



Shakespeare's learning futures: The application of Shakespeare's allegory as interpretative scheme for sustainable decision-making



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Shakespeare
Boundary objects
Sustainability
Narratives
Integral decision making
Metaphor

ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare's works can be employed to articulate values worthy of pursuit and reflect learning histories, thus facilitating organizational learning for sustainable futures. The authors argue that Shakespeare's allegories allude to recognizable representations of everyday life, and are built on a 'plan' that can be employed to perceive a patterned mirroring between the allegory and the learning history of a sustainability challenge. This mirroring exercise procreates the articulation of organizational challenges, an understanding of roles and motives of actors involved, the notion of plural perspectives and their dynamic correlation over time, and the anticipation of sustainability narratives for organizational learning. The 'plan' on which Shakespeare's plays are based is an immanent cyclical pattern of affirmative and adversative value orientations, whose disintegration engenders unsustainable tendencies, which finds support in recent sustainability theory. Analysis of the nature and effect of these combined value orientations becomes an instrument to recognize values worthy of pursuit and implement these in the learning process. This article demonstrates how to identify such value patterns in *The Tempest* and how to build on these patterns in a recent learning history of the renovation process of a monumental bridge in the City of Amsterdam.

1. Introduction

We can understand ourselves (...) only by acting upon ourselves. (Brecht, 2017, p.92)

The question how to move towards more sustainable futures is a complex one. Sustainability touches upon many fields of study, from social sciences to natural sciences to engineering to business. Sustainability issues often demand technical solutions and behavioral change at once.

Gearty, Bradbury-Huang, and Reason, 2015, p.44) argue that 'when behaviorally and technically complex issues intertwine, a collaborative social learning process that engages diverse actors in deep systems change is necessary.' They affirm the importance of understanding the behavioral and psychosocial factors of influence in this process and suggest an action research approach of 'learning history in an open system' that does justice to the diverging actions taken for sustainability across all levels of society and

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the social learning that is already underway.²

To guide these actions, narratives prove to be ‘cognitive devices’ and ‘fundamental diagnostic devices’: They are enablers to enact reality and anticipate learning for future realities (Patriotta, 2003, p.352). Reciprocally, as Duijn (2009), p.176) has pointed out, learning itself is often used in a metaphoric way to describe these largely intangible processes in which knowledge is acquired, processed and applied.

The power of the learning history ‘depends on its ability to convey multiple perspectives on controversial events’ (Roth & Kleiner, 1995, p.3). A learning history is a participative process with learning intended for those involved. We argue that, likewise, Shakespeare’s allegories can be applied to prompt multi-perspective reflection on the development of complex processes (by observing the roles and impact of all actors involved) and gain insight in what guides and frames our anticipations. Both learning histories and Shakespeare’s allegories enable the researcher to observe the (provisional) motives of actors for undertaking their specific, time-bound actions that fuel their interaction patterns. The explicit subjectivity enhances a deeper understanding of the (multifaceted) course of events in the described process and keeps shortsighted judgments at bay.

To illustrate our argument, we worked out the application of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* to a learning history of the renovation process of Hogesluis Bridge, a monumental, historic bridge across Amstel River in Amsterdam. This learning history resulted in a compilation and classification of lessons learned (from the perspective of all stakeholders involved) for similar complex infrastructure substantial future projects. We – the learning history expert and Shakespeare scholar – worked together to retrospectively draw lessons about the ‘characters’ and their interaction patterns, described in the learning history. The classification of these lessons challenged the learning historian to pose axiological questions, such as ‘What makes an action valuable’ and ‘Where does this action lead to?’ We then denoted a degree of importance of certain actions, which may help to improve the process of future projects around a complex issue through in-depth, metaphorical understanding of crucial actors and their interaction patterns. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005, p.409) define this process of sensemaking as ‘the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing.’

To find answers to the axiological questions mentioned above, and to learn to apply values that define solidarity and cohesion, we used Shakespeare’s allegorical pattern as a topographic map and put the learning history on it as tracking paper. Our research aims to develop the outcome of earlier research on the applicability of Shakespeare’s allegory for sustainable development (Casteren van Cattenburch, 2017).³

2. Framing of our methodology

2.1. Learning by metaphor

An instrument used in storytelling and learning is the metaphor. Judge (1993), pp.275-6) suggests that metaphors are used ‘to get a conceptual handle on complexity (...) a metaphor thus provides a framework of credible associations that increases the probability that relationships in other domains will be conceived according to the pattern, rather than another.’ In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (2004), p.135) literally presents metaphor as a learning instrument: ‘Words express ideas, and therefore those words are the most agreeable that enable us to get hold of new ideas (...) it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh.’ Theatre and narratives can help the participants to distance from actual events and move beyond feeling threatened or accused, so they can address delicate and difficult questions within the organization (Päsilä & Oikarinen, 2012, pp.187–188).

Hill and Levenhagen (1995), p.1068) analyze the power of metaphors pertaining to ‘entrepreneurial sense making’. They observe that entrepreneurs generate, adopt or use metaphors as mental models in developing and implementing their visions or concepts. As these mental models establish images, names and an understanding of how things fit together, they articulate what is felt as inherently valuable to the organization. They note that metaphors are used to cope with large amounts of data, offering a flexible framework for understanding and interpretation of information.

If the metaphor is extended throughout the piece, and objects, persons, and actions in the text allude to meanings that lie outside the text, the imagery is called ‘allegory’. Both as a literary device and as a learning history instrument, metaphor and allegory work by way of association. In our empirical work (Section 3) we matched the learning history with retrospective evaluation based on an allegory.

