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## Article

# The prisms of management

Foundations of Management

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## THE PRISMS OF MANAGEMENT<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This article makes a contribution to the ongoing paradigmatic debate concerning management science, aiming to define more precisely its constructs. At present, within this field there is a lack of definition, of a universally accepted way of seeing reality, which results in a clear deficit in pedagogical identity. Our proposal for a new paradigm is based on three descriptors or constructs (prisms): organization, knowledge, and safety (OKS); in this model, the leading role is played by human.

The “organization” prism, in the classic sense, concerns the organization with an emphasis on the implementation of the personalistic vision of human. The “knowledge” prism includes the technical, social, and economic aspects of the collection, processing, and use of knowledge. The “security” prism is an aspect related to the identification and prevention of crises and threats to the functioning of the OKS triad as a whole.

**Keywords:** organization, knowledge, security, paradigm.

### 1 Introduction

Human activities throughout the development of the civilization of societies can be explained by human curiosity and practical activities, generated by three natural causes:

- human’s gregarious lifestyle, resulting from the instinct to follow a course, the need to connect to, reproduce, and acquire new space – in other words: the ability to organize,
- the accumulation of material and cultural goods, in particular including any form of recording economic events, administrative, political, and social, and also including those concerning religion and the military, which are inherited from generation to generation and represent the transmission of knowledge concerning human’s social status, rights, and skills – in other words: the need to collect and use knowledge in all its forms,
- strengthening territorial and political borders through political, economic, and military arts – in other words: the need to increase the sense of security.

The three aforementioned groups of artifacts are easily recognizable manifestations – the result of management processes that establish and maintain human in his environment.

The effectiveness of the behavioral and physical processes of human activities in the social environment, and the administrative, political, and economic domains prejudice the aforementioned observation and decision-

making perspective. The prospective outcomes are the result of curiosity and practical activity. This perspective can be examined using the prisms of organization, knowledge, and safety (OKS).

These prisms, due to their ability to bring together and consolidate knowledge in the domains of the space and security of organizations, can become a holistic tool to prevent socio-economic crisis, and are in large part derived from the economic doctrines of the modern world, including Poland, as noted by Professor Elizabeth Mączyńska in an interview with Anna Leszkowska published in the journal *Science Matters* [10].

In this article, we propose to treat a triad of prisms, organization, knowledge, and safety, as key descriptors for a new paradigm in the discipline of management science, in which the leading role is played by human.

### 2 Toward a new paradigm of management science

Many contemporary authors have drawn attention to the lack of a widely accepted paradigm in management science. Stanisław Sudoł [13, p. 20] agrees with the view expressed by Płoszajski [12] and Sułkowski [14], who wrote that management science is in the early stages of establishing a paradigmatic foundation.

Apart from the ongoing discussion regarding the paradigm of the science of management, there are attempts to seek out the important elements of scientific inquiry in this field.

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Clarifying the paradigm should be supported to enhance the identity and the upgrading of management science, as argued by Szpanderski [16].

There are many definitions of the concept of paradigm. In 1962, Kuhn saw a paradigm as a set of concepts and theories that define the basics of the discipline at a given time. What is highlighted, amongst other things, is that a revolutionary change in paradigm is a feature of the maturing of science. To define a new paradigm of management science, it seems appropriate to adopt Jashapara's perspective, viewing a paradigm as the "accepted way of seeing reality in the field common to a group of theorists" [5, p. 62]. However, we should supplement this with a dimension covering variation over time, as stressed by Kuhn, which in turn leads to the proposed definition of paradigm as a way of seeing reality in the field, common to a group of theorists at a certain time.

There is intense discussion around the exploration of the paradigm of management science in academic circles. Adam Szpanderski calls for the return or even

the rebirth of a (new) praxeological paradigm [16]. Lukasz Sułkowski argues for a paradigm inspired by neo-evolutionism. He sees this as a "cognitively interesting perspective for management science, which brings creative breadth to the theoretical and empirical" [15]. A middle ground, although a somewhat narrower perspective, is proposed by Barabbas' clinical paradigm, which is based largely on psychoanalytic concepts [1]. Alina Kozarkiewicz seeks a management science paradigm in the taxonomies of paradigms of the social sciences, which include: functionalism, interpretivism, radical humanism, and radical structuralism [8].

