



# ‘What plot have they hatched at HQ again’:

Managing meaningfulness through purpose communication during organizational change

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# INTRODUCTION



## **ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Businesses are re-aligning to embrace purpose beyond profits, thus linking their operations to advancing the public good (Henderson, 2024)

- Purpose studied on many fields, e.g. org. studies, economics, management, strategy studies etc.
- Purpose has been central to studying meaningful work (Pratt & Hedden, 2023; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010)
  - Direction in life
  - Worthiness of an organization's actions
- However, researchers in org. comm. have been neglecting organizational purpose (notable exceptions, Kuhn, 2024; Mitra & Fyke, 2017; Fyke & Buzzanell, 2013) and meaningful work (Zorn, 2017; Cheney, 2008)

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND



## **MEANINGFULNESS OF WORK**

“Meaningful work’ is therefore work experienced as particularly significant and holding more positive meaning to individuals” (Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010, p. 95).

Impact of purpose

Psychological & individualistic ➡ ‘Soloist’

Management of meaningfulness



## **CONTROL/POWER**

Communication-as-power

Soft power

Organization-dominant world view

Resistance



## **ORG. CHANGE**

Managerial power in organizational change

Socialization & re-socialization of employees

Expectations held for employees

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **RQ1** How is the purpose communication utilized to construct meaningful work during organizational change?
- **RQ2** How does communicating organizational purpose generate an opportunity for a struggle over the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of work during organizational change?

# SITE OF THE STUDY AND DATA



## **“INDUSTRY LTD.”**

Public company operating in manufacturing industry

c. 15.000 employees, sales + 10 bn. euros, six business areas in 10 countries

A transformation strategy based on purpose communication, crystallized into a purpose statement



## **DATA**

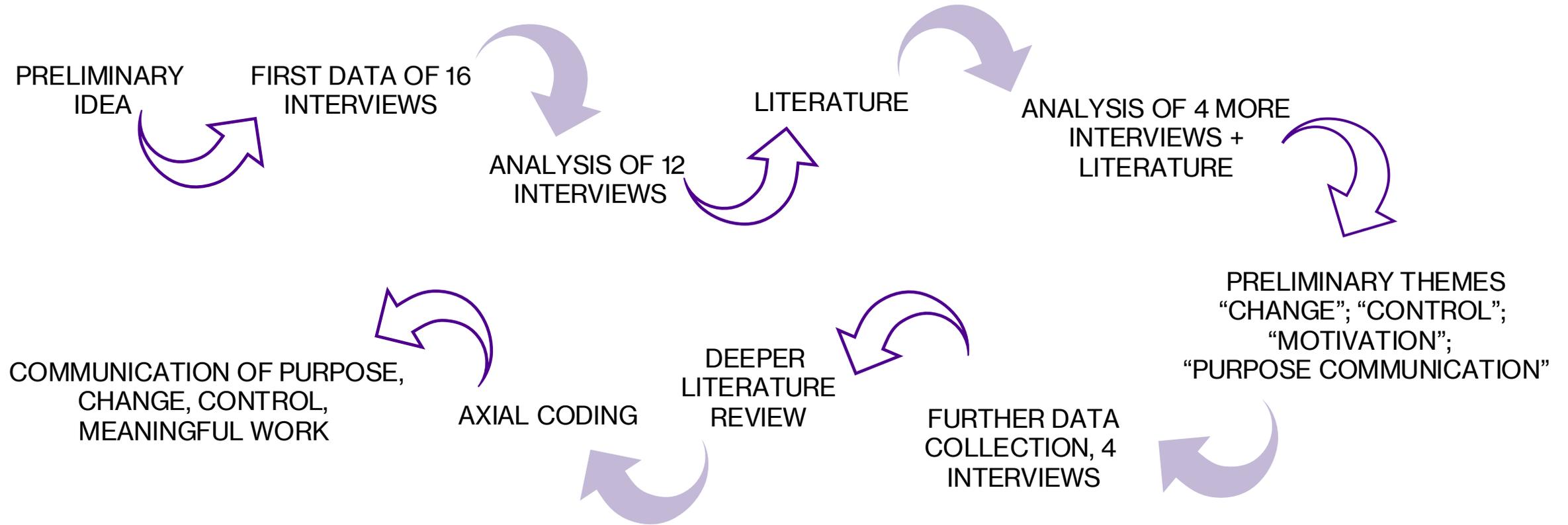
20 mid-level managers, 8 female and 12 male

49 years old (Med.), 8 years of service (Med.) in the company, 3 supervisees (Med.)

