the cotton intake, causing an overload on the saws on the left end while most other saws rotated empty. Shavit never climbed the four-meter tall machine to check expert staff's critique of Avi's mistake; believing Avi he delayed the repair for six weeks although it required only ten hours downtime which equalled production time loss due to blockings of two to three days. After the repair blockings became much less frequent, falsifying Avi and proving Shavit's ignorance since a knowledgeable manager would have suspected Avi's assertion since blockings was a known problem in gin plants. But Shavit did not; using detached MIC he consulted the ignorant loyalist yes-man foreman, a "two way funnel" (Dalton, 1959, p. 232) who as shop steward kept industrial peace in return for a nice salary while only roaming around, talking and pretending to work (Shapira, 1987, pp. 78-81).

3.1 Outsiders' detachment of problem solving: the ploy and personal MIC strategy

Detachment was a ploy and pattern that became a personal strategy (Mintzberg, 1987) by which many *pe'ilim* concealed ignorance and advanced careers, "jumping" (Downs, 1966) from one managerial job in which they camouflaged/concealed ignorance and failures to another through unquestioned loyalty to CEO patrons (Shapira, 1995a, 2005, 2008). This resembled Edgerton's (1967) retarded teenagers who when leaving their shelter defended their image of competence by avoiding others who might have exposed their incompetence. *Pe'ilim* were "parachuted" into jobs, an Israeli term for outsider executives appointed due to previous high office but with little or no pertinent know-how or referred expertise (Collins and Sanders, 2007). All the 21 plant managers studied at the five plants were "parachuted" and had no experience in ginning, nor were any of their CEOs experienced in plant management. Only four of them were vulnerably involved trusted managers (e.g. Zand, 1972), but only one, Gabi of Northern Gin, had also learned ginning by vulnerable involvement in a community of practitioners' deliberations (Guest, 1962, p. 4; Kanter, 1977, p. 33; Orr, 1996). For a decade his plant excelled nationally on all effectiveness and efficiency parameters until his succession by a loyalist "parachutist" of a new CEO[1]. For example, the percentage of downtime during 24/7 seasonal work: vs 32 percent downtime at Merkaz in my working season and 10-12 percent at other plants, Gabi's plant had most seasons less than 3 percent downtime. The ten Israel's gin plant managers acknowledged Gabi's excelling and chose him as their group head and representative *vis-à-vis* the authorities.

The job stupidity of intelligent educated Avi, Shavit and other managers and executives was not myopic (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012) but rather a personal strategic choice (Mintzberg, 1987) of defending jobs and advancing careers by MIC. Avi also failed to solve the problems of the new automatic sampler; as registrar I was in charge of the sampler during my shift and witnessed how he concealed ignorance that caused its failure: he prevented any plausible solution of its problems proposed by others, including experts from another plant whose sampler worked smoothly, as this would have exposed his ignorance. For several weeks the sampler caused us registrars many hardships but Avi did not care and refused any experts' help. Then he let the sampler stand idle for the rest of the season despite having no mechanical defect, costing the plant three additional workers; he clearly preferred MIC to defend his authority over

the plant's efficiency and our welfare (Shapira, 2013, p. 19). However, his detached MIC with the SGH cleaner resulted in much worse outcomes; his and the US manufacturer's mistakes caused malfunctioning and losses for both Merkaz and cotton growers, estimated at US\$165,000 (US\$500,000 in current prices).

A clear reason for Avi's continued costly fiasco was the detached MIC of Merkaz CEO Zelikovich; I never saw him coming without visitors to the plant to review its malfunction and he took no decisive action concerning it. Both Shavit and Avi kept their jobs for another year and then were replaced as if in normal *rotatzia* and furthered managerial careers elsewhere. Zelikovich's detachment was detrimental also in the case of Shavit's predecessor Yuval: in the first high season of my observations married Yuval and his young female secretary frequently disappeared for half a day to an unknown destination, with no way of contacting him. Everyone talked about this vicious romance, but the detached CEO ousted Yuval on the pretext of *rotatzia* only months after the season ended.

