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■ David COURPASSON
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Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"
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Power and Resistance : Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"

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INTRODUCTION

Power is one of the central concepts of both the social sciences in general and organizational and management theory in particular. It is to be found at the heart of all social relationships, and forms a leitmotiv for social action (Russell, 1938; Foucault, 1977; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Clegg, 1989; Machiavelli, 1981). In other words, it is an integral part of social living involving groups or individuals within organizations. Although its role is a pivotal one, the "scientific" treatment to which this concept is subjected gives rise to a paradox in that substantial organizational research overtly dedicated to the topic are still few and far between. This is in spite of the numerous empirical projects which have been carried out and the excellent synoptic works which now exist. All things considered, one could assume either that power is merely subordinate to other organization-based social phenomena or that, by dint of its very significance, power merits only the courtesy of a "passing" glance, and constitutes so obvious a topic of discussion that we need barely tarry to pay it any particular attention.

The secondary role to which power has been relegated by organizational research leads to a shortcoming in the way in which it is conceptualized in organizational and management studies on 'politics'. Indeed, only seldom do scholars see organizations and institutions as political groupings when conceptualizing power. They tend, rather, to make for a theoretical standpoint, and to draw on tried and tested concepts from social theory which do not allow sufficient light to be shed on the specificity (or non-specificity) of political goings-on within organizations. This is in spite of the fact that political issues are increasingly to be found at the heart of the dynamics at work in organizations: the principles of "new organizations" are intimately linked with a move to redefine the rules by which authority is shared out and, as they tentatively develop, modern organizations are reassessing every aspect of the relationship between the center and the

periphery of their make-up (Shils, 1961). Moreover, the eminent question which Dahl raised several decades ago, namely "Who governs?", comes back expressed in new terms and in combinations which are more volatile and less easily manipulated, where those in positions of authority struggle to consolidate a legitimacy which is increasingly, and sometimes justifiably, contested. What, then, should become of power in this "shakier", or at least less easily defined, political context?

It is not easy to find a single, clear response to that question. That is why we decided to accept Emmanuel Josserand's kind invitation to dedicate an "Unplugged" feature of M@n@gement to the ongoing question of power, approaching the topic on the basis of a number of "variations". The feature's centrepiece is David Courpasson's essay, which posits that modern work on the notion of power means (perhaps paradoxically) looking at the dynamics of resistance which emerge within organizations. In other words, not only is work on resistance clearly linked to the study of power—we have known this much for quite some time—but, what is more, power in organizations could be deployed and defined today principally on the basis of acts of resistance. The second section in this feature comprises interviews with four eminent sociologists specialized in the political analysis of organizations. These exchanges lay bare not only the various ways of approaching our chosen topic, but also several perspectives on the principles which underpin a researcher's interest in power. We find here, then, something of an attempt to chart the course which research in the field has taken.

David Courpasson's article demonstrates how individuals who are particularly central to modern management systems, the managerial staff themselves, can suddenly tip over into acts of resistance and thereby reveal the extreme flimsiness of such systems. Indeed, acts of resistance on the part of managers call into question the legitimacy of all aspects of contemporary management and in that sense constitute invisible acts of collective power which until now have been only loosely organized. This type of resistance is expert rather than ideological in nature, and its current development shows the astonishing level of similarity which often exists between the ways in which management projects and "resistance projects" are executed. Resistance projects allow new skills and personalities to emerge and lines of solidarity to be adjusted in unlikely ways, while modern organizations dissolve social links and drive people apart. As a background to all of this, the matter of power as a mode (or modes) of resistance and a driver for change is raised again; however, many organizational theories continue to suggest that resistance is doomed to failure if it strives for anything other than the pursuit of local ploys and the creation of wise alternatives to the predominant discourse favoured by management, not to mention the recurring idea according to which resistance is a problem or malfunction which must be avoided... We have here a plea to trace the study of resistance back to its source, to a time when it was seen as a "liberating" force and a source of crucial debate (since cut short by modern management) about how to work (and how to work well).

The interview with Steven Vallas sheds light on a current "affliction" in the sociology of organizations whereby power is only rarely tackled head-on,

even by the most prominent of today's sociologists; when it is addressed explicitly, meanwhile, it is emptied of some of its analytical potential and placed out of context through the elimination of such crucial variables as actors' subjectivity or identity, which are forged by their perceptions of themselves in the working environment. Indeed, according to Vallas, the struggle between various types of workers for control over the content and procedures involved in their work is at the heart of power-related issues, and this has an effect on the symbolic output of this struggle and the official and unofficial circuits of power and resistance (itself a type of power in Vallas's eyes) which are at work.

The second interview, with Neil Fligstein, highlights an ambiguous conception of Max Weber's inherited power, to borrow the author's own words. At the heart of this conception is the coexistence of two prospects, "power over" and "power to", as well as the empirical complexity of power, which is both good and bad. This continual and widely recognized ambivalence surrounding the nature and consequences of power can, according to Fligstein, be appreciated by analyzing capitalist systems, which, surprisingly and ambiguously, reflect improvements in the population's standards of living but also the exacerbation of inequalities, particularly where income distribution is concerned. Fligstein suggests that there is a common element running through various types of power which materialize above all in institutions and the practices to which they give rise. It is these various practices which lead to different countries' particular capitalist models. The hurdle to be overcome when studying power, then, is that of gaining acknowledgement for the fact that alternative models (such as European ones) and the powers (such as the State) which they put forward as a means of countering the effect of market forces are desirable if an increasingly one-dimensional and non-egalitarian American model is to be challenged.

The next interview, with Stewart Clegg, can be related to recent discussions surrounding power theories, with a focus on the ways in which power circulates. Clegg stresses the multi-faceted nature of power, as well as its various modes of practical deployment through multi-level circuits and the various points at which they intersect. Clegg begins with so-called "episodic" power, the main expression of the type of power which can be seen at the local level, and strives to establish a link between this and social power, which relates to meaning and dispositions. He thereby explains the strength and/or fragility of domination systems. Clegg clearly demonstrates the extent to which modern management's innovative approach to disciplinary and production techniques allows power to be imposed "from above", but also reveals that there is a relationship running counter to this, or from the bottom up, particularly in that episodic power relationships can transform the rules of meaning and therefore, in turn, constrain attempts to seek domination from the "center" of power circuits.

Finally, our last interview, with Jean-Claude Thoenig, posits that power is not, in principle, a dominant factor in social and organizational relationships, and power theories form above all a set of tools which make it possible to analyze various aspects of organizational management, the central focus of Thoenig's work. This, then, is as much a matter of How

are things governed? as Dahl's Who governs?. In this analysis of the practical ways in which power is deployed, the focus is the complex relationships which bind various actors seeking to control resources and achieve personal aims. Such relationships are made up of dynamics of interdependence and exchange which can be pinpointed in activities themselves. These elements of interdependence and exchange can be bottom-up or top-down, and therefore lead to hegemony or resistance to hegemony in a relationship of recurrent conflict which can ultimately lead to change. Thoenig confirms the role of power as a positive force, and also helps to remove the sting from certain analyses which portray power as a source of trouble rather than a dynamic social driving force which can assist groups in undergoing change and improvement when the upper levels of the hierarchy agree to use it well.