Disregarding the polemical aspects of the aforementioned views, and of other proposals, it is possible only to underline the fact that they are based on the concepts of existing paradigms, proven in other areas of scientific activity, which have simply been adopted by management science.

Therefore, the results are not derived primarily from the work of researchers in management, which may hinder their widespread adoption.

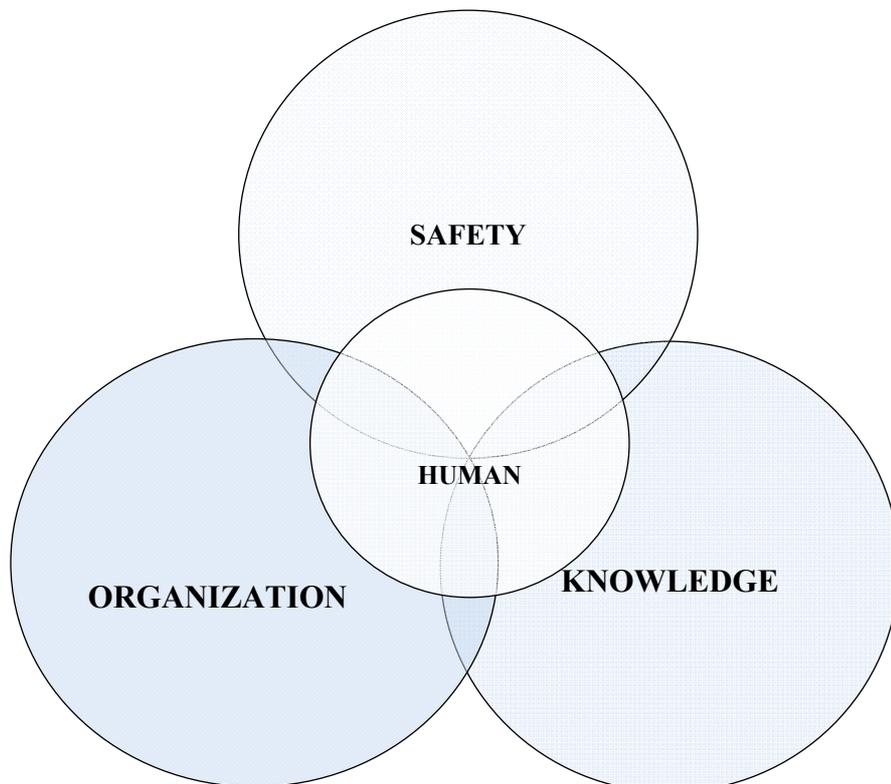


Figure 1. A schematic diagram of the new paradigm OKS  
(source: own elaboration)

The new paradigm of management science proposed and presented in this article is based on the postulation of a consolidated perception of reality view through three prisms – organization, knowledge, and safety – taking a specific perspective in relation to observation and decision-making arising from curiosity about the world and human practical activity. Together, these prisms form a framework, the OKS paradigm, in the center of which is human. Human serves as the foundation and integrator of all the concepts, theories, methods, and tools that can be derived as the basis of the new paradigm. A schematic diagram of the proposal is presented in Fig. 1.

Human, in this paradigm, must be considered in accordance with the theory of personalization, which assumes, *inter alia*:

- the supremacy of human value in socio-economic considerations,
- an emphasis on human dignity, which is based on respect for the individual,
- the right to the freedom of living in truth, justice, and respect for property (including intellectual property),
- human having the scope of his responsibilities,
- the subordination of social life to the good of human.

This understanding of the role of human is consistent with the concept of personalistic leadership, which in the ontological-axiological layer is based on the philosophy of personalism, and in the epistemological and methodological layer on phenomenological methodology. According to this concept, each stakeholder should be treated subjectively; a manager should create conditions conducive to the participation and commitment of all members of the organization [2, 3].