Yuval served four years, Shavit five years and first manager Moav ten years; they all used MIC, were ineffective and retained jobs by servitude loyalty to CEOs (Hirschman, 1970) after attaining jobs by personal ties and kept them until major fiascos (Yuval, Shavit) or deteriorating plant functioning (Moav) (Shapira, 1987). Each of the Merkaz detached ignorant CEOs kept job for eight to ten years, twice the formal term despite minute successes and kibbutz managers' critique by using unethical means: Machiavellian scapegoating, bluffing and other abuses and subterfuges (e.g. Dalton, 1959; Jackall, 1988; Jay, 1969; Kets de Vries, 1993; Mehri, 2005). Kibbutz field practices facilitated such low morality:

- (1) institutionalized "parachuting" of loyalist *pe'ilim* or prospective loyalists rather than promoting insiders spared superiors critique of their ignorance, mistakes and failures by empowered knowledgeable mid-levelers (e.g. Shapira, 1987; Klein, 1998);
- (2) deputies who functioned effectively due to kibbutz-habituated vulnerable involvement enabled CEOs to retain failing MIC-L-MC loyalist managers (Shapira, 2013);
- (3) importing vulnerably involved expert rescuers prevented plants' total failure and spared CEOs the need to fire incompetent failing loyalist managers;
- (4) ignorant superiors practicing L-MC supported the authority of ignorant subordinate loyalists by suppressing high-moral rescuers empowered by successes; and
- (5) castrated democracy enhanced *pe'ilim's* power vs owner-kibbutzim and advanced *pe'ilim's* interests over those of kibbutzim and their ordinary members.

4. L-MC of privileged *Pe'ilim's* power elites

Yuval's low-moral romance seems less exceptional in light of the prevalence of *pe'ilim's* L-MC. Touring plants untangled many signs refuting *pe'ilim's* high-moral mantra of being "the extended arm of kibbutzim." Compared to their brand new company cars, fork-lifts were cheap old sluggish models that frequently broke down. *Pe'ilim's* lavish amenities were rare in contemporary kibbutzim: air-conditioned offices and likewise nice dining hall serving high-quality meals, company cars even for lesser *pe'ilim*, cash allowances which violated egalitarianism, "study trips" abroad whose routes violated declared aims and more. *Pe'ilim's* interest in amenities reflected for instance

this event: when I came to the CEO's office at the time scheduled for an interview, I had to wait some 20 minutes until he and his deputy concluded a long heated debate about the deputy's experience of his new company car model.

Pe'ilim's little interest in effectiveness was demonstrated by Merkaz fodder mix plant: adding a new highly computerized second mill reduced annual mix production per employee to 1,123 tons from the previous 1,291 tons instead of the promised higher productivity. This new mill was a mega-projects-type OPM waste by careerist executives (Flyvbjerg *et al.*, 2003): its planned cost was US\$8 million, while the actual cost was US\$20 million (fixed prices). Executives bent the numbers to build Israel's largest mill. To cut a long story short, soon after construction began the true cost became known, while it was projected that only half the planned production capacity would be required in the next decade. However, *pe'ilim* stubbornly objected to kibbutz representatives' demand to reduce the project scale: it both denied them expected prestige and was a very complex problem at such an advanced stage, requiring expertise they lacked. They won over kibbutz delegates and the kibbutzim paid for this by higher fodder mix prices.

Similar excesses were found at other Merkaz plants (Shapira, 1978/1979), suggesting that managers' L-MC encouraged gaining prestige, power and tenure by plant enlargements and technological virtuosity (e.g. Galbraith, 1971). Yuval, for instance, "parachuted" ignorant *pe'ilim* deputies rather than promoting local experts (Gouldner, 1954), sought culprits rather than learning (Gittell, 2000) and decided to replace the electricity system at a cost of some US\$300,000 (US\$1,000,000 in current prices) with an imported system presented by the importer and a colluding engineer as state-of-the-art, but it failed and was replaced, doubling the cost. The objecting chief electrician warned Yuval of a bluff: no such systems were used in Israel since they had already been tried, failed and were replaced. But autocracy, secrecy and his and deputy *pe'ilim's* ignorance failed Yuval.