These contributions, then, look at power from points of view which are at once contrasting and complementary. They emphasize that power cannot be straitjacketed into a single, simple definition, and that a great deal of humility is required of those who wish to study it. It is also a subject which requires us to place a certain amount of trust in the actors involved; only then can we understand how political phenomena are marked not only by patent structural and organizational constraints, but also—and to no lesser degree—by the meanings which actors attach to their actions and relationships of power and resistance. This feature suggests that organizational change inevitably involves often painful conflicts and that any attempt to engage in an apolitical brand of naïve optimism (or ignorance) in organizational analysis is dangerous. Without a doubt, then, organizational research stands to benefit greatly from a clear conceptual understanding of the political notions at work in the field, as well as a confident but unassuming empirical approach to these issues engaging with a range of relevant actors. If all this is borne in mind, the field of organizational studies will still have a great deal with which to fill its authors' manuscripts.

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Part I
"Roads to Resistance" The Growing Critique from Managerial Ranks in Organization

David COURPASSON

I 're-discovered' the phenomenon of resistance while I was searching for new patterns of power and domination in organizations in the mid 1990s. Theoretically, I thought at that time that a 'rehabilitation' of the study of 'sovereign' power and of organizations as structures/projects of domination was necessary, at least because this topic had been slightly neglected by the post-modernist 'turn' and by resource-based sociologies of power (Courpasson 2000a). Quickly, I realized that the new organizations that I suggested calling 'soft bureaucracies' (Courpasson 2000b) were more complex settings than places merely opposing central managerial powers to a grassroots peripheral agency. Nothing very original here, except, maybe, that I started gathering stories where resisters were looking like the most compliant and 'highly committed' actors in the workplace: middle managers. The old question of resistance as power could be [re] posed in new terms, because interestingly, it was about understanding how 'new organizations', through their very liberal and distributed structuring and discourses, could trigger resistance and critique from their most loyal representatives. Lucky encounters also led to this reflection, like in 2003 when I met Georges, a former Marketing Director in a bank, in a supermarket. Georges became an associate professor in a business university in sociology, after having been one of the most efficient and convinced managers of his company for 10 years. Again, nothing very original here.

Maybe not; of course, social structures, social norms as well as structuring practices, are always up for grabs. The idea that social systems are de facto contested entities is an enduring conviction shared by most power theorists. For example, oligarchic regimes, while designed to perpetuate themselves, are constantly confronted with destructuring agencies arising from the grassroots, or initiated by organizational leaders themselves (Osterman 2006). The capacity to resist power structures is constantly shown in regular expressions of discontent from subjugated groups that do not aim to transform the organizational status quo (Scott 1990) but do not wholly consent to it. In this paper, I highlight a form of resistance that is situated between large collective protests (Fantasia 1988) and 'everyday adaptations to a life of discontent' (McFarland 2001: 615). I analyze stories of resistance within middle managerial ranks[1] and resistance that arises from the critiques that middle managers are capable of articulating in the face of decisions affecting them or other individuals in the workplace. I posit that the phenomenon of managerial resistance is an emerging sign of a growing critique emanating from a population usually described as rather conservative

1. In the paper we analyze middle managerial rebellions confronting upper managerial decisions/policies. We define middle management here as a very extensive group of employees ranging from relatively lower ranked 'team supervisors' to upper level business unit managers.

(Jackall 1988), as well as a phenomenon that recreates possibilities for middle managers actively to participate in the negotiation of workplace relationships. In other words, managerial resistance is a struggle about values, as well as a struggle about the place of middle management in contemporary organizational change. In this paper I contend that this place is currently being rethought because of new tensions produced by certain features of what are usually called the 'new organizations' (Child and McGrath 2001).

Broadly speaking, these tensions relate to the growingly ambiguous status of managers, who are on the one hand confronted by subordinate missions and tasks, and who are severely controlled by central managerial authorities, and on the other hand, who are systematically encouraged to act as powerful entrepreneurs. Through their actions the question that many managers ask these days is "what is the actual mission of over-controlled autonomous entrepreneurs?". Beyond the individual level, tensions can also be seen to underlie political and organizational dynamics in post bureaucracies (Heckscher and Donnellon 1995). Post bureaucracies are political settings where, while authority is supposed to be more distributed according to the principle of 'heterarchy' (Stark 1999), power channels largely operate to impose an all-encompassing ideology of high commitment and conformity (Tourish et al. 2009; Courpasson & Reed 2004). The classical distinction between authority, as the legitimacy of a given 'center', and power, as the 'peripheral' capacity to act (Shils 1961), is re-emerging in these dynamics. In other words, I have the conviction that the study of managerial resistance is an interesting means to better grasp wider political transformations in the workplace, but more importantly to relativize a tendency to overemphasize the 'totalizing' dimension of new organizations. Yes, post bureaucracies are shaping and reshaping principles and practices of control and coercion. But they are also shaping new means of temporarily and, no doubt, partially escaping from this coercion.

Again this is nothing new. Research on social movements suggests how challenges from below in organizations (Rao et al. 2000) or from outside (King 2008) are capable of pushing specific claims from actors whose legitimacy has constantly to be strategically and politically sustained, and who are likely to influence management decisions subsequently. Recent research on resistance also examines some conditions for challenging organizational policies and practices that rest upon a broad variety of acts of rebellion, all fabricated in the tension between the meaning of 'being a controlled subordinate' and the meaning of 'having agency' (Thomas and Davies 2005; Courpasson & Dany 2009; Spicer & Böhm 2007). That is to say they are made up in terms of the processes through which actors legitimize certain forms of legitimacy and exclude others (Flyvbjerg 1998). Through this process of resistance, actors discover their 'extraordinary abilities' to take Mary Parker Follett's words, and their capacity to invert the structure(s) of power, even for a short while. Managerial resistance is a means to concretely experience the autonomy that 'new organizations' are supposed to give to actors.

Indeed, to go a step further, I contend that it is in the actors' striving to

reduce this tension between being subordinated and having de facto broader scopes of agency that most forms of resistance take shape in organizations today. Actors experience the encouragement to behave as 'entrepreneurs' while being submitted to an unprecedented level of pressure. This paper offers an illustration and a theoretical interpretation of how some new roads to resistance are therefore opening in organizations because of this dual experience at work. Firstly, because certain actors decide, for reasons that will be explained, to shift the emphasis of their working lives, at least temporarily. Secondly, because other actors discover along the way that their resistance opens up new projects for themselves and their fellow rebels, and is likely to give pause to oligarchic power.

In this paper, I therefore attempt to highlight that contemporary management, while long being established on the necessity of preventing occasions of resistance[2] is paradoxically contributing to developing intra-organizational resistance, in particular from the managerial ranks, by forcing people to work under an excessive tension between, to put things simply, their power and their powerlessness[3]. This tendency helps to reshape the classical dichotomy in theories of power between 'power over' and 'power to'. To put things simply, 'power over' is a way to limit the field of action of individuals, while 'power to' is a way to generate autonomy (Göhler 2009). In other words, it suggests how, while neo-bureaucratic regimes of government still have a strong tendency to apply the 'power over' dimension by relentlessly controlling the actual work of managers, the tensions created by this very control push certain actors to resist and consequently to reconstitute the social conditions of 'power to' dimensions in the workplace.

A BIT OF CONTEXT: THE PROBLEM OF BUREAU-CRACY WITH REBELLION

Bureaucracy has been devised by Weber to concentrate the means of administration and of control over these means, under the tutelage of a rule-governed system of government[4]. Weber stipulates that

> *Bureaucratic domination means fundamentally domination through knowledge… This consists on the one hand in technical knowledge which, by itself, is sufficient to ensure it a position of extraordinary power. But in addition to this, bureaucratic organizations, or the holders of power who make use of them, have the tendency to increase their power still further by the knowledge growing out of experience in the service (Weber 1968: 225).*

Bureaucracy, as an ideal type, is intended to reduce the politics of discussion, deliberation and decision among the members of the organization by giving great power to the top through control over the use and production of knowledge. Bureaucracy represents rule by legitimate oligarchic systems founded on the concentration of knowledge in the hands of the "ruling few".