2.2. Allegory and Shakespeare

A helpful instrument in moving towards more sustainable futures is the allegorical art of William Shakespeare, who in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century wrote his plays and poems in a period of great scientific discoveries and innovations, overseas exploration and colonization, the rise of global trade and consequential political instability. Casteren van Cattenburch (2017), p.29)

² A learning history is a written document (or series of documents, perhaps including multimedia productions) which is disseminated in some deliberate fashion, to help an organization become better aware of a learning effort within its boundaries (Roth & Kleiner, 1995, p.2).

³ ‘The allegorical patterns may instigate the reader or spectator to relate to current personal and social challenges. This increases an understanding of human relationships and social developments. Such understanding can help to find ‘sustainable values’: principles that a person or group of people find valuable and important to pursue, because they contribute to a balanced relationship between the individual, society and the environment.’ (p.29)

demonstrates that the allegories of William Shakespeare can be applied to topical sustainability challenges, because allegory is directed towards the discovery of value (Clifford, 1974, p.14). Since the sustainability problem is a value orientation problem, Van Egmond and De Vries (2011) recommend an ‘integral worldview’ whose development needs:

- 1) an analysis of the mutual relation between single underlying values,
- 2) the ranking of these values
- 3) the implication of this choice for moral character.

As an instrument for ethical learning, allegory has long been employed. In Greek mythology, we learn that pride comes to fall, when proud Phaeton insists to take his father’s sun chariot for a day, or that blood begets blood, when Tantalus offends the gods by cutting up his child to pieces and serving it to the gods, calling down bloodshed upon his descendants for three generations. Allegory sends the reader somewhere – namely, to the recognition of a ‘pretext’: the source that always stands outside the narrative, yet nourishes the allegorical quest (Quilligan, 1979, p.133). Such a prior or paradigmatic narrative (varying from ancient myth to simply a reader’s awareness of current events or policies) allows the given text to be inserted into an explanatory frame (Clarke, 2001, p.30).

Our methodology is related to Richard Olivier’s Mythodrama, which employs the power of storytelling to demonstrate the skills and behaviors of leaders and enable them to adapt to new situations (Olivier & Verity, 2008, p.140). Olivier helps companies to maximize their leadership potential by using Shakespeare’s drama and myth in shared learning experiences, which he calls ‘embodied learning’. Embodied learning or learning as performance is based on embodied knowledge that stems from a pragmatist epistemology, advocated by Taylor (1991), p.309: ‘Our understanding itself is embodied. That is, our bodily know-how, and the way we act and move...’. Rothfork (1995, p.3) suggests that ‘Knowledge is never entirely a state of mind, but always originally grounded in embodied action’.

Like Olivier, we depart from the assumption that ‘Telling stories is part of human nature and a fundamental way that human beings learn; A story has the potential to bring complex patterns and relationships alive’ (Olivier & Verity, 2008, p.139). Olivier fuses mythology, theatre practice, Jungian psychology, archetypes and impact coaching ‘to explore archetypal re-patterning’ and so brought a systemic dimension to his work. We analyze similar patterns by collecting all voices involved and then apply them as an additional, retrospective evaluation for the results of the learning history. While Olivier’s focus is on business leaders, we focus on any professional who must make daily decisions about the execution of a complex project.⁴ As we mirror allegory to a complex organizational issue, we stay close to Shakespeare’s text, which also allows multiple interpretations. We use Shakespeare’s allegorical pattern as a scheme to reflect the issues that emerge in the learning history, but this does not control what we see. As Shakespeare leaves ‘a great deal of freedom to the director, actors and stage designer (...) to decide on a particular way of presenting any incident in the action’ (Foakes, 2005, p.87), the plays give the learning historian the freedom to discuss chosen scenes and viewpoints regarding learning. The allocation of the play’s characters to actors in the learning history aims at learning and debate in the first place, it is not to pin down certain beliefs or preoccupations. The learning historian and the participants in the learning history can only control their own perspective, and may decide to alter this, based on the reflection exercise.

We argue that allegory enriches the narrative strategy, because allegory invites to ‘interpreting (rather than simply following or responding to) a narrative’ (Clifford, 1974, p.53). The reader is invited to search for meanings, which can be applied to reality (Casteren van Cattenburch, 2017). These meanings are not purely critical or amusing commentary, as in satire; Satire makes fun of stupid behaviour or hateful ideas in an entertaining way, whereas allegory is directed towards the discovery of value (Clifford, 1974). ‘Value’ here is to be understood as ‘virtue’ in the Aristotelian sense: ‘the characteristic marked by choice, residing in the mean relative to us, a characteristic defined by reason and as the prudent person would define it (Aristotle, 2011, 1106b36-1107a1). It is a moral about which it is possible and desirable to deliberate.

2.3. Shakespeare’s allegorical pattern: ‘O’

Shakespeare’s plays are built on the classical five act structure: ‘A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end’ (Aristotle, 2000, 1450b27). As in the classical plays, there is a causal chain (the events follow each other by probability or necessity) and a play is generally divided in two parts: complication and unravelling. The complication is the rising of the action to a climax, a turning point to a new direction (leading to good or bad fortune). The unravelling extends from the beginning of that change to the end of the play, and usually includes a recognition or agnition.

The structure of Shakespeare’s plays rests on an immanent cyclical pattern of adversative or complementary orientations (Casteren van Cattenburch, 2015, 2017). Based on their traits and inclinations, the characters in the play are positioned in the four quadrants of a schematic crossed circle. Their encounters in the play demonstrate if they seek to disrupt or restore balance:

- 1) A growing distance between characters (outward movement) is a precursor of crisis or disruption;
- 2) Reciprocation (inward movement) indicates recovery and balance;
- 3) A full centre represents stagnation, a precursor for shift of focus.

⁴ These professionals may be called ‘leaders’ as well because they have authority to act. This refers to De Geus’s Geus de (1988) remark that relevant learning in organizations is learning by those who have the power to act.