The kibbutzim, as Merkaz owners, could not prevent such fiascos not only because of the above mentioned low-moral politics of ignorant careerist detached CEOs and *pe'ilim*, but also due to castrated democracy caused by oligarchic practices:

- (1) Both Merkaz and individual plants were formally controlled by assemblies of managers of owning kibbutzim, which chose so called 'kibbutz delegates' for the Boards beside *pe'ilim* directors. But none of kibbutz managers truly chose 'kibbutz delegates': the CEO proposed to assemblies of 70-120 managers a list of five to seven "kibbutzim delegates" which was always approved en-block.
- (2) Kibbutz managers' career ladder after short kibbutz terms was in I-KC-Os, deterring most managers serving as 'kibbutz delegates' on I-KC-O Boards from criticizing *pe'ilim* to prove loyalty and advance careers (e.g. Shapira, 1995a; Hirschman, 1970).
- (3) In contrast to older experienced *pe'ilim* who enjoyed power and intangible capitals from past careers and plants largeness and technological virtuosity, 'kibbutz delegates' were mostly young, inexperienced and lacked prestigious jobs (Shapira, 2005).

The outcome was that *pe'ilim* passed almost any motion they wished and 'kibbutz delegates' reacted to this mock democracy by avoidance: according to minutes usually less than half of them came to the gin plant's Board sessions, transforming the formal minority of *pe'ilim* directors into a practical majority. On Moav's Board this majority

included two *pe'ilim* ignorant of ginning, Moav and another plant manager *pa'il*, and two vulnerably involved knowledgeable *pe'ilim* deputies. One deputy depicted Board sessions thus:

[...] they [kibbutzim's representatives] did not understand much about most subjects on the agenda, and Moav and a manager of another plant were quite similar. The only two who really knew what was going on in the plant and coped with almost all major problems, thus also shaping most decisions, were myself and Moav's other deputy.

Management sessions followed a set paradigm, as Moav testified and found in minutes: he rarely spoke, except when finances were discussed, trying to spare expenses except for lavish amenities that enhanced authority by symbolizing high status: an air-conditioned office, a nice small company car and more. Moav's low morality was not limited to the plant: when *pe'ilim*'s cars at his kibbutz were first offered to all members on weekends (Shapira, 2008, p. 34), his was not, rather kept as the status symbol. He continued L-MC like in previous I-KC-O jobs but did not fail as he let the two knowledgeable deputies lead employees by servant transformational leadership (e.g. Shapira, 2013; Burns, 1978; O'Toole, 1999; Sendjaya, 2011). Managing the plant's construction and then its operation, the two with employees learned ginning together by trustful vulnerable involvement that created virtuous trust and learning cycles which the two habituated in kibbutzim (e.g. Shapira, 2008, 2013; Obembe, 2012; Raelin, 2013; Thomas *et al.*, 2009). The veteran stores manager remembered the leader among the two: "He modeled committed leadership so convincingly that you could not but follow him". Moav was not replaced by this successful deputy since the CEO would have lost an obedient loyalist on the Merkaz Board as this leader was more independent, empowered by successes (Klein, 1998). The leader left while Moav remained despite plant's deteriorated functioning.

In accord with the "managerial homosexual reproduction" thesis (Kanter, 1977, p. 49) Yuval imported the prospective loyalist practical engineer Avi, a young *pa'il* like himself to replace the hired technical manager. This aim was kept secret to prevent resistance in light of the heir apparent and unofficial deputy, an experienced talented hired certified practical engineer. Yuval asserted that he wanted a *pa'il* on the job to care for kibbutzim's interests but he was bluffing, all informants refuted this excuse. The real reason was the heir apparent power: in addition to professional successes he was ten years older than Yuval, very popular among the staff and shop steward. Yuval feared the latter's power if promoted and imported potential loyalist Avi who had never previously handled serious mechanical problems. Avi used detached MIC, but Yuval missed this due to his ignorance of own ignorance (Kruger and Dunning, 1999) caused by seductive-coercive autocracy (Shapira, 2013, p. 18). After a year and a half Avi replaced the veteran technical manager and failed miserably. Soon Yuval's deputy called to the rescue his kibbutz garage manager, Thomas (35), also a certified practical engineer but with 21 years pertinent mechanical experience. He explained:

Avi is not the right stuff that we [Yuval and I] were looking for; he is not that [a truly technical manager]. Thomas has learned the problems much quicker and although he has only been on the job four months, he has proved to be the right stuff.

Thomas rescued the failing plant by avoiding MIC, preferring vulnerable involvement that engendered virtuous trust and learning cycles due to his experience since the age of 14 as mechanic and then garage manager, promising him successful learning of local problems and due to kibbutz-acquired high-moral vulnerable involvement habitus.