### 3 The organizational prism

Organization as a prism in the proposed triad should be viewed from the classic perspective, proposed by Kotarbiński and supported by Zieleniewski, who stated: “The organization must be understood as a whole, with the components contributing to the success of the whole” [7, p. 74; 19, p. 274]. As seen by Zieleniewski, this “whole” is a system, that is, a whole composed of parts, and consideration of the whole requires consideration of the parts due to the ongoing relationship between them. In addition, these parts are to a certain

extent functionally diverse, and for the whole to operate successfully, the success of each part is usually a prerequisite for the success of the whole section [19, pp. 274-275].

Taking a rather different perspective of organization and giving it new meaning in the proposed paradigm, we see it as a system that should create conditions for the implementation of the personalistic vision of human. Relationships, for example between employees, should give room for individual responsibility and be focused on respect for every person. This approach should result not only in achieving the goals of the organization, but also – and most importantly – meeting the needs of the people themselves, the stakeholders, who are part of the organization.

Thus, the ideal organization is a community of people who use their wisdom and knowledge, who respect each other, trust each other, and share common values in pursuing their own aspirations, and at the same time meeting the goals of the organization as a whole. The organization should be a place in which all stakeholders count, a place in which work is noble and dignified. First and foremost, the organization should ensure that all the people involved in it have freedom because individual freedom can provide the maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the whole. Only free men will effectively build organizations that are creative, intelligent, learning, knowledge-based, secure, socially responsible, flexible, and so on.

This way of thinking about organization is consistent with the concept of personalistic leadership, which is based on the phenomenology advocated by Max Scheler. As a fundamental principle, it accepts “moral ascent,” that is it assumes that “improvement of the organization,” begins with the individual, specifically the leader [3]. This links to the concept of corporate social responsibility, which postulates that organizations in the socio-economic space should not only meet the needs of the people, but also pay attention to the social implications of their actions.

Corporate social responsibility requires organizations to ensure that the positive effects of their actions are maximized and the negative are minimized. The organization seen as an element of the OKS triad, maps and links to the other prisms: knowledge and safety. It not only coexists with them, but also creates a meta-whole prism in unison with them, and it is on this that the proposed paradigm of management science is based.

#### 4 The knowledge prism

The development of telecommunications technology, computerization, and the Internet have increased the level of education and globalization, and their attendant effects of hypercompetition, such that the effectiveness of any organization depends crucially on its intellectual capital, based on the knowledge of employees and the organization. Knowledge affects the condition of the organization, which in turn determines the type and quality of knowledge employed. The doctrine of economic sciences clearly highlights the growing importance of the development of knowledge for civilization. A rapidly growing approach called knowledge management is rightly recognized, as Kisielnicki puts it, as “a logical continuation of the trend of the development of the organization and management sciences” [6, p. 35].

Knowledge management can be assigned some of the same attributes as innovation: it is a tool of entrepreneurship and determines competitiveness. The generation of knowledge is responsible for changing an organization’s current and potential state, serving to shape its intellectual capital in favorable ways.

Overall, knowledge management consists of creating, searching for, identifying, selecting, choosing, addressing (establishing flow channels, optimizing access), storing, updating, assimilating, and exploiting knowledge in such a way as to increase the value of the organization; key aspects of this process include ensuring the security of knowledge and training organizational members in knowledge management.

For knowledge management in the organization to be effective, it must be comprehensive and be part of both strategic management and operational management. It is not enough, however, to focus attention only on the technical aspects of knowledge management. Decisions taken in this dimension are not only economical and technical, but also social. The social aspects of knowledge management (and management in general) are usually associated with the social responsibility of an organization, focused primarily on issues of safety, such as environmental protection, sustainable development, and so on.

This aspect of management has recently become a subject of interest to many researchers. As a social construct, it is not only involved in the creation of intangible assets and property, but is also concerned

with meeting the needs (desires) of employees, particularly in the following areas: human values, humanitarian goals, recognition, appreciation, awards, respect, justice, opportunities for improvement to satisfy ambitions, and so on. Such factors determine the quality of the work and the commitment to achieving the goals of the organization, generating a sense of community within the organization, and thus its success and wider security.