This allegorical pattern, called ‘O’ (Casteren van Cattenburch, 2015, 2017), echoes the changing world view of Shakespeare’s time, during which the perfect circular order of medieval religious thought was questioned and refuted (Rivers, 1979, repr. 1994, p.68). Scientists, philosophers and other critics of the ‘old’ system were often suppressed or even silenced; Inspiring to or commenting on the reorientation of old value patterns was a precarious undertaking.⁵

Shakespeare scholars explain how Shakespeare’s allegories mirror social and political challenges of early modern England, ranging from historical allusions to the Nine Years War with Ireland in *Henry V* to *King Lear*, in which Shakespeare tackles the issue of patriarchal monarchy not long after James I succeeded Queen Elizabeth in 1603 (Foakes, 1997, p.44). Shakespeare’s allegories can be interpreted as critical, but cannot be pinned down to one static, moral conclusion: They simply mirror life including its complexities. This is also why Shakespeare’s plays lack endings. It is up to the reader to pick up ‘elements of their own world that is much larger and more complex (...) to influence and shape the plot’ (Raven & Elahi, 2015, p.52).

2.4. The usefulness of allegory in learning history

To describe and change complex patterns of human activity, systematic learning needs to occur. The learning history method is an instrument to realize such systematic, yet accelerated, experience-based and ad hoc learning, which includes reflection: One of the key building blocks of human learning (Gearty et al., 2015, p.46; Reynolds and Vince, 2009, p.90). The value of the argument of Gearty et al. is that they found a way to scale up action-based research, without losing the uniqueness of local and momentary experiences that action researchers foster. Their suggestion is *storytelling* via the learning history, which connects ‘collective learning and learning histories from multiple organizations, within a more spacious inter-organizational field and beyond to the open system’ (Gearty et al., 2015, p.47; p.50). This could be a leg-up to address wider systemic issues, by engaging broader social networks and practical learning at once. While storytelling lies at the heart of scenario and design practices (Raven & Elahi, 2015, p.58), it makes a learning history polyvocal and therefore more engaging: One of its principles is that the multiple perspectives allow and invite contradiction (Gearty et al., 2015, p.50).

In her study on communication problems in organizations, Bechky (2003), p.314) argues that ‘participation in [such] communities [of practice], through means such as storytelling and apprenticeship, leads members to share common understandings of their world.’ She notices that engineers used boundary objects to ‘elicit feedback and buy-in from others’, because a boundary object is a metaphor through which persons involved can convey, share and combine their knowledge. Star and Griesemer (1989), p.393) define boundary objects as ‘tangible artefacts or object-like forms of communication that inhabit several intersecting social worlds and satisfy the information requirements of each of them.’ Hawkins, Pye, and Coerreia, 2017, p.294) articulate the importance of boundary objects to learning, as they ‘enable connecting and shared focus’: preconditions for a central ethical commitment to active participation in sustainable practices within and among work organizations (Fenwick, 2007, p.643).

We see Shakespeare’s allegories as boundary objects that create a safe environment in which complex patterns of human activity can be analysed and diverging viewpoints can be discussed, to stimulate systematic learning for future activities of organizations. We use the allegorist’s pattern to deepen the work of the learning historian. In a learning history, the organization is openly ‘talking to itself’ to learn to see things from another’s perspective. The purpose of Shakespeare’s allegory is ‘to hold, as it were, a mirror up to nature’; therefore allegory, as a boundary object, can reflect this ‘external self-talk’ of the learning history. The act of reflection helps the learning historian to discuss different viewpoints and pose critical questions regarding e.g. the process of decision-making, the nature of relationships, the status quo or change in the force field, etc. As quests for values worthy of pursuit, Shakespeare’s allegories can be applied to strengthen and establish the link between organizational learning efforts and key business results, because they create ‘transformative spaces for the creation of alternative futures’ (Inayatullah, 1998, p.815). Also, the ordering of allies and opponents in Shakespeare’s allegorical pattern supports the execution of a force field analysis (Lewin, 1951) as a basis for change. This method is used to make the mutually interdependent positions of actors explicit. Force field analysis is used to take stock of driving and restraining forces around a desired change or action. This insight can help ‘actors’ (like characters in a play) make productive use of driving forces, and at the same time, come up with ideas to by-pass or eliminate restraining ones (in Shakespeare’s plays often with fatal consequences).

2.5. The application of Shakespeare’s allegory to a topical challenge

For the application of Shakespeare’s allegories in learning history, we use the following procedure (in our case ‘Hogesluis Bridge’, we worked out each of these steps with one of the authors of the learning history):

- 1) We deduce how an allegory may relate to the complex organizational challenge by analysing the theme of the challenge.
- 2) Based on text analysis and literary criticism of Shakespeare’s plays, we choose one allegory that reflects on a similar theme.
- 3) Then we allocate the characters of the play to the actors we must deal with in the challenge. We see Shakespeare’s characters as representations of different roles and dynamics in the play, like organizations describe different roles and dynamic interaction between those roles and the process.
- 4) Then we observe how the plot of the play develops, and how this development relates to the development of the situation we have

⁵ Playwright Ben Jonson and some actors ended up in jail in 1597, after staging a satirical piece; the controversial priest, philosopher and cosmologist Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake in 1600.

projected on the play.

- 5) We add the allegorical perspective to the perspectives recorded in the learning history and suggest how the allegorical perspective may enrich the learning process.

3. Empirical work: matching Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the learning history on the renovation of the Hogesluis Bridge

The authors of the learning history 'Renovation Hogesluis' (Willems & Duijn, 2010) analyse the complex, and at times controversial process of renovation of Hogesluis. The renovation process started in 2003 and was completed in 2012, consuming almost twice the initial budget and almost a year more than planned. The learning history describes the roles of different professionals and organisations involved in the renovation process, their experiences of and opinions on decisions made during the process, their reflections on their own role and the roles of other professionals and organisations involved, and the considerations and recommendations of external experts who were asked to reflect on the entire process. The learning history addresses the themes of lack of teamwork, lack of involvement in the consultation process, diverging opinions, mutual disapproval (e.g. the role of a contractor marked as 'dubious'), projection (preliminary set of requirements are not questioned in the first place), and a (revealing) time lapse during which positions radically change. We then discussed which of Shakespeare's allegories echoes these themes and could be viewed as a metaphorical representation of what took place in and around the project. We found Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to match these themes and verified our choice by making a plot and actor analysis.