The data comprised 352 pages of transcribed interviews, totaling 125,976 words

# GROUND ED THEORY

WINDING AND TURNING ONE WAY AND ANOTHER LIKE A SERPENTINE ROAD. DESPITE OF ZIGZAGING, MOVING FORWARD.



# CODING

PHASES OF CODING NOT STRICTLY DISSECTED AND CODING STARTED DURING INTERVIEWS

## OPEN CODING

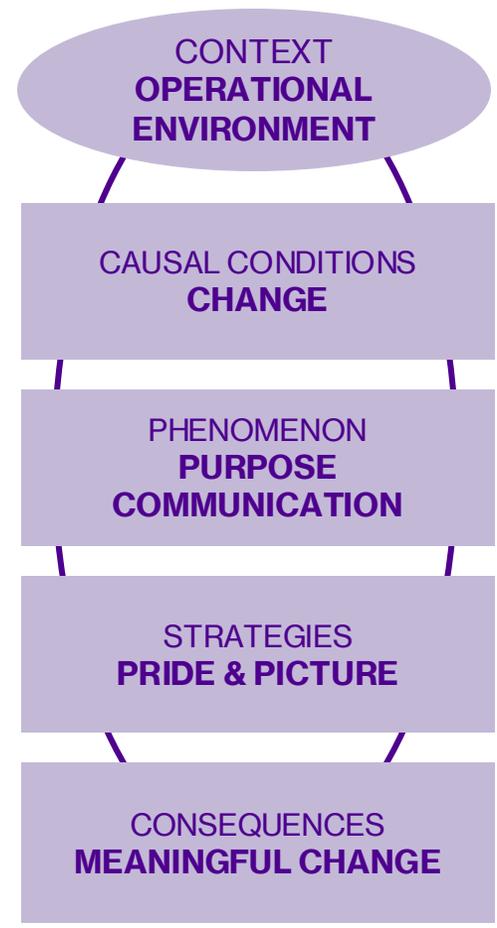
- First author
- ATLAS.ti
- Fracturing of the data; labelling words, sentences and paragraphs
- After coding the first 16 interviews, 245 open codes
- Four more interviews to further understand the codes and emerging categories
- 280 codes
- Sense of saturation

## AXIAL CODING

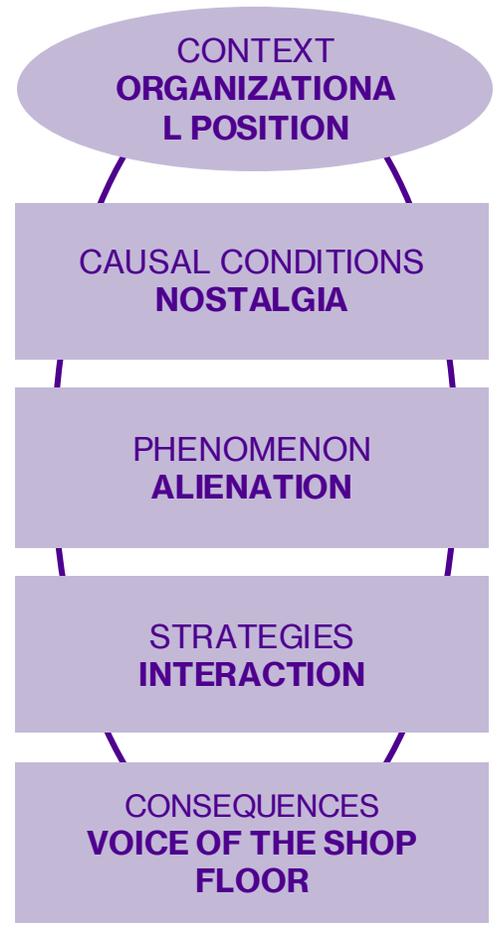
- Point to reconstructed the deconstructed data → to collapse the codes to larger categories
- Comparison of the codes and their properties, to find similarities and continuums
- Coding paradigm (Strauss) to detect links between the codes. Subcategories of context, causal conditions, phenomenon, strategies and consequences
- Subcategories to categories