Thomas solved major problems and with three other similarly involved *pe'ilim* shaped an innovation-prone high-trust local culture (Ouchi, 1981; Parker, 2000; Semler, 1993; Shapira, 2001), called "organic" by Burns and Stalker (1961). He resembled Gabi in the Northern Gin Plant and Moav's two deputies who also shaped such cultures. Their virtuous trust and learning cycles vs vicious distrust and ignorance cycles of MIC-L-MC *pe'ilim* can be summarized thus:

Virtuous Trust and Learning Cycle

Involvement habitus and/or much relevant know-how and *phronesis* encourages superior's vulnerable trusting involvement choice



Superior's ignorance exposure causes an ascending trust spiral as openness and knowledge sharing enhances learning and right decisions that enhance trust



Successes further mutual trust, openness, learning, problem solving and successes



Effective functioning encourages innovation, causes more successes and furthers learning and innovation



Innovation-prone high-trust culture encourages vulnerable involvement and trust and learning cycle repeats

vs Vicious Distrust and Ignorance Cycle

Detachment habitus and/or little relevant know-how and *phronesis* encourages superior's detached or coercive-seductive distrusting control



Superior's concealing ignorance by detachment/coerciveness causes distrust as secrecy retains ignorance and causes mistaken decisions and indecision



Failures further mutual distrust, secrecy, misunderstandings, mistakes and failures



Conservatism spares some mistakes, but causes brain-drain, foolishness, mistakes, and failures which furthers use of MIC



Conservatism-prone low-trust culture encourages detachment or seduction/coercion and distrust and ignorance cycle repeats

Additional proof of Yuval's L-MC (which Shavit continued) was the retention of ignorant Avi's formal status aimed at enhancing power by *divide et impera*: Thomas was designated "second technical manager" on the pretext of an expected major expansion, while Avi became his *de-facto* aide but retained managerial status, insignia and privileges; his dependency on the bosses' power ensured his help in taming Thomas who was empowered by successes (Klein, 1998). The two bosses' L-MC reflected their self-serving preferences:

- (1) importing ignorant Avi to succeed a veteran middle manager although a much better candidate was an expert insider, because of the latter's potential empowerment;
- (2) promoting Avi to technical manager with no knowledge of his incompetence, since knowing it required ignorance-exposing vulnerable involvement; and
- (3) retaining him despite proven incompetence aimed at own empowerment.

"Parachuting" and promoting of *pe'ilim* ignorant of local know-how and *phronesis*, officially aimed at ensuring I-KC-Os' care for kibbutz interests, really self-served

executives practicing MIC and L-MC detrimental to kibbutzim. Another example: when Moav's two effective deputies left frustrated, Moav took young greenhorn Yuval as a deputy with minimal pertinent managerial experience, hence requiring a prolonged grooming period, much more than that required of available alternatives, thus promising Moav, then three years beyond retirement age, job extension. But without effective managers the plant's functioning deteriorated so much that CEO Zelikovich replaced Moav with Yuval. This act proved the CEO's MIC: he knew the unsatisfactory Yuval's record as Moav's deputy, but probing his suitability for promotion required of the CEO ignorance exposure to plant expert staff. He spared it, used detached MIC and nominated ignorant Yuval also because weak Yuval promised to be his loyalist on Merkaz's Board.

Similar were almost all other I-KC-O CEOs, aside for Gabi's CEO Dan of the Northern I-KC-O. He was not interviewed but many testified to his exceptional high involvement in plant problems and sincere efforts to help Gabi's participative, democratic management to best serve kibbutzim (e.g. Raelin, 2013; Semler, 1993). Gabi also used another high-moral practice: he promoted two competent hired technicians as technical managers, not concerned of their empowerment due to the high-trust culture he created in which a manager's power served the common good rather than his own interests, unlike most gin plants' low-trust cultures due to "parachuting" Avi-like *pe'ilim* to this job. The first succeeded and left to be an R&D engineer at the USA's largest ginning machinery producer and the second replaced him. Their superb expertise untangled long repeated interviews that taught me much of ginning while the latter also depicted the low-moral politics of Gabi's and Dan's ignorant successors.