3.1. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as interpretative scheme: plot and actor analysis

The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's last plays, written around 1611 and centring on Prospero, a former Duke of Milan. Twelve years ago, his power-hungry brother Antonio banished him to an island in the Mediterranean Sea, together with his daughter Miranda and his books, which are important to him.

Two of the three islanders at the time were Sycorax and her son Caliban; meanwhile, Sycorax deceased. Initially, Prospero accepted Caliban 'as if he were his son' and taught him his language, but when Caliban threatened to deprive Miranda of her virginity, Prospero employed him as a slave. Caliban in turn accuses Prospero of killing his mother.

The third islander is the spirit Ariel. Prospero contracted Ariel as his assistant when he released Ariel from his predicament as a prisoner of Sycorax and promised him liberty when he gets 'the job' done, which is about to happen.

The Tempest opens with a violent storm at sea, which causes a ship to strand on the rocks. The storm is effectuated by Prospero's 'Magic Art'. Among the shipwrecked are Prospero's brother Antonio and his conspirator Sebastian; King Alonso of Naples, who, 12 years ago, agreed to Antonio's claim to the duchy of Milan; Alonso's faithful counsellor Gonzalo and the nobles Adrian and Francisco. Alonso fears for the life of his son, Prince Ferdinand. Overcome by sorrow, he does not notice the evil plans of the calculating Sebastian and Antonio, who are out for the blood of Alonso and Gonzalo, so that they can seize power in Italy. This double murder is prevented by Ariel, who is visible to the audience, but invisible to the royal entourage.

Crown prince Ferdinand, also accompanied by Ariel, is washed ashore alone. He meets Miranda, and they fall in love. Prospero appoints him as his log bearer.

The third party includes butler Stephano and Trinculo the clown, who find Caliban on the beach. Although initially this 'earthly monster' scares the courtiers, they conceive the idea that it could make them rich and powerful. Together they go to battle against the 'tyrant' of the island, Prospero, who, thanks to Ariel, is exactly aware of the plans of 'his' shipwrecked.

Prospero's talks with Ariel reveal that his 'Project' has not only been carefully prepared, but every event on the island appears is directed. In the final act, Prospero's 'Project' comes to an end, when Ariel drives them together to freeze in Prospero's magic circle and Prospero addresses them one by one before casting off his magic. Everyone wakes up and everything seems to end well: The marriage of Miranda and Ferdinand promises lasting peace between Naples and Milan, Prospero acknowledges Caliban as his own and as agreed, he frees Ariel. Only Prospero is still running in circles around the value system he has projected.⁶ His acknowledgement of the tensions in his projected reality (V.1) may induce a discussion on how to find a sustainable balance, in which diversity and inclusion are key factors (Fritz & Koch, 2014, p.192).

3.2. Allocation process and learning

3.2.1. Introduction

Hogesluis Bridge, dating to 1662, is still in use by cars, trams and cyclists for crossing the Amstel, and frequently opens to let ships through. The abutments of the bridge slowly move towards each other, which obstructs the opening and closing of the bridge. This leads to traffic jams. The renovations of 1977 did not solve the problem. In 2002, an automatic cooling system was installed to prevent the steel parts from heating up and expand. A measuring system was put in place to gain more insight in the extent, the velocity and the exact direction of the bridge's deformation. The department Maintenance of the City's Infrastructure, Traffic and Transport Service (DIVV) organizes a brainstorm about the problems with Hogesluis in 2003. This marks the beginning of 'a play'

⁶ The stage direction in Folio (1623) indicates that Prospero is observing all characters in the circle (from the outside): 'Heere enters Ariel before: Then Alonso with a franticke gesture, attended by Gonzalo. Sebastian and Anthonio in like manner attended by Adrian and Francisco: They all enter the circle which Prospero had made, and there stand charm'd: which Prospero observing speaks.'

around the question how to deal with the bridge's problems.

3.2.2. Selection and reflection

Text analysis grounds the framing of actors in Shakespeare's allegorical O.⁷ This frame was our benchmark for the allocation process of the actors in the learning history and a critical reflection on the project's progress. Analogous to the plot development of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, we analysed and identified the 'acts and scenes' in the renovation process and posed the following questions:

- (1)
 - (1) Which position does an actor have in the allegorical O? Why?
 - (2) How do they relate to one another?
 - (3) Which issues do they address in the allegory?
 - (4) Which challenges do they encounter?
 - (5) How do these challenges change their position in the O? (this refers to the interactions between the actors in the play – and subsequently, the interactions between the actors in the case of Hogesluis)
 - (6) What impact do these changes have on the issues addressed?
 - (7) How would you suggest the actors to apply the values you discover?
 - (8) How does the plot of the play relate to the issue addressed in the learning history?

While discussing Prospero's position as the great 'Projector', we deduced a parallel with the 'unbending' position of BMA in setting stringent requirements. The feud between Prospero/BMA and his brother Antonio (which reveals a relationship of mistrust based on diverging world views but a great shared interest) occasioned us to investigate which questions the allegory advances if we allocate Antonio to the role of the contractors in the learning history. The mutual misunderstanding and power relationship of Prospero and Caliban echoed the tension between the departments of BMA and IBA, while the collected counsellor Gonzalo reminded of Architect A's calmer actions. Our 'deduction' is based on literary scholarship and interchange with the author of the learning history, but we should note that our allocation choices remain partly subjective and are liable to further discussion: perhaps another valuable exercise of reflexivity.⁸

Our deduction resulted in a tentative cast list for *Hogesluis Bridge Preserved* [Table 1]:

We substituted the characters of the play for the actors of the learning history in the allegorical pattern. We then reflected on the learning history to discuss mutual relations.