The fulfillment of human desires, within the meaning of member organizations, necessitates the organization taking actions that will result in:

- the possibility of learning, and gaining qualifications, skills, and experience,
- an increase in the ability to observe and assess creative activity, creativity, entrepreneurship, and the innovation-oriented shaping of attitudes,
- the ability to make choices and take shared responsibility,
- willingness to act and the ability to adapt to changing conditions in the internal and external environment,
- the ability to take risks and failures,
- an appropriately shaped organizational culture,
- assisting human activities through techniques and technology.

It is necessary to take into account the dynamic nature of knowledge management, which includes making new goals, and integrating new knowledge created in the organization and external knowledge coming from the environment. This knowledge must be used at the appropriate time: it must be current, select, and credible. Knowledge management involves dealing with a cyclical fund of knowledge. Observation of the knowledge cycle can promote the recognition of various areas of expertise:

- methodical (management) – structure, procedures, standards, systems for competence, leadership styles and motivation, contacts with the environment,
- technical (products and technologies for the creation of tangible and intangible assets),
- free, public, protected, concealed, and hidden (unconscious) knowledge,
- knowledge that is already possessed and that which is desirable (individual, team), used and unused.

An important aspect of knowledge is that part subject to legal protection (intellectual property).

Knowledge is increasingly becoming capital that is protected, and there is competition between organizations for this protected knowledge. In the theory of business, science, and management, organizations still ascribe too little importance to the role of knowledge management processes with regard to protected knowledge, and the effects of such processes in making an organization competitive. This is in part due to the difficulties faced by researchers in the analysis of the phenomenon of knowledge creation and the exploitation of protected assets, much of which remains a mystery, but also the lack of a tradition of dealing with this issue.

It is therefore necessary to develop and disseminate knowledge of the rules determining the relationship between the employer and employee in terms of who has exclusive rights to intellectual property, the creators of the principles of remuneration, the criteria relevant to the individual subjects of intellectual property entitling them to obtain legal protection, and the extent to which there is a monopoly on trading the property.

There is also a need to undertake research on the economic consequences of the various uses and the possible uses of protected knowledge, and the changes to the rules required to protect the knowledge in the world. Knowledge has been, is, and will increasingly become the basis for the security of the organization.

## 5 The safety prism

In this paper, we assume that every day human uses the prisms of organization, knowledge, and safety, but without necessarily realizing that he does so. In today's often chaotic environment, human operates in multiple triads of competing OKS prisms. He works, uses banks, utilities and insurance, health care, computer networks, databases, credit cards, transport, and engages in hobbies, forming endless sets of triads around him. Human creates triads and only human "looks" at the prisms within the triads.

Each triad is a reality (semiotic sign) and has its referent and interpretation (descriptors); each belongs to a continuous and overlapping chain of semiotic signs, showing the process of the simultaneous propa-

gation phenomenon associated with the activity of (OKS) prisms (Fig. 2) [9].

The knowledge prism and the organizational prism together formulate the "rules of the triad" – a kind of license for the operation of human in the OKS triad.

The OKS prisms in the triads and the phenomena occurring in them change over time relative to each other in a way that is not harmonious, interfering with each other and disrupting the functioning of the triad as a whole (see Fig. 3) [9]. This can be a natural process (idiopathic), or artificial (forced), which often leads to a crisis, for example, making decisions concerning the organization under time constraints during a threat or crisis.

In essence, the process involves the breaking down of key features of organizations (socio-economic and political), and is characterized by highly dynamic changes in the structure and functioning of organizations as a result of the crisis, for example, the culmination of conflict or terrorism.

Threats – caused by the interaction of humans, material objects, or phenomena – lead to an increased risk of adverse events, and in the case of severe intensity, also to an emergency.

The membership (or share) of human in OKS triads requires significant investment. Some triads may dominate others, and some may become alienated, possibly in a process of painful self-exclusion, from the chain of triads.

The prism of human security in the multiple triads should play a dual role in the OKS formation; specifically it should:

- protect it from unwanted external domination (threats) that come from other triads (e.g., monopolies, globalization, crises, terrorism, aggression),
- protect humanity (society) from itself (e.g., global warming, consumerism, pollution, nuclear armament).