CODING PARADIGM (Strauss)

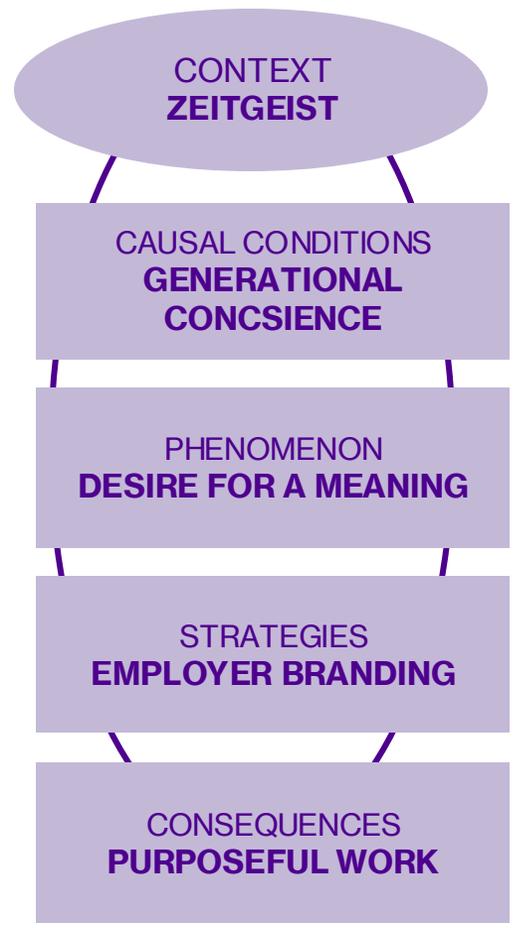
‘CONSTRUCTING MEANINGFULNESS THROUGH PURPOSE COMMUNICATION AMIDST OF CHANGE’



“‘WHAT HAVE THEY COME UP WITH AGAIN?’ ASSESSING OTHERS’ ENGAGEMENT TO PURPOSE’

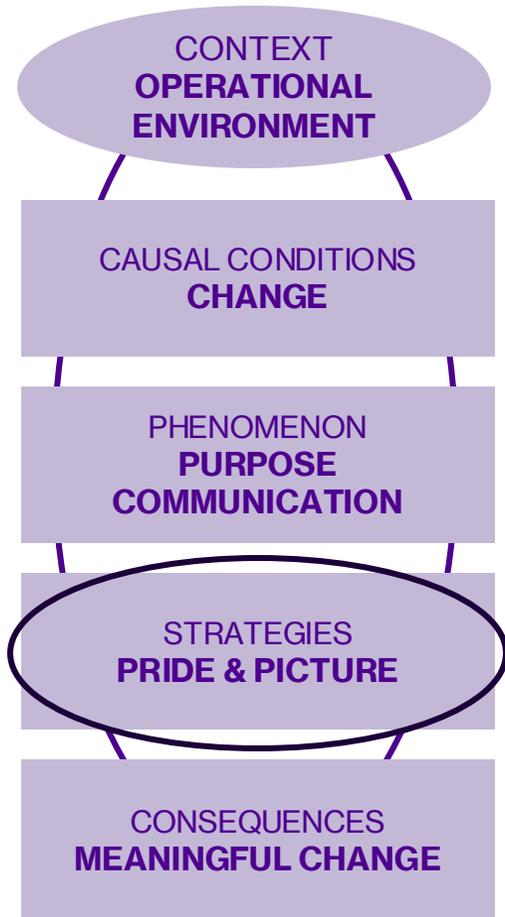


‘RECRUITING WITH PURPOSE’