Episode I: Research (August 2003 – June 2005)

By request of DIVV, several studies are carried out by external experts, coordinated by IBA – Amsterdam's Engineering Agency. These studies reveal that the underwater construction of the bridge deteriorated over time and needed reconstruction, replacement and/or renovation. Late June 2005, IBA draws up a report for DIVV's project manager. IBA recommends a complete rebuilding of the bridge (including historic elements).

Allusion with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: the former Duke of Milan (Prospero: BMA) and the King of Naples (Alonso: political power Amsterdam) are confronted with a threat to Italy's peace (the historic bridge's preservation). The situation on the island (scene of the action: Amsterdam) initially involves Miranda (Screening: BMA's 'daughter'), Caliban (IBA) and Ferdinand (DIVV), while the Master of the ship (operating system of the bridge) and the Boatswain (engineers) work together to prevent the ship (Hogesluis Bridge in its present perilous situation) from running onto a rock.

Episode II: Pre-design (July 2005 – September 2006)

DIVV proposes to make pre-designs for both the renovation and the rebuild option, including a program of functional requirements. A second opinion is favorable. Because of its status as a national monument, any 'tampering' with Hogesluis Bridge requires involvement of the City's Monument Service (BMA) and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE). Based on their requirements, IBA works out both options on behalf of Amsterdam's Committee for Aesthetics and Monuments (CWM). This committee asks for specification of the renovation option. DIVV chooses the renovation option, in which most of the historic underwater construction would be preserved. Their choice is supported by the municipality's controller and BMA. In September 2006, CWM discusses Hogesluis Bridge again, and issues a positive advice to grant a permit for renovation.

Allusion: Prospero (BMA), with the help of spirit Ariel (CWM/Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency) and the goddess Juno (UNESCO), controls the preparations of the action on the island, which is directed towards grounded learning for the sake of lasting peace (sustainability). Ferdinand (DIVV) is appointed as log-bearer.

Episode III: Final Design

In December 2006, the City Council discusses a proposal for the Hogesluis renovation project and decides to provide an implementation budget of €14.4 M, setting preconditions with respect to its monumental status and nautical function.

DIVV appoints an overall project manager, assisted by a DIVV process manager. During this episode, DIVV, IBA and BMA deliberate about the design. To avoid the risk of collapse, the builders must renew and rebuild the pillars instead of preserving and renovating the historic underwater masonry. The renovation of the natural stone elements requires the involvement of external

⁷ See complete analysis of the characters of *The Tempest* in Shakespeare's allegorical O in the dissertation of author 1 (2015).

⁸ See also paragraphs 5.1 & 5.2 regarding this point.

Table 1
 DRAMATIS PERSONÆ of *Hogesluis Bridge Preserved*:

Alonso, King of Naples	Political Power City of Amsterdam
Sebastian, his brother	Budget
Prospero, the right Duke of Milan	Amsterdam Municipal Department for the Preservation and Restoration of Historic Buildings and Sites (BMA)
Antonio, his brother	Contractor
Ferdinand, son to the King of Naples	Traffic and Transport Infrastructure department (DIVV)
Gonzalo, an honest old councillor	Architect A
Miranda, daughter to Prospero	Screening
Adrian and Francisco, lords	The Press
Caliban, a savage and deformed slave	Engineers Bureau City of Amsterdam (IBA)
Trinculo, a jester	Construction: Secondary Industries
Stephano, a drunken butler	Products: Secondary Industries
Master of a ship	Operating system & construction of Hogesluis Bridge
Boatswain	Engineers
Mariners	Construction workers
Ariel, an airy spirit	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) Building Peace in the minds of men and women
Other spirits:	Project Relationship Management, stakeholder circle
Iris, messenger of the gods	City Interest
Ceres, goddess of harvest	Rijksmonumentenzorg, the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency
Juno, chief goddess	Mobility
Nymphs	Science (Green Construction Technologies)
Reapers	
Scene: ship; an un-inhabited Island; Milan	Scene: Hogesluis Bridge; the learning history of its preservation/ renovation challenge between 2003 - 2012; Amsterdam

experts. Only when the construction specifications are almost ready, DIVV starts looking for a suitable candidate for the executive management and decides to hire an external professional, to be assisted by a deputy IBA executive manager.

Allusion: IBA (Caliban), DIVV (Ferdinand), and BMA (Prospero) represent different perspectives on the sustainability issue, although all three are in favor of the preservation of (respectively) the bounty of the isle (Caliban), love for Miranda (Ferdinand) and whatever is needed for sustainability: revenge or peace? (Prospero). Antonio and Sebastian allude to the role and actions of the ‘external expert’ with complicating (budgetary) consequences. Gonzalo, the old councilor, alludes to Architect A; he pours oil on troubled waters and puts things in perspective.

Episode IV: Procurement

In February 2008, the construction specifications are published in a European procurement procedure. The selection of a contractor is based on price. In the negotiations, the contractor suggests excluding the renovation of the natural stone elements from the contract, because of the specialist nature of this renovation. Although this suggestion is against the procurement rules, DIVV decides to open another tender.

Allusion: Act 4 of *The Tempest* opens with a solemn masque on the approaching marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda (the publication of the call for tenders) for the sake of lasting peace (the preservation of the bridge). The masque presents figures that allude to important values in sustainability issues: the goddesses Juno (cultural heritage), Iris (project relationship management) and Ceres (city interest), the nymphs (mobility) and the reapers (science: green construction technologies). The masque is interrupted (Figs. 1–3).