To make this possible, the OKS prisms in the triad must organize (build) safe infrastructure, create and gather knowledge about potential risks, and develop and implement safety theory – all this to ensure the continuity of business and existence of human societies [18].

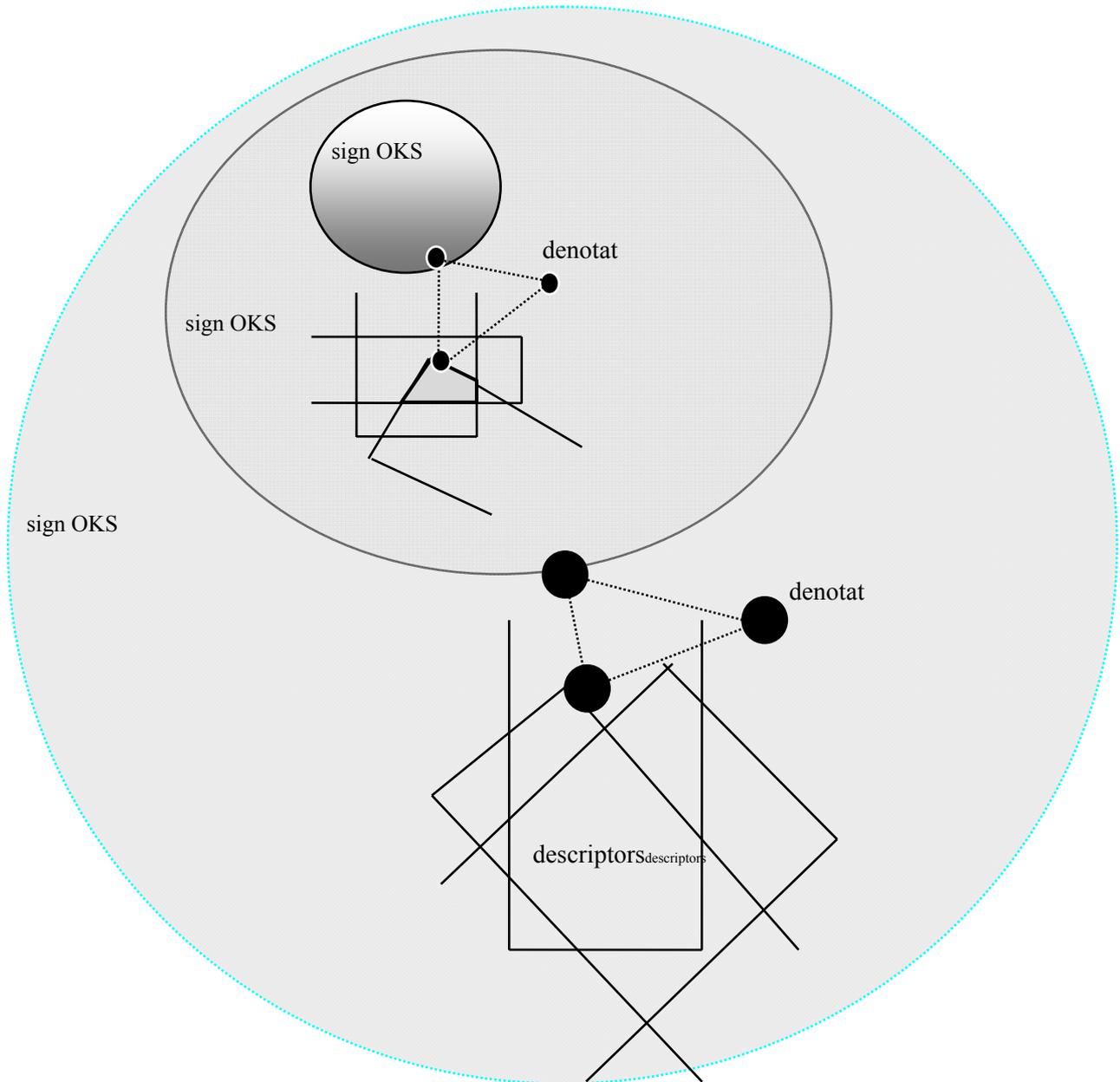


Figure 2. Continuous triads of prisms: **O** denotes organization, **K** denotes knowledge, **S** denotes security as semiotic signs; signs from the lower (deeper) levels of interpretation are treated as factual reality at the higher levels of interpretation (*source: own elaboration*)