Both Weber and Michels, Weber's contemporary, agreed that whatever the organizational and social characteristics of collective organizations,

2. As, in particular, most research on change and the resistance to change has been suggesting for decades (see for instance Dent and Goldberg 1999).

3. This paper is based on research financed by ANR, research grant number ANR-07-ENTR-010 ; some examples are drawn from Courpasson, D. & Thoenig, J.C. (2010, forth.) When Managers Rebel. London: Palgrave.

4. From a political point of view, according to Weber bureaucracies are constructed as monocratic forms, i.e. they are organizations where "power is concentrated in the position of a single individual leader and which is distributed down a bureaucratic hierarchy to a group of officials who in turn execute the policies of the leader in relation to a non-official group of followers constituted as clients, workers, or citizens" (Waters 1993: 56); an administrative model corresponding to oligarchy at first glance.

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M@n@gement vol. 14 no. 1, 2011, 1-46
Unplugged

they would eventually come to be dominated by bureaucracy and oligarchy (Lipset et al. 1956; Jenkins & Perrow 1977)). From a Michelsian perspective, all attempts to change bureaucracy appear ultimately doomed; either oligarchs will absorb resistance (Leeds 1964), or resistance will create, at best, lower-level autonomy (Crozier 1964), power games (Crozier and Friedberg 1980, Pfeffer 1981, Hickson et al. 1971), or futility (Rubin 1995), as political struggles over meanings and resources traverse organizations (Lounsbury, Ventresca & Hirsch, 2003; Schneiberg & Bartley 2001).

It is well known that bureaucracy was designed to deal with certain conditions, usually understood as those of stable environments and mechanistic routines (Burns and Stalker 1961). While resistance was not absent from these scenarios, it both patterned and was patterned by industrial bureaucracy (Gouldner 1954). Resistance was mostly a means of 'making out' against the dictates of machines and of systems of rules (Roy 1952; Hodson 1995). That said, new logics of internal resistance have emerged within contemporary workplaces. New power asymmetries have arisen (Child and McGrath 2001) and horizontal collaborations straddling professional cultures are more necessary, while authority seems to be more distributed (Kellogg, Orlikowski & Yates 2006) in 'new organizations'. Traditional bureaucratic systems seem unable to cope with these new situations because these logics are different from those with which bureaucratic managers were confronted in past decades. Linking the research on alternatives to bureaucracy to the question of resistance in the workplace is important because, theoretically, the Weberian definition of authority in organizations is founded on specific systems of power legitimation, and this despite resistance. Bureaucracy itself is established through the necessity of controlling, even avoiding resistance, because organization members do not mold themselves automatically into a bureaucratic form "by virtue of its own internal dynamics" (Langton 1984: 334). Thus, bureaucratic leaders have to neutralize countervailing sources of power; the process of bureaucratization appears therefore as a means of "attaining the highest degree of efficiency … the most rational means of exercising authority over human beings" (Weber 1968: 223), despite their resistance or through resistance avoidance.

Consequently, studies of bureaucracy as a form demonstrate that bureaucracy emerged out of struggles around the legitimacy of internal resistance against specific patterns of authority (Gouldner 1954). For instance, the work of Langton (1984) on the British Pottery Industry demonstrated the ways in which bureaucracy emerged as a control solution to problems of resistance in traditional ways of working and managing in the company. Hence, on this reading, bureaucracy emerged out of contestation as a legitimate form. Consequently, any new alternative to bureaucracy should start from a political agenda that hinges on issues of the legitimacy of internal resistance in the workplace; in other words, it should address how internal resistance affects organizational efficiency. Bureaucracy and its repertoire of routines would be unable to cope with the dysfunctions that resistance could bring about, and the political volatility of neo-bureaucratic contexts (Ciborra 1996). Resis-

tance in the 'new organizations' workplace is developing what Callon calls 'hot situations' (1998) such as situations of ambiguity, fluidity and emergence of unexpected strategies, tactics and behaviors, the opposite of bureaucratic characteristics.

As I suggested above, in organizations where authority is deemed to be more distributed, the issue of resistance and contestation takes on a new impetus because occasions of confrontation are numerous. In particular, logics of internal resistance are founded on one of the key principles of new organizations, namely empowerment. The logic of empowerment entailed in new organizations is likely to be overtly used and endorsed by certain key employees to resist specific decisions and/or to take unplanned and sometimes unorthodox initiatives. These initiatives shape an alternative political structure to that of bureaucracy, because organization leaders are constantly pushed to invent new responses to those acts from below. Managers can try to reintegrate resisting leaders in the organization orthodoxy while rewarding them for having "shaken" it. Often, they continue to see them as 'troublemakers', and consider dysfunctions and difficulties to derive from resistance (see Ford & al. 2008). Implicitly, resistance is seen as an irrational reaction against managerial decisions and policies, instead of being considered as resourceful and positive behavior. So new organizations, like bureaucracies, seem to have a problem with resistance, although for different reasons.

In this paper, I assume that the difficulty of new organizations to handle resisting activities, despite their anti-hierarchical façade, partly reflects the theoretical tension existing between power over and power to. There is an enormous problem for organizations to propose ways to collaborate with resisters, to create spaces where resisters' claims can be taken into account despite profound differences in purposes, norms and meanings, as well as visions of business that emerge from these moments of resistance.

However, the necessity of creating what Galison calls a 'trading zone' (1997; Kellogg, Orlikowski and Yates 2006) is highlighted by the examples of resistance that I suggest in the next section. For Galison, the trading zone is 'a social, material, and intellectual mortar binding together the disunified traditions of experimenting, theorizing and instrument building' (1997: 803). Kellogg et al. specify that engaging in a trading zone suggests that 'diverse groups can interact across boundaries by agreeing on the general procedures of exchange even while they may have different local interpretations of the objects being exchanged, and may even disagree on the intent and the meaning of the exchange itself' (2006: 39).

The cases that I will rapidly use are intended to illustrate the difficulty of neo-bureaucracies of dealing with resistance, partly because they paradoxically handle resistance through extremely classical bureaucratic means and in particular, through entrenching central power's prerogatives about certain managerial issues, like customer relationships (case 1) or high-potential careers (case 2).

RESISTERS AT WORK

Case 1:The bloggers of Insur: shifting the claims, inverting power.

I interviewed several actors of a resisting movement in a company called Insur, following a random inquiry on the net when I was looking for cases of collective insurgency in the workplace[5]. I stumbled upon a website and got in touch with the Insur resisters through their newly launched blog. They wanted to 'publicize' their struggle.

Insur is a major player in the insurance sector in France. In 2006, the management decided to change profoundly the principles of remuneration of around 2000 salespeople. An addendum to their contract was signed by most unions and sent to the salespeople in September 2006. They had one month to sign the addendum and accept the new system, otherwise they would be fired.