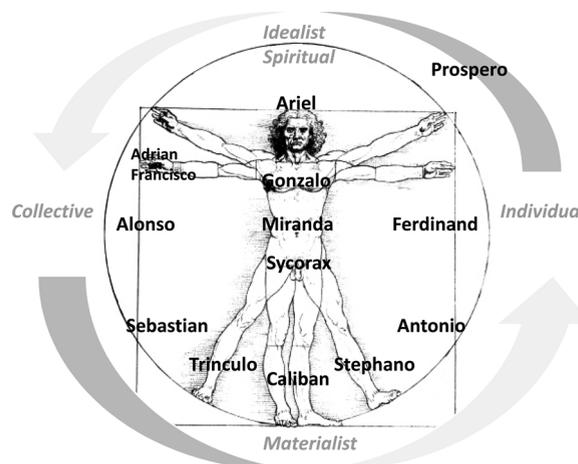


Fig. 1. Exposition *The Tempest*: Prospero running in circles around his projected value system.

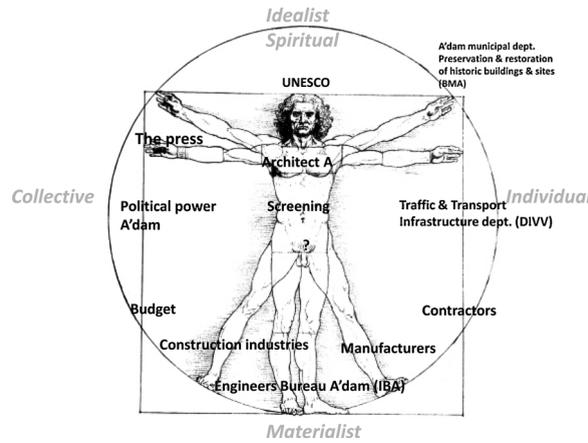


Fig. 2. Allegorical value pattern *Hogesluis Bridge Preserved*, inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.



Fig. 3. Example of Aristotle's value scale in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Episode V: Implementation (July 2008 – December 2010)

During the construction of a temporary bridge, the contractor discovers an unknown underground police communication cable, whose re-routing causes a three-month delay and additional costs. The renovation and replacement of the natural stone elements prove to be a lot more work than assumed. The pennants on the bridge need to be removed to guarantee the safety of the workers.

In September 2008, DIVV's project manager concludes that to finish the Hogesluis project within budget and time is impossible, but the alderman is not properly informed till Spring 2009. The contractor warns that the method chosen for renewal of the foundation bears significant risks regarding the preservation of the historic masonry. In December 2009, BMA agrees to tear down the pillars and completely rebuild them.

From December 2009 until March 2010, a team of DIVV, IBA and the contractor work on an alternative renovation plan. The choice is between 1) rebuild a new bridge with historic looks and 2) build a new bridge in a contemporary design style. The latter would be considerably cheaper: €18.5 M instead of €23 M for the first option.

On April 10th, 2010, the local newspaper *Parool* reports that the national monument Hogesluis is threatened with demolition. The alderman orders Architect Agency A (AAA) to execute a second opinion study. This study concludes that the budget indications for both rebuilding options are too high. Although the second opinion report is a classified document, *Parool* publishes its outcomes on July 13th, 2010.

Based on the second opinion study of AAA and DIVV's explicatory report, the City Government decides that the renovation works can be continued for a new bridge with historic looks. A cofferdam is built for rebuilding the underground parts of the bridge's pillars, but it frequently floods. This last set back leads to another amendment: the pillars are rebuilt on stilts.

Allusion: The rest of Act 4 and Act V of *The Tempest* allude to a similar insightful period, which demands latent ambitions to appear (Prospero's acknowledgement of his own projections) and a reflection on 'key performance indicators' (values that need to be sustained: Prospero's acknowledgement of his son Caliban, his abdication and moral choice: 'The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance' (Shakespeare/Hinman, 1968: 34-5.1.1977-8).

4. Interpretation of the findings

4.1. Structure of a learning history as the plot in a play

The structure of the play became a device for the learning historian to reflect on the reconstruction of the renovation process.

Hogesluis Bridge was both the allegorical ‘scene’ of the described process in the learning history and its boundary object: a go-between for actors, knowledge and action. The specific features (or ‘identity’) of Hogesluis Bridge defined the controversy and complexity of the renovation challenge. In the learning history, the sustainability of the bridge (Willems & Duijn, 2010, p.5) was the subject matter of dispute. How can Amsterdam sustain its cultural-historical heritage, subject to limiting conditions regarding time, money and available knowledge, and meet societal needs like safety, access to mobility or a free flow of traffic? What is the bridge’s new, functional balance?

4.2. How Prospero’s O in Hogesluis Bridge may come to Prosper

Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, like the learning history of Hogesluis Bridge, also ends with a question: How to achieve a dynamic equilibrium and make what is of value inclusive? The play anticipates the answer to that question in several ways:

- (1) Like Prospero should have kept a tight rein on what was happening outside his library, the complexity of Hogesluis Bridge should not have been underestimated in the first place;
- (2) Like Prospero and Ferdinand must find a way to relate well, BMA and DIVV must respect their mutual cultural differences and level of knowledge;
- (3) Prospero’s final genuflection towards the audience may remind of the importance to transcend subjective projections for the benefit of a coherent and balanced ‘Project’ that ‘was to please’ – not to fail.