5. A Strathernian contextualizing of prevalent I-KC-Os' MIC and L-MC

Explaining the prevalence of I-KC-Os' executives MIC and L-MC requires a Strathernian contextualization that discerns impacting contexts and their interrelations (Huen, 2009; Morita, 2014; Strathern, 2004). The findings suggest that outsider executives mostly ruled I-KC-Os by practicing dysfunctional MIC and L-MC, shielded by "cost plus" systems, castrated democracy, "parachuting" loyalists and vulnerably involved knowledgeable mid-levelers rescuing plants from total failure only to be suppressed after their success until exiting, as L-MC Shavit suppressed high-moral Thomas (Shapira, 2013, p. 21). The exception of Northern I-KC-O's CEO Dan and plant manager Gabi emphasized this bleak picture which negated the kibbutz high-moral democratic and egalitarian ethos and the cultures of many kibbutz high-trust innovative successful work units that raised to management Thomas and his like and led to major successes of kibbutzim (Shapira, 2008). Explaining this contradiction and the prevalence of MIC and L-MC enables two decades of ethnographing of the kibbutz field which is here only briefly sketched (Shapira, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2011).

The kibbutz field was I-KC-Os' prime context; in, 1985, ahead of its crisis, it consisted of 269 kibbutzim with 129,000 inhabitants and 250-300 I-KC-Os with 15-18,000 hired employees and 4,000-4,500 *pe'ilim* (Near, 1997; Niv and Bar-On, 1992). Numbers are inexact due to a lack of research: kibbutz research ignored the field perspective (Bourdieu, 1990; Lewin, 1951) and the study of I-KC-Os as it would have ruined the kibbutz image of a high-moral progressive society by exposing low-moral I-KC-O cultures which largely emulated Israeli bureaucracies. My 25 years' of ethnographing I-KC-Os and kibbutzim (Shapira, 2012) untangled that the two leaders who founded the largest kibbutz federations in 1927, consisting of some 80 percent of kibbutzim, became conservatives, castrated democracy and centralized control from

the mid-1930s, used Machiavellian reverence of Stalinism to legitimize these and censorship of publications, becoming oligarchic rulers until the 1970s (Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 2008, forthcoming; Shure, 2001). They had immense invisible power (e.g. Ahonen *et al.*, 2014): first, the indoctrination of Stalinism turned them into mini-Stalins (Shure, 2001); second, each ruled over 70 kibbutzim, some 35,000 inhabitants, hundreds of *pe'ilim*, eight to ten Knesset (parliament) members (of 120), two-three cabinet ministers (of 15-18) and many I-KC-Os (Near, 1997; Niv and Bar-On, 1992; Shapira, 2005); third, senior loyalist *pe'ilim* which either overruled *rotatzia* by tenure or moved from office to office became powerful under leaders' auspices and dominated their kibbutzim, secured support for the leaders by castrating local democracies. The leaders retained their egalitarian image by modest tangible privileges but enjoyed ample power, status symbols and social, political and cultural capitals, while suppressing critical thinkers and innovators (e.g. Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 2001, 2008; Shure, 2001; Brumann, 2000; Hirschman, 1970; Michels, 1915/1959).

The prevalence of MIC and L-MC in I-KC-Os is explicable by the impacts of this oligarchic field's practices and policies. Institutionalization of practices in an organizational field may cause outside impacts combined with "internal circuits" (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011). In addition to managers' vulnerable involvement that exposes ignorance, the creation of high-trust cultures in I-KC-Os required high-moral leadership (Burns, 1978; Hosmer, 1995), but the oligarchic kibbutz field negatively impacted I-KC-O executives, encouraged MIC and L-MC practices by leaders' self-perpetuating practices from the mid-1930s and their following by deputies and other *pe'ilim* executives. These higher-ups held jobs for life or moved from one high office to another without democratic election or reelection even when they failed in their jobs, contrary to leaders preaching democracy and egalitarianism. Leaders and I-KC-O CEOs violated these principles by low-moral distrustful practices (e.g. Dalton, 1959; Kanter, 1977; Starbuck, 2007; Wilson, 2011), while loyalist power elites defended their rule despite the dysfunctional oligarchic conservatism which negated kibbutz radicalism. The two prime leaders never admitted reverence of Stalinism was wrong, not even after the, 1956 exposure of Stalin's brutal dictatorship and the suppression of Hungarian democracy, since admission would have opened a Pandora Box leading to their succession (Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 2008, forthcoming; Shure, 2001).