The salespeople of Insur did not necessarily know each other. They were in charge of local commercial areas in different regions of France and seldom had the chance to meet and chat. Interestingly, around 200 of them decided to refuse the new system to be fired and left the company in early January 2007. Their reasons were numerous, and it is not the object of this paper to analyse them. However, in spring 2007, seven salespeople decided, officially and legally, to contest the layoffs and to start a resistance against both the procedure and the reasons given for the layoffs. They set up a website in 2008 with a blog, thus gathering not only the interests of the laid-off people but progressively extending their struggle and making it more and more public in order to get official support from diverse constituencies (journalists, columnists, politicians and intellectuals). Their struggle shifted in one year from issues of the trial (held in Paris on September 24th 2009), to broader issues about the very management of Insur. Their struggle did not concern the initial contractual and HR-related issues but rather how the management of Insur governed the organization, how they unduly pressured and harassed workers not to contact some of the 'bloggers', how they regularly surveyed their computers, how the evaluation of performance was changing from maintaining customer loyalty to getting as many new clients as possible without matching their needs, and how, in fact, oligarchic elites at Insur were abusing power. The objective of the bloggers was to show why these processes were detrimental to the future of the company. The struggle was therefore clearly political.

During the political process, several former Insur employees discovered their interest in contestation and shaping claims, in organizing the confrontation between the 'community' of the bloggers (more than 25,000 visits and around 3000 contributions by early 2010) and in devising arguments showing that the Insur bloggers were defending more than 200 illegitimately laid-off salespeople, that they were in charge of a wider debate about the values of contemporary management.

Today, their action is progressively modifying the balance of power between the bloggers and the company management. The latter are more and more afraid of 'losing face' and tend to increase the level of

control over Insur's employees and use rather violent means to make sure that customers are not going to leave the company's portfolio to move to some of the individual companies that many laid-off employees have created subsequently. What appears here is that the only step that the management of Insur has taken is vividly bureaucratic. When resistance arises, bureaucracy comes back, while, as I have suggested above, research shows repeatedly that it is acting often innocuously against contentious behavior.

6. From Courpasson and Thoenig (2010)

Michael [6]: refusing a mission for the good of the company

I met Michael in 1994 during some research I was conducting in his company on changes in managerial jobs. He called me a couple of years later to tell me how he had been obliged to leave his job.

One evening in December 1995, Michael, the production manager in a large textile factory, received a proposal to become the head of a facility in the North-East of France, with 320 employees. He had the implicit assignment of shutting down the facility as soon as the local, social and political conditions permitted.

Michael procrastinated; it was a big deal, at 33 years old, but he was immediately torn between two feelings, pride because the big shots wanting to see him with a tough mission was stimulating, and embarrassment, because closing the facility awoke numerous personal memories and emotions about his father and grandfather's struggles in their own textile factories back in the 1930s and 1960s. When thinking about being the 'bad guy' that his father used to talk about back at home, Michael felt dizzy and contested, especially in terms of the clash between his ambition as a terrific and compliant young executive and his values and emotions as the son of a radical and tough unionist, a tension that was shattering most of the evidence that he had about his own career.

Michael did not cope with the moral compromise that would be necessary to solve the tension between accepting the subordination that his status within the company supposed that he would accept, and the refusal of the sacrifice of personal values that such an acceptance implied. He decided to pass on the offer, considering it to be for the best of the company because, as he said, ' the mere fact that I was hesitating meant that I was not the right guy for the mission, I would screw up the whole thing and create havoc, so the company would be better off if I declined'. But the company would see this refusal as an unacceptable disobedience to the orthodox canons of sacrificial management; black or white, subordination or disobedience, these are the terms in which things are dealt with in this company. This cognitive rigidity rapidly drove Michael to leave the company because he felt he was way off the mark, although he was recognized as one of the most promising managers of the company. 'Professional suicide', according to managerial oligarchs. Beyond his confusion, Michael was sure to have made the right choice for the company, deciding according to the very criteria of contemporary HR management, that he was not cut out to be a 'real' manager. He would therefore take management at its word, thus showing the power of 'consentful contention' (Straughn

2005) in strategies of resistance, when, in a savvy manner, resisters use the very logics of the opposing camp to explain and impose their own claims.

POWER OVER AND POWER TO

I think that these two short stories offer an account of how actors are capable of shifting politics in the workplace from 'power over' to 'power to'.

'Power over' presumes that at least one of the actors involved in a social relationship is able to execute 'more' power than others. This takes us back to the starting point of 'power over' analyses (Dahl 1961) which posits that the observable effects of power are the only significant elements that can be used to understand how certain options can be realized or not, or how certain actual decisions are made. This is what Lukes (2005) called the 'one dimensional' view of power. 'Power to' analyses do not put the emphasis on the effects of power, because power is not seen to be first and foremost directed at others. Rather, it is seen as a constitutive element of any social relationship; power is directed 'at the individual or the group as actors themselves' (Göhler 2009: 29). It is a capacity which can remain unexercised. The actor's autonomy also resides in her capacity to decide whether given resources are going to be used or not. As Clegg & al. (2006) put it: "power will always consist of a complex contingent tension between a capacity to extend the freedom of some to achieve something and an ability to restrict the freedom of others from doing something or other" (191).

The stories of resistance expose how certain actors decide to operate a brutal shift from being restricted to being actors, while not being authorized to act. That is a definition which helps to understand managerial resistance; managers are supposed to comply and to act within severely restricted limits of autonomy imposed by neo-bureaucratic regimes of action (Courpasson & Clegg 2006). Their resistance implies, firstly, that they break these restrictive limits, and, secondly, that they do not need any authorization to do so, because they consider that the other camp (let us say the upper management) has broken other limits or has created new forms of incompatibilities in the manager's working environment. In the case of Michael, the incompatibility between private life and the pressures of managerial work, what Courpasson and Thoenig (2010) call the 'forbidden zone', comes to a head when the mission is offered and the dilemma appears. In the case of the bloggers, the incompatibility between 'doing a good job', or 'respecting the customer as a person'[7], and the necessities of contributing to increasing year after year the profitability of the company, is growing or is more acutely perceived by Insur's sales force because of the layoffs. Here I analyze resistance as a process of self-empowerment, because resisters gain and retain an autonomous power to act without being hierarchically empowered to do so. In that definition, 'power to' and 'power over' are complementary rather than incompatible; the authority of the company

7. The kind of expressions those bloggers use often to justify the struggle.

managers allows them to issue orders based on a certain vision of acceptable norms and actions but the very structure that these orders help to establish gives de facto resisters to their power to act. Indeed, resistance is triggered by this prevailing structuring of norms; resistance is a social power relationship which is developed thanks to the preexistence of a given authority, rather than thanks to its broader distribution within the company. Resistance is also permitted by the fact that actors do not internalize those norms and usually acceptable practices; they develop a potential for acting against ruling power relations because of the tensions emerging in the contemporary workplace. They penetrate relations of power and fight them in actual struggles about these tensions. Now I suggest that the latter derive new forms of power regimes from the transformation of bureaucracies.

TENSIONS EXPLAINING REBELLION

Despite opposing claims made in a recurrent way by managerial rhetoric, as well as in research about new organizations, people feel clearly that organizational power is still mostly exercised according to the 'power over' gospel, in a dominating and self-serving manner. It is sometimes dressed up in charming and smiling outfits, but it is tighter than ever. Bosses smile most of the time and do not behave like stubborn sub-officers or mulish servants of an obscure administration. Managerial power is liberal is the sense that it suggests solutions, offers opportunities, opens debates, but behind the scenes of this managerial third-dimensional power, impersonal criteria and performance metrics do the violent job, and Michael's resistance is filtered by these instruments and is eventually seen as a lethal mistake, according to those very criteria and metrics.

This smiling neo-bureaucratic power creates specific tensions in the workplace, especially for people occupying upper-middle managerial positions such as Michael. Torn between the identity of being 'trustworthy' employees and the diagnosis that they make every day of an increasing oligarchic atmosphere, they resist solving or overcoming these tensions, even if only for a short while, even when they are eventually expelled or exit willingly, even if the question posed by their resistance is not to 'target oppression'[8], but to make a good job in acceptable social conditions.