As we mirrored the plot of the allegory to the findings in the learning history, this exercise again anticipated the outcome of the learning history:

- (1) The Engineers Bureau (Caliban) seems to be allegorically positioned in a ‘conspiracy’ against the Municipal Department of Preservation and Restoration of Historic buildings and Sites (BMA-Prospero), with the help of Construction Industries (Trinculo) and Products Industries (Stephano). Closer co-operation with BMA is advisable to maintain control of Budget (Antonio) and external research by Contractors (Sebastian);
- (2) The connection between ‘Political power’ or the responsible alderman (Alonso) and BMA (Prospero) should be strengthened so that overspending can be reported in time. The time lag between the first signal of budgetary control and the act of informing the alderman exceeded six months, cf. the twelve-year time lapse between the Prospero’s detachment to the desert isle (the preservation challenge of Hogesluis Bridge) and the restored relationship with Alonso. This, in combination with the marriage of Ferdinand (Traffic and Transport department) and Miranda (Screening), promises a ‘sustained peace for Milan and Naples’, alluding to the situation of a ‘Hogesluis Bridge preserved’ within the financial and managerial scope in the longer term;
- (3) Key helpers in realising this ‘sustained peace’ are Gonzalo (Architect A), the Master of the ship (the operating system of Hogesluis Bridge), the Boatswain (Engineers) and the Mariners (Construction Workers);
- (4) It is apt to discuss Prospero’s initial contracting of his helper Ariel and Ariel’s final release: if Ariel alludes to UNESCO’s aid to restore and sustain the bridge (as world heritage), when is it ‘on the sixth hour, at which time, My Lord, you said our worke should cease?’ (Shakespeare/Hinman, 1968, p.34-5.1.1950). In other words: when can UNESCO’s work be a ‘matter of course’ to be integrated in the ‘minds’ of all people involved in the bridge’s preservation in the longer term?
- (5) Who does Sycorax allude to in the renovation process of Hogesluis? If her position in the allegorical O is the centre, and she is already dead in the play – can she be alive/ revitalized in the reconstructed process? Does she represent ‘continuity’? Who is the anticipator of change?

Like the desired ‘sustained peace’ in the play, the success of the preservation project depends on:

- (1) A willingness to be open about and share information with relevant parties in time;
- (2) Mutual respect for positions and procedures;
- (3) Careful selection of ‘key helpers’ (e.g. for the second opinion, or a specialized agency like UNESCO);
- (4) Continuity in the process, from preparation to operations management.

5. Discussion

We discuss our findings by examining two key qualities of both the learning history method and retrospective, evaluative use of allegories: to reveal multivocality and to productively deal with subjectivity.

5.1. Multivocality

For futurists, the manipulation of sympathy is the main reason that narrative strategy matters: The choice of the narrator, the tense (past, present, future) or the perspective (I/we, you, he/she/it or multiple voices) may ‘help a reader to empathise and identify with a ‘good’ protagonist or reveal an unpleasant side to a more complicated and morally ambiguous character’ and put the reader on track to the *telos* of the project (Raven & Elahi, 2015, pp.58-9). The reader needs to know why the protagonist makes certain choices, and what these choices lead to. Narratology is thus applied to shape scenario outputs.

A learning history anticipates alternative futures and advocates an inclusive and balanced approach of different perspectives (Alcoff, 1996). In the Hogesluis project, it is used for getting grip on the complexity of the process of renovation, including different actors/stakeholders and consecutive wide-ranging interests. It includes the (multiple) perspectives of all stakeholders involved in the process, structured by way of a narrative inquiry: 'In the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4). By analogy, textual, historical and dramatic analysis of a Shakespearean play affords an understanding of different perspectives, connected values, their position in the allegorical pattern and their reciprocity (Casteren van Cattenburch, 2017, p.35). Take for instance the relationship between the two brothers Prospero and Antonio, respectively the former and present Duke of Milan. The play presents dualistic perspectives on their shared history: Prospero considers Antonio as 'the usurper', whereas in Antonio's Machiavellian approach to rulership, there is no place for Prospero's otherworldliness (Auden, 2003). The reader gradually learns that the two brothers represent two extremes on the scales of authority. While authority is an underlying value – the Aristotelian 'Golden Mean' (cf. Aristotle, 2011, II.1) – Antonio's hunger for power is its excess and Prospero's focus on vision its deficiency.

In the learning history, we allocated Prospero's role to BMA, Antonio's to the contractors. By looking in the allegorical mirror of *The Tempest*, the learning historian broadened his perspective on the position of contractors and BMA. This new perspective helped him to pose additional (axiological) questions in the (epistemological) learning process about how things really are (and how they can be improved), such as: do BMA and contractors have a shared value? What is their individual position regarding that value? How do they gain understanding about each other's motivations? What happens in the 'magic circle' of their final meeting regarding their individual position regarding the shared value?

The allocation process gave the learning historian tools to investigate the positions of different stakeholders and their reflexive relationship, also by critical interpretations and character analyses of Shakespeare scholars. Post-colonial critical readings of *The Tempest* usually explain Caliban's position as a 'racial Other'; Samuels (2001, p.53) suggests that Caliban's darkness is 'equated with an accusation of hypersexuality' and that he embodies 'all of the desires that Prospero and his dominant cultural order refuse to accept in themselves.' He introduces the possibility that Prospero has rejected his own desire for his daughter, and projected this on Caliban, who is then accused of trying to rape Miranda. If Caliban represents the 'Engineers Bureau of the City of Amsterdam' (IBA), and Miranda represents 'Screening' (the role of checking and verification of costs incurred, drawing up and monitoring the various contracts) – then it would be interesting for the learning historian to pose questions like:

- 1) How is the role of 'Screening' incorporated and managed by BMA and IBA respectively?
- 2) How do the IBA-representatives view their relationship with BMA, and their responsibility for the screening role in the renovation process? Vice versa: How do the BMA-representatives view their relationship with IBA, and their responsibility for the screening role?
- 3) Who accuses who, and of what?
- 4) Is there a moment of 'acknowledgement' in the relationship between BMA and IBA, like in the allegory when Prospero says: 'This thing of darkness, I acknowledge mine'? And what does this acknowledgement mean for the participants in the learning history, can there be any change at all?