Amoral leaders preached *rotatzia* on a pretext of preventing oligarchy but it enhanced oligarchy, empowering them and other higher-ups who blocked their own *rotatzia*, appropriated privileges and accumulated intangible capitals by which they informally ruled their own kibbutzim through tenure and empowerment (Shapira, 2001), while *rotatzia* weakened lesser *pe'ilim* and kibbutz formal managers. *Rotatzia* encouraged L-MC (e.g. Gabriel and Savage, 1981; Segal, 1981) and discouraged critical thinking and innovation: managers' short terms prevented productive use of experience-acquired job know-how and power to introduce changes and innovations; it encouraged seeking advance to privileged I-KC-O jobs and accumulate power and capitals to obviate *rotatzia* or to move from one I-KC-O high office to another by use of patronage rather than performance. *Rotatzia* deterred "kibbutz delegates" to I-KC-O Boards from criticizing *pe'ilim*, rather encouraged seeking their auspices to further "delegates" managerial careers, and it empowered I-KC-O executives to seek excessive growth and technological virtuosity rather than efficiency and effectiveness. Worse still, it helped suppress critical thinkers and innovative successful *pe'ilim* like Thomas: the pretext of *rotatzia* legitimized causing their early leaving when their empowerment threatened bosses' superiority, thus Thomas left both since he expected to be fired and

as he was tired of the conflicts with Shavit (Shapira, 2013, p. 21). On the other hand, the pretext of *rotatzia* helped camouflage that managers were fired due to failures, enabling them to further managerial careers elsewhere, as succeeded both Shavit and Avi.

Another major negative practice was limiting I-KC-Os' managerial positions exclusively to *pe'ilim*, which was institutionalized already in the, 1940s after the first I-KC-Os began to succeed, urban employees were hired and some of them might have advanced to management according to merit but this rarely happened. Exclusiveness was formally aimed at defending owner-kibbutzim's interests, but it engendered "parachutings" of ignorant *pe'ilim*. The latter faced the dilemma of either risking authority by ignorance-exposing vulnerable involvement, or defending authority by MIC through detachment or seduction-coercion as they mostly did (Shapira, 1995a, b). The kibbutz field context explained the logic of this seemingly illogical practice (Bourdieu, 1990): sparing learning of knowledge required for effective functioning was logical in a field dominated by self-serving oligarchic conservative leaders who promoted according to loyalty rather than critical thinking and creativity, in I-KC-Os ruled by CEOs who used MIC and low-moral means much like Israeli socialist leaders (Shapira, 1984) and corporate executives (Ailon, 2015; Jackall, 1988; Jay, 1969; Maccoby, 1976; Rhode, 2006). The kibbutz field encouraged this CEOs strategy: when MIC of L-MC loyalist *pe'ilim* failed it supplied non-careerist rescuers who succeeded, were suppressed and ousted by ignorant superiors. Then "parachuting" new outsiders repeated this cycle, which retained the rule and advanced careers of low-moral CEOs that kibbutz research missed (e.g. Ben-Rafael, 1997; Near, 1997; Niv and Bar-On, 1992).

Maintaining authority and power while practicing MIC and L-MC also required higher-ups' backing for managers' low-moral practices. Kibbutz movement leaders supported L-MC of *pe'ilim* by never criticizing I-KC-O oligarchic practices which they themselves used to control federations, such as suppressing critics and innovators, castrating democracy and privileging *pe'ilim*. While kibbutz leaders criticized the careerism of Israeli officials, they ignored the careerism of I-KC-O officials by presenting I-KC-Os as non-kibbutz entities not of interest to the kibbutz media and kibbutz research (Shapira, 2012). Without any public critique of I-KC-O violations of kibbutz principles up to the mid-1970s due to censorship careerist executives paid no price in terms of prestige for practicing L-MC and MIC, much like business "superstars" until recently (Ailon, 2015). Similar to Enron and other scandalous firms many I-KC-Os went bankrupt or were sold recently, since the economic crisis of kibbutzim barred them from further paying for I-KC-Os' inefficiencies (Shapira, 2008).