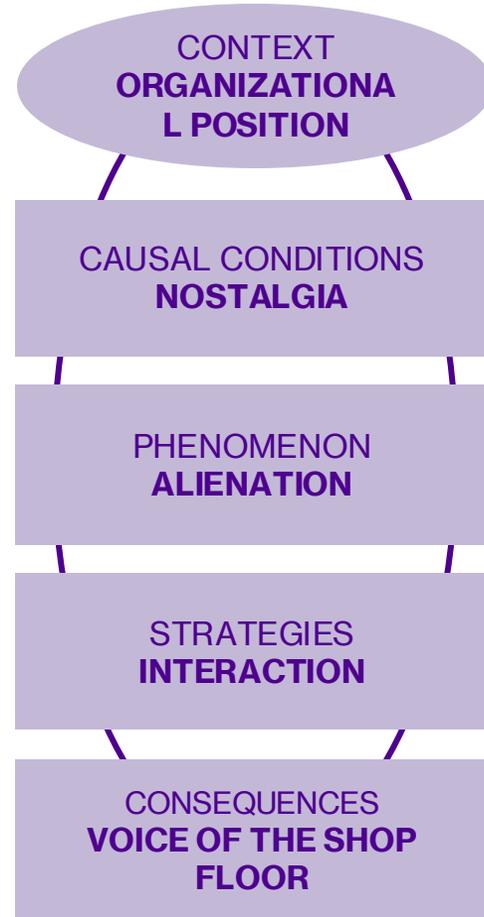


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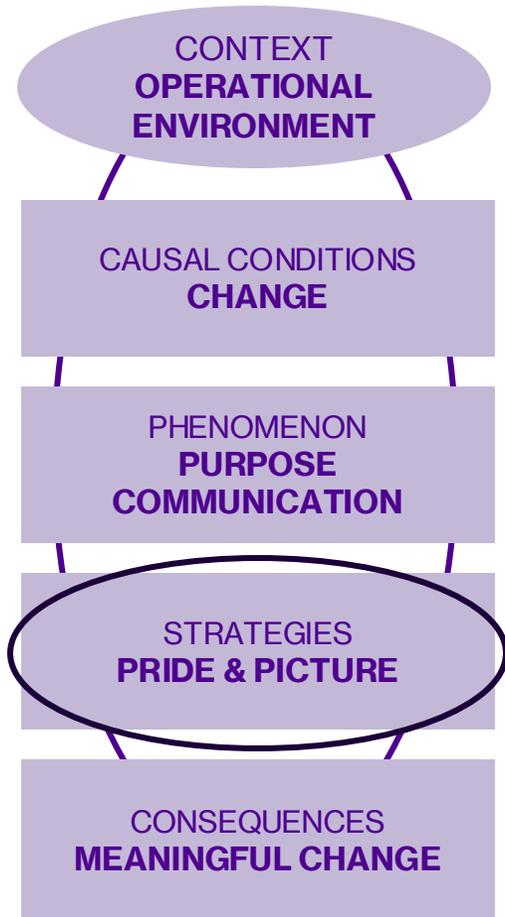


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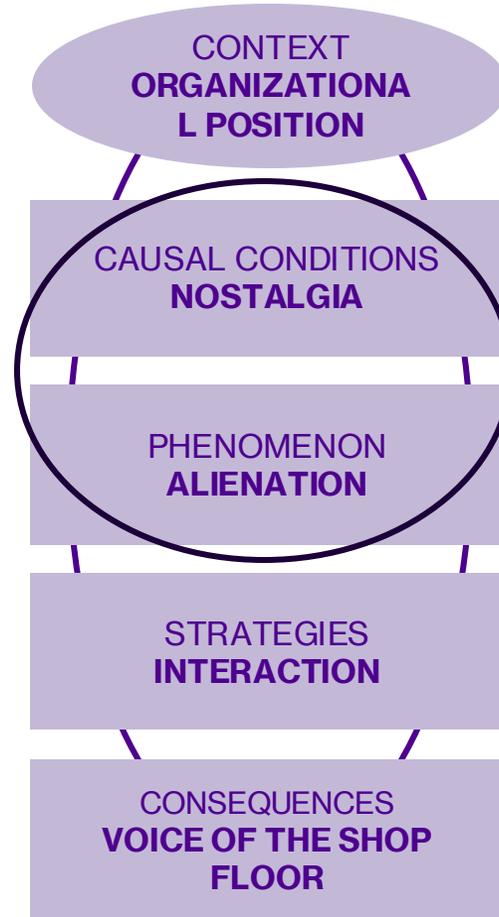