Several growing tensions explain the resistance that develops into managerial ranks in post-bureaucracies.

A first interesting tension is the coexistence of a neo-bureaucratic 'culture' of empowerment and of a growing 'culture' of precariousness within managerial populations. In other words, managers are facing the growing lack of fit between the 'entrepreneurial' injunction to take initiatives and being personally accountable, and the reality of job insecurity and of fierce competition between managerial populations. In a way, the resisters are those individuals who decide not to step back and remain

8. Courpasson, D., Dany, F. & I. Marti (2010) Political Entrepreneuring. Targeting Oppression through the Defence of Personal Values. Unpublished paper.

in silent postures of protection against those pressures. They decide not to toe the line anymore, not necessarily because they are born rebels, rather because the management itself pushes them to speed up their reflection about these pressures, because it requires them to make a quick decision in the face of a dilemma. To put things differently, resisters take the management at their word (Straughn 2005); they take the outfit of the 'organizational entrepreneur' and make a decision based on an expert diagnosis of the situation. They resist on the very basis of their expertise; they elaborate their claims and rationales in a savvy manner, not against management but in a cooperative way, saying that it is better for the organization not to send them to shut down a factory, or to force customers to buy whatever new insurance product. They shift from subordination to active struggling cooperation, which leads them eventually to create moments of emancipation (Courpasson, Dany and Marti 2010).

A second significant tension is the growing pressure of everyday practices of control over managerial work, together with the distanciation of the actual centers of power. Managers resist when they feel the pressure of control over their work and their performance without knowing who or what is exercising this pressure. In a way, this is not a new story, as it is the story of skilled workers and professionals struggling to defend their autonomy (Zald and Berger 1978; Smith 1990; Hodson 1995). Representatives of the central systems of control and evaluation are constantly changing, so that the relative stability of 'grassroots' production teams sharply contradicts the volatility of the "central expert" battalions. This tension is unacceptable for managers because they undergo severe restrictions in their autonomy and resources, while the functional populations in charge of major decisions are hardly ever physically present[9]. In other words, the dissociation of the culture of the 'managerial grassroots' from the central neo-bureaucratic culture of the 'controlling experts' is at the heart of many individual and collective acts of resistance today, which take the shape of infighting between managers. This is the core of the Insur bloggers' critique; the growing discrepancy between the oligarchic ability of central managers to impose a certain vision of managing people and customers and the subsequent rules of the game at Insur, and the claimed professional incompetence of those managers that is leading the company into a new form of internal social struggle which might be irretrievable. To put it in Bourdieu's terms (1998), the 'left hand' of the organization would be competing with the 'right hand' to solve this tension; the left hand describes those managers who, willingly or not, take in charge some of the struggles against the central right hand of the company, representing the managers obsessed with the question of short-term financial equilibrium. The 'left hand' has the sense that the 'right hand' no longer knows or no longer really wants to know what the left hand does, and why they should encourage, understand and listen to acts of which the right hand disapproves because it sees those acts as resistance against the legitimate central organizational apparatus. This struggle between managers is a new kind of conflict within organizations. It signals the potential emergence of an alternative intra-organizational power, the power of resistance.

9. Notwithstanding their frequent arrogance noted by many employees.

THE POWER OF RESISTANCE

Through their acts of resistance, Insur's bloggers and Michael, like many others, are transforming contemporary organizations. More precisely, they reinstall social logics and create new knowledge within managerial ranks. I suggest that three major effects of managerial resistance are taking shape in today's neo bureaucracies.

Shaping new cultures of solidarity within managerial ranks

In most organizations, solidarity seems to be a figure of the past. But the stories that I have rapidly presented in this paper, as well as many others[10], suggest that new cultures of solidarity might be emerging in the process of resistance that we describe here.

Research has already demonstrated how solidarity and collective identity are produced and sustained in the process of struggle: the idea defended by Calhoun (1991) or by O'Hearn (2009) is that solidarity is not necessarily a pre-condition for struggles to arise, but that it can be an outcome of those struggles. This is clearly what is happening for the Insur bloggers. Their resistance is forging a 'remote' solidarity among people who participate in the discussions that the blog is stimulating. Participating in this activity is not necessarily risky, except for some bloggers who are clearly identified, and who have had the experience of suffering from personal repression[11]. But the regular exchange of ideas and expression of emotions, combined with the fact that the bloggers are in a legal procedure against the company, is re-defining the boundaries of the rebellious collective body, supposing the appropriation of a collective space of debate which, in turn, encourages practices of participation, opening new possibilities and topics of resistance. The growing concentration of a political and cultural creativity through the critique of the company's management and of management in general, reconfigures the action of resisters, and leads some of them to think that 'they are becoming some kind of professional activists, after having been salespeople for years'[12]. Now that their action directly challenges the power of the company, it turns into a collective campaign gaining ground and triggering more and more support from the employees of the company and from outside the company's boundaries. The interest of this case is to highlight an interesting creative phenomenon; the group of resisters was not predisposed to solidarity; quite the contrary, salespeople were living and working in different areas, being de facto in competition while not knowing each other. But still, the struggle has created new spaces for exchanging ideas, zones of unexpected cooperation and dialogue between previously anonymous colleagues. The core group of the seven coordinators is surely now made of friendship and 'unforgettable moments of sharing', as one of them told us.

The case of Michael is more ambiguous. It is easy to see in this episode of resistance the individualistic act of a nakedly ambitious young manager who decides to avoid what he considers to be a mission doomed to failure and who does not want to pick up the pieces. But the story is also about the overt and deliberate expression of strong values competing with the officially recognized and legitimate values of management. The struggle between

10. See for instance www.jeresiste.com, but also, in France, the creation of numerous associations developing an activism based on the idea of connecting 'disobedience' to new forms of action and relationships between actors (for instance Les Désobéissants, see www.desobeir.net)

11. One of them was pushed to go on hunger strike for several weeks because of several direct attacks coming from the company.

12. Interview with one of the Insur's bloggers (November 2009).

Power and Resistance :
Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"

M@n@gement vol. 14 no. 1, 2011, 1-46
Unplugged

values diffuses a new meaning in other places within the company, where some of Michael's counterparts work. This new meaning is that it is possible to oppose the evidence of subordination and the consequential sacrifice of the private sphere imposed to high potential managers by the managerial 'gospel' about the model of the good manager. Here, the emerging solidarity within the high-potential young managers is more diffuse than within the community of bloggers; it is made of weak signs, messages of support, and it is punctuated by the rapid exit of other young managers some months after Michael's exit. This inter-subjective solidarity is built by a collective common perception of an ethical and social confrontation between Michael and the management. No doubt that the multiplication of this type of individualistic resistance is likely to escalate into heightened cultures of inter-subjective solidarity within highly individualistic populations, a behaviour that should lead organizations to revise their conception of resistance in the workplace.

Consentful contention: growing networks of critique within organizations

The revisions highlighted are all the more important as, beyond the potential seeds of solidarity emerging out of the resistance that I describe in this paper, the forms of resistance are complex and difficult to label as simply adversarial or as simply cooperative. In fact, they are both, which renders their 'treatment' more problematic and gives unexpected power to the resisters.