6. Discussion, conclusions and further research

While corroborating stupidity research and other studies showing that tacit know-how and *phronesis* essential for managerial competence are acquired by trust-creating vulnerable involvement in problem-solving efforts, the findings fill a lacuna concerning authority defense, job survival and career advance of organizationally stupid outsider managers. The findings explain such outsiders' achieving these personal aims by either seductive-coercive involvement or detachment through use of MIC and practicing L-MC. Both strategies caused vicious distrust and ignorance cycles and failures, both directly by mistaken decisions and wrong actions, and indirectly by negative managerial selection and promotion: rather than promoting competent experienced insiders empowered by successes, they imported outsiders resembling themselves, in accord with the "managerial homosexual reproduction" thesis (Kanter, 1977, p. 49), who mostly used MIC. Importees' loyalty enhanced superiors' power but their ignorance

obstructed functioning and encouraged unethical L-MC by scapegoating, bluffs, abuses and other subterfuges as in the cited literature. These encouraged ingratiation by fools, imposters and boot-lickers, who selfishly used their local knowledge advantages. Only a few outsider *pe'ilim* did otherwise, learned local know-how and *phronesis* and managed effectively by repeating kibbutz-habituated high-moral vulnerable involvement and trustful learning, as did non-careerist rescuers of failing plants. The vulnerably involved *pe'ilim* created virtuous trust and learning cycles and local high-trust successful innovative-prone cultures, but these continued only until supremacy-defending ignorant superiors suppressed them. Like a classic Greek tragedy, effective *pe'ilim* could not avoid being empowered by their successes, for which they had come from kibbutzim, while MIC-L-MC superiors who lost power suppressed and replaced them by imported loyalists or prospective ones; they often failed and once again high-moral rescuers were called in and so on. This seesaw retained ignorant careerist executives' rule over mediocre functioning I-KC-Os.

A Strathernian contextualization (Huen, 2009; Morita, 2014; Strathern, 2004) plus internal processes and instituted practices explain the prevalence of MIC and L-MC among *pe'ilim* although many of them commenced their managerial careers as non-careerist kibbutz branch managers. As they advanced to kibbutz management, and more so when promoted to I-KC-O management, they found that the formally democratic and egalitarian kibbutz field was in fact autocratic and oligarchic, dominated by conservative low-moral self-perpetuating I-KC-O CEOs who enjoyed the auspices of tenured prime leaders in spite of violating egalitarian and democratic principles preached by the leaders. This amoral hypocrisy encouraged low-moral job survival abuses and subterfuges by *pe'ilim*; leaders' low-moral impact cascaded through low morality of CEOs to mid-levelers (e.g. Shapira, 2008; Liu *et al.*, 2012). However, this cascading was not enough to explain the prevalence of *pe'ilim*'s MIC-L-MC since many came from kibbutzim with non-careerist and vulnerable involvement habituses, nor did personality changes explain such a metamorphosis; it was explicable by "parachuting" and *rotatzia* practices institutionalized at I-KC-Os despite not proving advantageous (e.g. Gherardi and Perrotta, 2011). "Parachuting" of *pe'ilim* was formally instituted in order to ensure that I-KC-Os would serve kibbutzim's interests, but a dearth of pertinent local know-how, *phronesis* and essential expertises (e.g. Collins and Evans, 2007) made the success prospects of most executives precarious, encouraging the cautious strategy of defending authority by MIC rather than learning. Instituting the *rotatzia* norm further encouraged MIC by making the learning of current problems quite useless for subsequent managerial jobs at other I-KC-Os or back in kibbutzim, hence it was discouraged. Learning was also discouraged by meeting many *pe'ilim* who managed to successfully advance their careers without learning local know-how and by realizing that no plant managed by MIC-using careerists completely failed, while Thomas-type vulnerably involved *pe'ilim* who sought performance failed to keep their jobs and advance their careers since MIC-L-MC superiors mostly preferred loyalty over performance. Worse still, vicious distrust and ignorance cycles enhanced themselves: outsiders' efforts to learn local knowledge became more risky by secrecy, subterfuges and abuses common in I-KC-Os' low-trust cultures engendered by MIC and L-MC.

The successes of the few Thomas-like vulnerably involved *pe'ilim* empowered superiors who practiced MIC-L-MC, as successes legitimized adding status-symbolizing amenities and privileges and practicing OPM plant enlargements and technological virtuosity which enabled obviating *rotatzia* (Shapira, 1995a). Efficient economies of