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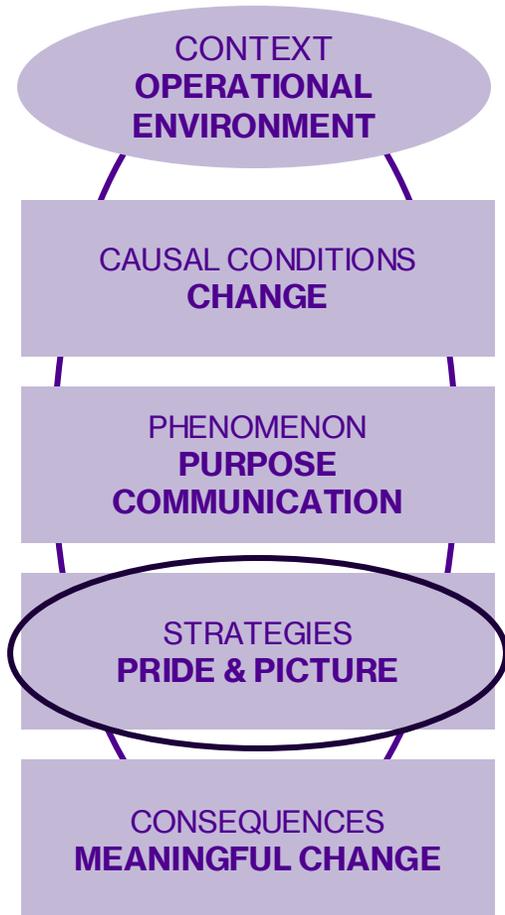


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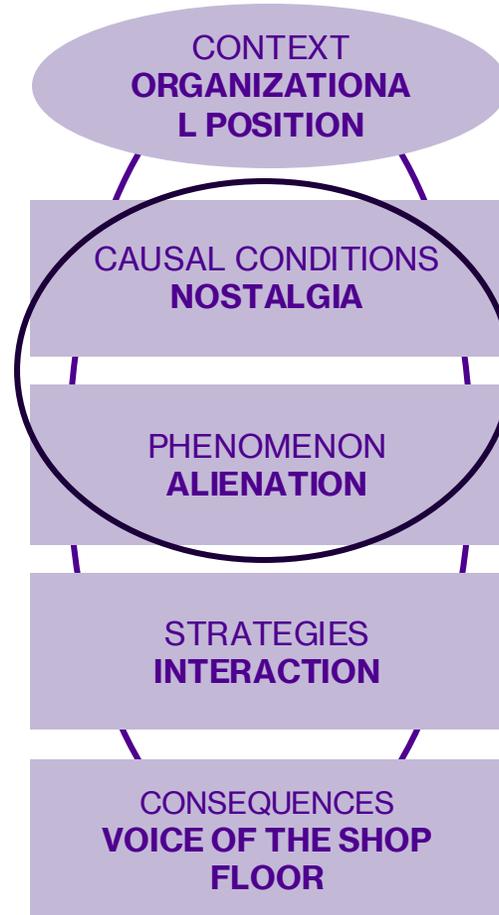


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‘RECRUITING WITH PURPOSE’



# CORE CATEGORY

“WHAT’S THE MAIN STORY HERE” (STRAUSS, 1987, p. 35)

## ‘PURPOSEFUL MANAGEMENT OF MEANINGFULNESS’

FOSTERING SENSE OF MEANINGFULNESS THROUGH COMMUNICATION OF  
ORG.PURPOSE & INTENTIONALITY (VIA PURPOSE & ON PURPOSE)

ELEMENTS OF ETHICS AND MORALITY IN THE PERSUASION OF EMPLOYEES:  
COLONIZATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL’S CONSCIENCE

MEANINGFUL CHANGE

# TAKEAWAY

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## ***PURPOSE COMMUNICATION IS INTENTIONAL***

Purpose communication is instrumentalized by management to provoke experiences of meaningfulness among employees

M.o.M. elevates meaningful work into an experience provoked by others

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Change is a chance to reconstruct relationships between the organization and its members -> resocializing employees

Purpose communication gives management soft power to argue for, push for, and motivate organizational change

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Organizational purpose is not a value or goal shared by all employees, thus challenging management's control over their staff.

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## **MOTIVATING & CONTROLLING**

Purpose communication has a dual role: a motivational tool and a mechanism of control

Potential to reshape workplace dynamics and employee worldviews

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**THANK YOU.**

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