Straughn (2005) has recently captured this duality of oppositional and cooperative action in analyzing how citizens of the German Democratic Republic openly contested official directives by appealing to the state's own 'dominant ideology'. He labels this resistance "consentful contention". He describes this political genre of contention in an authoritarian context as being situated somewhere between perfect quiescence and systematic resistance (2005: 1601). This form of resistance is interesting as to the case of managerial resistance because it looks strikingly similar to what managerial resisters are actually doing. Consentful contention is a genre of political engagement in which "the claim maker enacts the persona of a dutiful citizen, while contesting specific actions or policies of the state" (Straughn 2005: 1601). This genre is likely to develop in neo-bureaucratic organizations, where the managerially ideological claim to govern according to distributed forms of authority, logics of empowerment and entrepreneurial models of behaviour supplies workers, in particular managers and skilled professionals and experts, with more opportunities to contest this very claim simply by taking management at its word (Straughn 2005: 1602). For instance, Michael exercises his duty of being the responsible, accountable manager that he is supposed to be by contesting the reasons of his 'promotion'; his refusal is based on the very objectives of achieving the mission that the managers want him to accept, and on his assumption that by refusing, he also uses the entrepreneurial power with which he is endowed. The Insur bloggers overtly criticize managerial choices by taking for granted managerial criteria such as the quality of customer relationships. They perform the role of dutiful managers while contesting, according to their knowledge of professional standards, the underlying claims of managerial decisions and policies. They invoke the very ideas and objectives of management and they use the language of management to

perform their resistance. They can do that because they are management experts themselves, because they know the business and because they understand the 'dominant ideology' of management, having been active servants of this ideology for years.

This resistance genre is powerful on three levels. Firstly, it shifts resistance in the workplace from small scale subversive activities or sporadic everyday insurgencies to a more substantial and permanent critique of management ideologies and objectives. As a result, informal networks of critical dissent emerge within managerial ranks today, based on the very expertise of managers in business and organizational issues, as well as on the growing shared feeling that being a 'subordinate' manager means, increasingly, belonging to a sort of 'invisible social class' straddling organizational boundaries. Secondly, as Straughn reminds us, the political resistance based on consentful contention clouds the boundary between consent and dissent, which is more ambiguous. By the same token, upper management decisions about whether resistance of that kind should be sanctioned or not is rendered more difficult, which gives more space to managers to express dissent without risking their job. Thirdly, the scope of resistance left out by neo-bureaucratic settings is wider than in traditional bureaucracies; consequently, the line between what is tolerated as critique and what is not is more ambiguous as well, all the more so as managerial rebels do have the capacity to articulate claims that share the actual standpoint of upper management (Straughn 2005: 1606). As one of the Insur bloggers puts it: "we are acting for the organization treating its customers fairly, not the other way round". Resisting appears, therefore, to be a real job aiming to improve organizational practices rather than seeking to create useless disruptions.

The "professionalization" of managerial workplace resistance?

The roads to resistance are open because neo-bureaucratic regimes of power have a problem with most kinds of contention and dissent. Organizations can no longer invest in supposedly genuine rhetorics and policies about entrepreneurship (through an ethics of autonomy) and sustainable responsibility (through an ethics of accountability) while denying middle and upper middle managers the right to disagree and to voice their disagreement.

This is all the more true as the similarity between resisting skills and managerial skills is striking. In other words, working as a manager for years creates specific abilities and capacities to organize a resistance and/or to participate in a given movement of contestation. The story of the bloggers is a case in point. Here the 'drift' from claims based on the issue of retribution to claims based on an articulated critique of the management of the company has a political meaning. It is a case where a process of 'professionalizing resisters as resisters' is under way. Several resisters discover along the way their interest in this type of political activity; they experience a form of 'emancipation' that they realize is a key to overcoming personal frustrations and to continuing the combat against the company management. Secondly, they also realize that they are good in this domain; they analyze managerial discourses with their expertise in business and their knowledge of the company terrain, they investigate with documents about the company, statistics about

the personnel and so forth with enjoyment; they are extremely efficient in shaping new kinds of networks based on external sociabilities and converging interests[13], in organizing a dialogue between individuals from within the company as well as outside the company, including some customers, who take clear positions and express opinions on the blog. The savvy usage of internet, videos[14], imagery and symbols, is the manifestation of a collective capacity to act politically, without necessarily having the official support of more institutional channels of action.

13. The blog has enabled to connect with several other associations of executives, formed after difficult episodes of restructuration. For instance the 'association des victimes de la fusion AXA-UAP'

14. Like in the case of Nortel, where managerial strikers have created several videos representing the dramatic death of their company.

TO CONCLUDE

Resistance proves to offer opportunities to take contemporary management at its actual word. In that sense, managerial rebels seem to consent to the socio-political order imposed by management, but not from the 'wholesale internalization of dominant values' (Femia 1981: 35) of management, rather, from the shared feeling that the current state of affairs and decisions is not viable for the company. So the question posed by Tilly '…why do subordinates comply?' although they feel that something wrong is going on in the company management, can be addressed from the perspective of the resistance, not of consent.

Resistance shows that organization members are not mystified by managerial rhetorics, nor constantly repressed. They are aware of their true interests. But resistance is costly (Tilly 1991: 594). Indeed, the argument made by James Scott might well be right; the dominated are always resisting, everywhere, covertly or overtly (Lukes 2005: 13). Current resistance is creating not only new types of 'organizational activists' in the workplace; it also develops the capacity of critique of members as well as new knowledge about the process of resistance itself. Such actions also confirm that people do not always fail to recognize the sources of their desires, interests and projects; in other words, that 'power to' might well be back, because as Jon Elster (1983) has put it, willing compliance to domination cannot be generated by the imposition of internal constraints.

Some of the rebels in today's organizations seem to go against the state of mind of the 'underdog' who 'learns to bear the burden so well that he or she overlooks the burden itself' (Sen 1984: 308). The question remains whether the accumulation of stories of resistance within managerial ranks is likely to disseminate the critique of managerial power(s) so that a more collective action is made possible (Ewick and Silbey 2003).

But this is another story.

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Power and Resistance :
Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"

M@n@gement vol. 14 no. 1, 2011, 1-46
Unplugged

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Part II
Power: Interviews with Steven Vallas, Neil Fligstein, Stewart Clegg and Jean-Claude Thoenig.

STEVEN VALLAS

1- What is your conception and definition of power? Do you consider other concepts like hegemony and resistance in your conception? If yes, are they connected concepts (with power) for you?

American sociologists of work and organizations have not advanced a well-developed conception of power. For many years there was an ongoing debate as to whether power was an inherently zero-sum phenomenon, or whether it could be expanded and enjoyed by many groups. Think for example of the concept of power (as merely "the ability to influence one's environment") that was used in classic works such as Rosabeth Kanter's Men and Women of the Corporation. More recently, as labor process theory has waned, as American theorists of organizations have shifted toward neo-institutionalist approaches, and as managerial concerns with workplace flexibility have dominated the field, the concept of power has been drained of that, and furthermore it has been drained of its analytical bite. Even supremely insightful analysts such as Walter Powell, who has written about the network as an increasingly important platform for economic transactions, only rarely speaks of the question of power. On the other hand, when American sociologists of work organizations have addressed the question of power (I think here of scholars studying global commodity chains), they have often ignored elements of organization that are indispensable in any adequate analysis: agency, subjectivity, identity and workplace culture. For me, what organization studies needs above all is a means of bringing agency, subjectivity and identity into the analysis, showing how different groups of workers, technicians, managers, and executives each engages in an ongoing contest for control, not only over the work process, but also over the forms of knowledge and expertise that will ultimately be defined as legitimate within the work process as such. This is why in the traditional industrial context, where skilled manual workers mobilize their own conceptions of production, I repeatedly find ongoing "authority contests" breaking out. Such contests sometimes become a kind of ritual, in which the respective combatants engage in an ongoing game over the distribution of symbolic rewards, seeking to determine whose knowledge will constitute the official currency and whose will be an underground form of exchange.