kibbutzim (Barkai, 1977) with many high-trust innovative production units led by servant transformational leaders paid for I-KC-Os' inefficiency, while I-KC-Os' thriving encouraged "parachutings": executives could suppose they would not fail through their use as plants' total failures were unknown at the time and no literature they knew of rejected this practice, which best served their rule and was common in the Israeli context (Maman, 1989). Would the field not have obtained rescuers, the threat of total failure might have encouraged promotion of competent insiders and prevented institutionalization of "parachutings." The same pertains to institutionalization of *rotatzia*: if the Israel Defense Forces had not used *rotatzia* and functionalist Israeli students (Ram, 1995) had not considered it helpful rather studied it critically and exposed its failures like US army students (Gabriel and Savage, 1981; Segal, 1981), self-perpetuating low-moral oligarchic kibbutz leaders might not have weakened most *pe'elim* and kibbutz managers by frequent *rotatzia*; then the latter's careers would have been less dependent on the formers' patronage, servitude loyalty to superiors would not have been encouraged, kibbutz managers would have served as less docile "delegates" on I-KC-O Boards, and as more critical high-moral directors caring for interests of kibbutzim they would have discouraged MIC and L-MC among CEOs and plant managers.

By emphasizing the decisive role of experience-based tacit know-how and *phronesis* for successful managerial functioning, my findings support critics of suppositions of knowledge management (Wilson, 2002), managerial knowledge portability (Groysberg *et al.*, 2006; Townley, 2002), firms' betterment by importing CEOs alien to their business domain (Khurana, 2002) and distant leadership (Collinson, 2005). The findings prove the decisive role of mutual trust between hierarchic ranks without which educated, trained and intelligent executives were unable to lead (e.g. Bennis, 1991), while indicating that where mid-levelers prevented total failures (e.g. Kanter, 1977, p. 33), executives could ignore their own ignorance, missing the far-reaching negative impacts of MIC-L-MC largely overlooked by organizational knowledge research.

Executives' MIC and L-MC are major threats to advanced industrial cultures, as proven by the recent business scandals and failures of Boards who "parachuted" "star" CEOs to please Wall Street without considering the suitability of their knowledge for jobs (Bower, 2007; Groysberg *et al.*, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Khurana, 2002). Unfortunately the growing organizational knowledge and learning research avoids the topic of MIC-L-MC. Students of careerism, leadership and organizational knowledge missed the MIC-L-MC complex and how it served oligarchic rulers whose power was used to conceal ignorance and L-MC. Research must untangle further contexts and interests that encourage MIC-L-MC, explaining their impacts and practice institutionalization in order to offer plausible remedies.

One remedy can be new anti-oligarchic succession CEO norms. Succession encouraged by "Golden Parachutes" is mostly oligarchic; these are allotted independently of a CEO's functioning on the job (Vancil, 1987) with no say to non-director executives and managers who know best whether s/he deserves generosity. Successes of democratic firms (Erdal, 2011; Semler, 1993; Shapira, 2008) suggest that a democracy which includes knowledgeable insiders in succession decisions side by side with directors can curb oligarchic tendencies and discourage L-MC by periodic tests of trust in a leader, say every four years like the reelection of US presidents. However, the many cases of successful leaders who managed to function effectively for more than eight years support allowing CEOs more than two terms. This is plausible by allowing up to four terms for those trusted by extra-large majorities, over 67 percent for a third term and over 88 percent for a fourth term (Shapira, 2013, p. 24).

Second, new yardsticks for executive nominations can minimize MIC-L-MC:

- (1) having, a habitus of vulnerable involvement aimed at learning local problems;
- (2) having referred and interactional expertises that fit a firm's major problems; and
- (3) previous successful trustful servant transformational leadership.

These yardsticks may also be useful for comparing insider vs outsider candidates, but further study of their relative weight in forecasting who among candidates will be a non-careerist executive is in order. Research is also required of the relative weight of the five factors that impact careerism according to findings: first, involvement habitus, second, relevancy of expertises, third, previous leadership type, fourth, career prospects with MIC-L-MC, fifth, organizational contexts that encourage/discourage their choice.

A radical change of attitude to the study of MIC-L-MC is required. Much research has been recently devoted to managerial ethics and organizational trust, but only little to MIC-L-MC. Survey research is bound to fail studying these dark secrets, their untangling requires ethnographies of managers by longitudinal field-work and study of cultural context impact; these can result in an organizational science that matters (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Such studies do not have to take decades but they must be much longer and extensive than usual ethnography, and they must be phronetic, seeking a concrete, practical and ethical answers to major troubling questions concerning power-holders of one's society, much as the Aalborg Project was for Flyvbjerg (2006) and the study of kibbutz for myself (Shapira, 2012).

Note

1. According to interviews with the CEO, the two managers and six other informants.

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