The intellectual and physical potential of the OKS triad should be focused on diversity and the diversification of any activity, based on a philosophy of safety, employing theoretical knowledge and educating citizens

concerning risks and risk management – this goes all the way up to the critical infrastructure of the security systems that are the responsibility of the state.

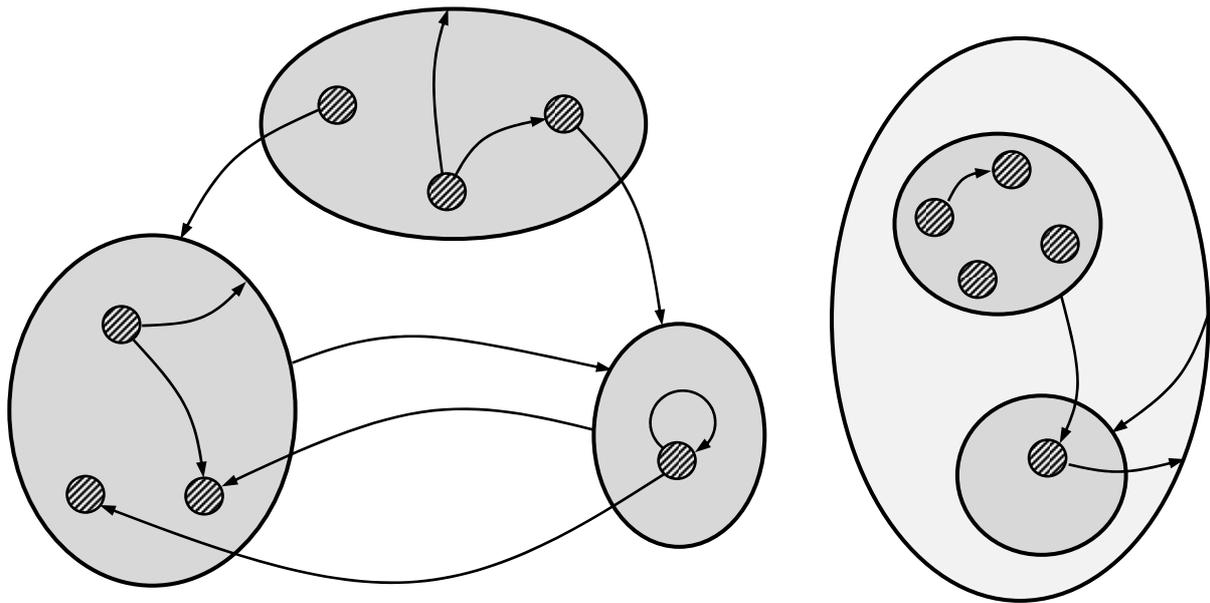


Figure 3. Examples of hypergraph models of interaction clusters; hypergraph arches combine OKS triads, pointing to external and internal interactions (threats) at different levels of their operation  
(source: own elaboration)

## 6 Conclusions

Management is a process carried out by human, understood in terms of the theory of personalism. The management process is the result of three artifacts (lifestyle, use of knowledge, and a sense of security), which define virtually every human activity. The effectiveness of management should be created and viewed through prisms: organization, knowledge, and safety (OKS). These prisms are, in our opinion, the key descriptors of a new paradigm in the discipline of management science:

- The organizational prism should be interpreted in classic terms, as the organization including the realization of the personal vision of human.
- The knowledge prism includes technical and social and economic aspects of the collection, processing, and use of information and knowledge.
- The safety prism is related to the identification and prevention of crises and threats to the functioning of the triad as a whole.

It is in the interests of human to maintain the dynamics of change in the OKS triad, ensuring a balance, and establishing or going beyond the boundaries of the formation of the paradigm developed by the authors of this article.

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