Such questions help to analyse the reflexive relationship of different actors in the learning history. Our learning process centred around the twofold question 'how to preserve the monumental bridge in the long term' and 'what to learn for future projects.' Through the eyes of all actors (stakeholders) involved, the learning historian investigated diverging (professional) perspectives that often also change in time. While staging a play, a dramaturge encounters similar challenges: Initial assumptions (about what is necessary to solve or deal with) are challenged and overturned by actors (characters) with different interests and backgrounds.

5.2. Subjectivity

According to Stanley Cavell, 'to include subjectivity and to master it in exemplary ways' is the challenge of the artist and contributory to the beauty of art (Eldridge, 2003, p.114). Narratives and allegories are always produced with a point of view (viz. the artist's) and vice versa: they are always read with a point of view (the reader's). Subjective narrative and framing inevitably leave something out of the reality in which they are born and may put a (positive or negative) spin on it. The learning historian, who uses allegory to deepen his/her research, should first acknowledge that truth is relative and multivocal. While the act of employing allegory might evoke additional subjective reactions, the allocation game gives voice to the diverging viewpoints. The allegory itself (in our case projected on the bridge as 'boundary object') becomes the safe zone for the actors (of the learning history) to engage in this dialectic process.

Our first step was to allocate the dramatic characters of the play to the actors in the learning history 'Hogesluis' based on informed selection. As Young (2016, p.51) has pointed out, it makes sense to view Shakespeare's characters as imaginary persons for whom a degree of subjectivity and agency can be posited. He argues that these characters are best understood in relational terms, as 'locations for a dynamic activity of offering and response requiring us to take into account multiple characters in order to think about any one of them.' To be recognized as a person in any sense, a dramatic character must resemble the people we are surrounded by, even the people we experience ourselves to be (Young, 2016, p.35). Similarly, the dramatic characters can allude to a place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance.

This allocation process requires emotional detachment, for the benefit of critical learning, as in Brecht's epic theatre the 'spectator is not supposed to share in the experiences of the characters but to question them, dispute them' (Brecht, 2017, p.39). Therefore, the

allocation process provokes a tension between distance and identification. This prevents the audience from losing themselves completely in the narrative. Instead, they are made critical observers. Such a critical attitude reciprocates with the (Brechtian) ‘ability of the performer to exhibit one view while always hinting at all the other possibilities’ (Taxidou, 2007, p.144). Taxidou’s account of Brecht’s work connects to Rorty’s concept of irony (1989), which refers to the temporal and provisional relation that an observer (spectator, investigator or narrator) has with the object of observation (performer, object of study or narration). This means that the allocation is the pragmatic choice (of the observer, investigator or narrator), and not ‘given by nature’: In Rorty’s view, only descriptions of the world can be ‘true’ or ‘false’ (Rorty, 1989, p.5). Truth cannot exist independently from the human mind, it is a result of linguistic properties (Rorty, 1989, p.7). Likewise, the ‘values worthy of pursuit’ found through reflection of the allegory in the learning history will be the result of encounters of (subjective) different standpoints and should be fostered as such. The employment of allegory may then stimulate intersubjective learning.

6. Conclusion and suggestions for further research

Our discussion centred on the parallel between Shakespeare’s allegorical pattern ‘O’ and Hogesluis Bridge as boundary objects to enhance the learning process. Like the allegorical pattern, the bridge in the learning history was a device through which the actors (players – stakeholders) conveyed and transferred their specific knowledge and experience of the bridge’s preservation, its functioning in the traffic system and its place in the city’s historic scenery.

We demonstrated how to use Shakespeare’s allegorical pattern to reflect on the complex and controversial challenge of the actors (players/stakeholders). As the learning history method aims at inclusion of all relevant perspectives, well-informed selection of the actors in the learning history and their allocation to the allegory stimulates an integral learning process, with a longitudinal approach to evaluation. Like in a Shakespearean play, this evaluation is evolutive: roles may change, and the relation between people and (physical) object is made explicit for (further discussion about) decision-making for sustainable futures.

Our method comprises the following steps: The learning historian is invited to participate in a structured process, which starts with text analysis, framing and plot development to recognize the play’s ground pattern. Based on this pattern, the researcher articulates the value challenges of the play’s actors, and projects these challenges on the learning history, to list opportunities for success (values to be sustained) and potential for failure (unsustainable tendencies). The pattern uncovers current (power) relationships, dependencies and embeddedness. As the narrative thus enacts reality in advance of alternative (improved) realities, it ‘turns action into text and text into action’ (Patriotta, 2003, p.353). Through identification with (situations around) the actors in Shakespeare’s allegory and reflection of the allegory in a learning history, the learning historian gains an understanding of how one point of view relates to another, and how the dynamics between these multiple perspectives create new moments of choice for democratic governance.

Ideally, eventually participants of future projects can ‘undergo a little bit of a learning experience’ (Roth & Kleiner, 1995, p.3) from reflecting the learning history to the corresponding allegory and playing the allocation game. The allegorical reflection of a certain situation or challenge can ‘tell an organization its own story’ and anticipate alternative futures, for the benefit of more integral decision making (Inayatullah, 2006; Roth & Kleiner, 1998).

As ‘seeing a new performance of a play can be so rewarding in making us aware of new aspects of the shifting relationships between words and action’ (Foakes, 2005, p.93), we advocate deepening research on the fit between Shakespeare’s allegorical O as mental model and organizational learning for sustainable futures: How can the employment of Shakespeare’s allegorical O anticipate formalization of structure? Is it possible to use this mental model in the articulation of the values and value drivers in management and decision-making? How can it add to an organization’s learning process and procreate a more sustainable approach? To answer such questions, the authors are working out a test project with two companies in the logistics industry, whose results they will present in a subsequent article.

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