**(IV) How to apply the Viable System Model to get a fast design or diagnosis of an organization (Introduction-Part IV)**

**Pathologies related to System 3 (Management style: Is the Operations management designed and working adequately?)**

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1. I continue sharing some ideas taken from the Organizational Cybernetics (OC) field, with particular emphasis on the Viable System Model (VSM) that I think may be useful to any decision-taker in any organization.

The content of the OC approach, the details for its implementation and use can be consulted in the book:

[Design and Diagnosis for Sustainable Organizations. The Viable System Method](https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-642-22318-1)

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2. In this **fourth general post,** I will continue commenting on some of the most frequent pathologies in organizations. As I mentioned in previous posts, this knowledge is helpful to design them, so they are created free of them (healthy), or for diagnosing an existing organization. Once identified a pathology we can try to eliminate it.

**In previous posts, I shared a short version of the first group of pathologies**

**(I. Structural Pathologies) and started to show some of the pathologies included in the second group: II. Functional Pathologies.**

3. In the presentation I made for the **Metaphorum Group in May 2022**, I did show **the three global maps** with the more frequent **organizational pathologies.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62mRBzRDxHI>

**Organizational Pathologies (4)**

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As I mentioned in previous posts, identifying a pathology is a prerequisite to prescribing any treatment for the diagnosed deficiency. With that aim, I prepared back in 2008 a taxonomy of "**Organizational pathologies**" that I am sharing. I classified the 26 ones I found widespread into three main families or groups.

The first group (I) includes pathologies related to organizations' structural design and how the organization copes with its total environmental complexity by creating the necessary sub-organizations. These I name Structural Pathologies.

The second group (II) includes pathologies related to the adequacy of the organizations (at all recursion levels) to the prescription made by the VSM about functional subsystems and their relations. These I call Functional Pathologies.

The third group (III) subsumes Information System and Communication Channel Pathologies.

**In a previous posts, I shared a short version of the first group of pathologies:**

**I. Structural Pathologies) and started to show some of the pathologies included in the second group: II. Functional Pathologies.**

**The denominations used, as are System 5, System 2, etc., are typically used in the Beer's Viable System Model (VSM).**

**II. Functional Pathologies (4)**

This group includes 17 pathologies related to each of the organizations that compose the entire organization. In each unit, one must check to see that all the essential functions (systems) necessary for the organization's viability exist and work adequately.

Here are the more frequent pathologies affecting each of the VSM functions (systems) and the whole organization (named as System 5, System 4, System 3, System 3\*, Homeostat 4-3, System 2, and System 1). In this post I will mention the ones related to System 3.

Concerning the pathologies related to System 3 (in the VSM), some observations related to some essential principles of OC and the role of System 3 are fundamental. These are the following:

\* One of the essential principles of OC is to endeavor to make systems (organizations) **self-regulating**; for this purpose, one key is to locate the point of decision as close as possible to where the corresponding need for decision occurs. Consequently, the corresponding operational units should have sufficient capacity both to decide and to act; in other words, they should be allowed the necessary degree of **autonomy**, limited only by **cohesion** requirements for the organization as a whole.

\* The principal function of a sound System 3 is to design just the right components (System 3\*, System 2, and the channels of communication with each System-1 component) for the organization, which it must run (integrate) to operate almost autonomously. Its intervention should be restricted to dealing with the exceptions that those in charge of the different elements in System 1 are incapable of handling, as well as any unforeseen situations in both the environment and inside the organization on which decision-making is beyond the remit of these managers.

**Pathologies related to System 3.**

System 3 and System 1 are generally possessed by all organizations, as they make it possible for the products and services that are supposed to be provided to reach the market or the particular environment. Nevertheless, their existence does not guarantee that they will perform well.

I mentioned in the previous post the kinds of problems engendered by a lack of communication between System 3 and System 4 and the corresponding effect on the activity of the System 4-System 3 homeostat, ranging from dysfunction to its failure to work altogether. Everything described then is also applicable to System 3.

We can here look specifically at the pathologies caused by a dysfunction of System 3 regarding its task of integrating the elements in System 1.

Some of the frequent pathologies associated with an inadequate functioning or design of System 3 are the following (PII7, PII8, PII9 and PII10):

**PII7.** **Ina              ¡dequate Management Style.**

System 3 intervenes excessively or inadequately in the management affairs of

System 1. For example, an authoritarian management style constraints System 1's autonomy.

**PII8. Schizophrenic System 3.**

Conflict arises between the roles of System 3 due to its simultaneous inclusion both in the system (operations) and the metasystem (management).

**PII9. Weak Connection Between System 3 and System 1 (**"each man for himself").

The operational units composing System 1 work separately without being adequately integrated by System 3.

**PII10.** **The Hypertrophy of System 3.**

System 3 arrogates to itself too much activity, some of which should be carried out by System 3\*, System 2, and System 1 directly.

For are detailed description of each pathology you may consult the book:

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*Functional Pathologies. Pathologies related to System 3.*