The reason I suggest that identity and subjectivity are important elements in the struggle for power is that these aspects of human subjectivity are most proximate to organizational processes. That is, they impinge on workers' responses to organizational change,

and condition the capacity and the inclination of workers to respond to change from on high. Workers who define themselves as defiant actors, insistent on defending their own dignity, often do so because their local work culture enables them to preserve what Goffman called "back stage" areas. As the political theorist James Scott argues, such conditions enable workers to establish autonomous cultural realms, with their own rituals and the private spaces they define, and these conditions breed self-conceptions that stand at odds with corporate imperatives (and sometimes proudly so). Workers who internalize corporate identities of themselves as good organizational citizens (as many white collar workers, technicians, and service workers do) often stand more exposed to fluorescent managerial realities, and cannot form autonomous norms or self-conceptions. In other words, power is about more than the ability to command resources; it is also about self-concepts, about the ability to mobilize an oppositional discourse, and about the capacity to contest. This point is apparent in several recent ethnographies, such as Rachel Sherman's Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels (which studies how hotel workers protect their own dignity while serving the rich). It informs Michel Anteby's Moral Grey Zones (which reveals how French aeronautics workers create their own spaces for free self expression on the job). It is also found in Jon Weeks's Unpopular Culture (an ethnography of a British bank, in which workers maintain a conception of themselves as superior to their corporate overseers precisely by repeatedly finding fault in the corporate culture in which they are embedded). To fully understand power, then, we need to understand how organizations induce various groups of employees to adopt given self concepts, which in turn act back on the capacity for resistance which workers do or do not enjoy.

All of which is to say that yes, I do consider hegemony and resistance to be vital concepts, and I use them in my research. But I try to capture the ironies which they sometimes promote. Some of the most defiant workers I have studied have, precisely because of their rigid opposition to managerial rule, succeeded only in reaffirming management's jaundiced view of manual labor, and in so doing perpetuate their subordinate place within the production process (much as Paul Willis found in his classic study, Learning to Labour). On the other hand, in some highly revealing cases, I found that manufacturing workers have been able to appropriate the new managerial language of empowerment, and to use this language as a means of renegotiating the boundaries of managerial prerogatives. Ironically, in these cases some of the best "weapons of the weak," to borrow the title of one of Scott's books, were forged and designed by management specialists in organizational design. Hence the interconnection between hegemony and resistance; at times, what some refer to as hegemonic projects can inadvertently disrupt taken-for-granted norms, and actually open the way to resistance from below.

Power and Resistance :
Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"

M@n@gement vol. 14 no. 1, 2011, 1-46
Unplugged

2. How do you apply your conception (on power and the «connected» concepts) on organizations, work and institutions in the contemporary capitalism?

One approach that works particularly well is that of the comparative, multi-site ethnography. This approach is very much the vogue among my anthropology colleagues, who claim to capture essential features of globalization by linking geographically distant research sites. For my part, I have no pretensions that this approach gives us a privileged means of approximating organizational realities. But I do claim that by studying work settings that share certain similarities (for example, in terms of process technologies or product markets), but which evidence divergent ideological outcomes, one can begin to disentangle some of the factors that account for such differences. At times I seek to compare work settings that are similar in many respects but which use traditional and "transformed" systems of managerial authority. In one study called "The Adventures of Managerial Hegemony," I used ethnographic analysis to gather observational data, and then conducted a quantitative analysis of the number of oppositional and acquiescent utterances I observed in these different production areas. Here I used three dimensions of workplace culture - references to the legitimacy of managerial practices, instances of behavioral defiance, and the salience of the boundary between hourly and salaried groups - as measures of hegemony. In another study, I compared work settings that had dramatically different outcomes with respect to team systems, and found that the manner in which workplace reforms are introduced - from above in a centralized manner versus autonomously from below - was a critical factor determining the trajectory of workplace change. In this way I try to combine the analytical power of multi-site research with the interpretive richness of single-site ethnography.

In another strand of my research (involving scientists in both university and corporate settings), I have tried to make regional comparisons, thus comparing Route 128 laboratories with their counterparts on the West Coast, in Silicon Valley. This is very difficult, and often requires greater control over the research situation than American scholars typically enjoy. Research access, in my experience, is much more difficult in the context of neoliberal American regimes than my European counterparts typically experience.

3- Regarding your conception, do you see emerging forms of power, hegemony and resistance in organizations, work and around institutions?

This is a difficult question, and one that has been much debated. Some theorists, such as Richard Sennett, bemoan the loss of an anchored culture and identity under the new forms of work organization, for the latter no longer enable workers to construct ordered, meaningful narratives regarding their own personal accomplishments and human character. Here we see destabilized, hollowed interiority - fractured selves - disempowering workers and leaving them unable to contest the new regimes at work. Other theorists, such as Richard Collinson, speak of

the rise of strategic identities, in which workers are continually engaged in self-presentation rituals as a means of positioning themselves within the status markets that exist within the firm. The danger here is that as neo liberalism spreads internally throughout the work organization - I speak of an "implosion of market forces" internal to the firm - it often induces an experience of precarity that powerfully suspends even the ability to claim autonomy for oneself and one's peers. We even see this implosion of market forces within the American university, although we have a rich and elaborate language that often induces us to misrecognize this trend. For me the question is whether and how workers can respond to precarious employment, and which sectors of the workforce are best positioned to take the lead in the struggle to renegotiate control over economic resources. As I type, an important question (and one in which President Obama will have a hand) is whether or not organized labor can mobilize sufficient power to win legislation that will expand workers' rights to organize on their own behalf. The question is whether employers can leverage the discourse of precarity, and strike fear into workers' hearts. For that matter, it will be important to see if employers can invoke the concept of "flexibility" on their own behalf. This concept, for me, is as ideologically freighted and politically effective as was the concept of "progress" in an earlier time.

4- For you, what is the next agenda to study power in organizations, work and around institutions?

There are many strands of inquiry that must be pursued. I will mention only five, mindful that I have only a handful of decades left yet to live.

The first item on an ideal agenda (and one that emerges in my own fieldwork) concerns the organizational logics that develop, especially within settings undergoing rapid structural change. Ours is a time of workplace transformation, owing to the spread of digital technologies and new managerial regimes. I have found that such changes not only tend to disrupt existing organizational logics, but to overlay new logics on top of the old ones, generating inherently contradictory managerial regimes. How are such tensions and contradictions managed? Under what conditions do they generate forces which outstrip the managerial capacity to control? In some settings, I have seen such contradictory logics provide a useful source of worker creativity (a phenomenon which David Stark refers to as "heterarchy"). My point here is that we need to do a better and more imaginative job of allowing for contradictory processes, rather than flattening organizations out into a two-dimensional space.

A second item on my agenda concerns the boundary work in which different groups of employees are often engaged. This term was first coined by Thomas Gieryn, but of course it harkens back to Durkheim and Mauss, and more recently to Bourdieu. The question is how employees invoke informal symbolic distinctions among one another, how such informal processes affect or even shape the formal structure and functioning of work organizations. We are too well schooled at taking for granted the boundaries between occupations for (for example, between worker and engineer, printer and journalist, or physician and nurse). We need to

"trouble" such boundaries, and to recognize how such boundaries are constantly policed, and at times redrawn. Andrew Abbott and Michele Lamont have done much important work along these lines, and this needs to be utilized by students of workplace life.

A third point emerges from the second, in that it concerns the spatial meaning of the concept of boundaries. In an earlier comment, I argued that access to a back stage space, free from the fluorescent glare of managerial scrutiny, is a vital ingredient in the exercise of autonomy. My point here is that space matters to a far greater extent that we have allowed. Spatial proximity affects the visibility of workers in relation to customers. It impinges on workers' ability to interact with one another, and under given conditions. space conveys status, as any dishwasher or housekeeper can tell you. Analysts of work organizations must pay much more attention to the architecture (both literally and figuratively) of work spaces, factories, offices, and stores. Much of the retail sales experience in which sales workers are immersed is indeed designed to maximize sales. What does it do to the identities and subjectivities of the workers who are immersed in such cultural spaces? We do not yet know.

A fourth point concerns the racial and ethnic aspect of work – what we might term the ethnic division of labor. We in the United States have a wealth of occupational statistics by race and ethnicity. We know all about the earnings of divergent ethnic groups. We have many surveys that unearth the likelihood of promotion which African Americans, Latinos, Asians and whites do or do not enjoy. And yet we know relatively little about what E. C. Hughes once called "the knitting of racial groups" – that is, the web of informal norms and practices with which workers "do" ethnicity while they are at work. This is a difficult aspect of work to unearth. We have some studies that have begun to capture the meanings which employers attach to the concept of "diversity." But we have much to learn about how ethnic boundaries divide us from one another, and how judicial remedies might actually help heal ethnic wounds.

The fifth and last point on my ideal agenda concerns the aesthetic dimension of work. I have colleagues (such as Ashley Elizabeth Mears, in a forthcoming study of fashion models) who have begun to inquire into what has come to be called "aesthetic labor" (work that is implicated in the reproduction of established tastes and images). Yet there is an aesthetic component to the work that virtually all workers do, and we need to acknowledge this. This point is certainly true of both manual workers and restaurant employees (as both Robert Thomas and Gary Alan Fine argued separately, more than a decade ago). It is true, even if aesthetic energies can only find expression in what I call the "poetry of defiance" (by which I mean the endlessly gratifying art of relating jokes, narratives and fables that combine to defend one's honor). Perhaps most ironically, the aesthetic component of work often entices even routine service workers such as food servers, whose performative abilities at seeming professionally deferential sometimes provide a source of fulfillment. Under such circumstances, can workers remove their masks when they go home? Or does the face grow to fit the mask? These are the questions I would like us all to consider.

NEIL FLIGSTEIN

1- What is your conception and definition of power ? Do you consider other concepts like hegemony and resistance in your conception ? If yes, are they connected concepts (with power) for you?

I see power in the same ambiguous way that Weber did. Power is both a form of domination («power over») but it is also a way to get something done («power to»). This corresponds to what Foucault called «negative» power and «positive» power. For me, one of the great and amazing things about capitalism is how it has produced so much wealth and increased the life chances of so many people, while at the same time it often hurts or oppresses people as well. As a sociologist, when I study firms and markets, I like to try and understand how they can be used for good and when they can be used for bad. So, unlike an economist who has never come across a market they have not liked, I am cautious about the effects of routinized exchange on the parties that form a part of them.

My theoretical orientation is to ask first what kind of institutions are necessary to produce modern markets and states, and then to see if the ones we have are set up to maximize rent seeking on the part of one group in society, or if countervailing powers exist. For me, society is best when there is both complexity and countervailing centers of power. It is when power is a zero-sum game where one set of actors totally dominates that makes societies fundamentally evil. Where there are lots of centers of power and the possibility for new ones to emerge, that means that people can exit and still exist.

I am not a big fan of the idea of hegemony. It seems to me that it is a way to sneak the idea of false consciousness into our discourses. It is probably true that we have dominant ideas in society at different times. But it is false to think that such ideas do not change. So, for example, there was a book written in the U.S. about three years ago by Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson that examined how the conservatives in American politics had not only changed the conversation about American politics but had built up an institutional base that was going to be almost impossible to assail. This sounds like a classic argument about hegemony. Then the 2006 congressional elections happened and the conservative Republicans lost both the House and the Senate. So much for the hegemony of neo-conservative thought. As I write this in the summer of 2008, observers of American politics think that we are about to have a sea change in political attitudes and George Bush is the most unpopular person in America. Whether or not political attitudes really change, if one has ideas like «hegemony» one is left having to catch up with changes in people's perceptions of what is both «taken for granted» and «known.»

Humans are constantly imagining new ways to live, work, and think. It is true that these evolve in the context of existing ideas and systems of power, but it is also true that they can astonish us and make people's lives change. I am neither modern, anti modern, nor post modern, but pragmatic.

2. How do you apply your conception (on power and the «connected» concepts) on organizations, work and institutions in the contemporary capitalism?

I think that capitalism has created a great variety of forms. One way to encapsulate this idea is the idea of comparative capitalisms. These forms are historical and often centered on particular societies. They are embedded in government, firms, managers, owners, and workers. How they work, how they evolve, and what happens when firms from different societies meet, is one of the most fascinating topics in modern organizational studies.

I have several takes on all of this. Firstly, I firmly believe that there is not just one best way for societies to produce economic growth. If we look at the development projects in India and China, one can only be struck as to how different they are. Thus, there is more than one way to get growth. And as I like to point out to people (particularly economists), if Germany is such a terrible place to do business, why are the Germans the largest exporters of good and services in the world in absolute dollar terms?

Secondly, even though there are different ways to attain growth in terms of political systems, rule of law, and the relative power of governments, workers, and capitalists, these institutions have profound effects on the distribution of income, wealth, and life chances. As I have already mentioned, I am a big fan of countervailing powers in society. This guarantees that one side or the other will not rent seek, and it will mean that the distribution of the valued things in society will be more equal. At the extreme, like the societies in parts of Africa, rent seeking on the part of government officials and their families and friends is so extreme that people are literally dying.

But even in advanced societies, the distribution of social power has profound effects on income and wealth. The economic crisis in the 1970s that began with the oil shocks and produced slow economic growth and high inflation in the advanced industrial countries was interpreted very differently everywhere. So, for example, in the U.S. the destruction of organized labor, the relatively weak liberalism of the Democratic Party and the complete strength of firms and their political representatives in Washington has profoundly changed the way American society has worked in the past 25 years. The «shareholder value» revolution made worker's rights superfluous in firms and the lack of support for the minimum wage meant that income inequality changed dramatically. In the past 8 years, it is no surprise that some 70% of the benefits of economic growth have ended up in the hands of the top 1% of the income distribution. This has simply not happened in Germany, France or Sweden. Social democratic parties, trade unions, and strong public support for social safety nets, have kept up the welfare state, reduced working hours everywhere, and made sure income inequality has not increased dramatically.

3- Regarding your conception, do you see emerging forms of power, hegemony and resistance in organizations, work and around institutions?

I view the competition between the American model, which some call «neo liberalism,» and other models whereby governments stay involved in their political economies, as the key struggle in the world today. Scholars have the duty to explain to government officials and the public that strong social safety nets and strong worker protection do not produce lower economic growth over time. The importance of keeping product markets open but offering social protection is the great political issue of the next 20 years in the developed societies.

I also think it is important to continue to argue for free trade and open markets but to insure that markets operate transparently and not only to the benefit of the few.

In Europe, the forms of resistance are numerous. In general, European workers and voters are simply more skeptical of the claims that their systems are not efficient. I find the U.S. quite puzzling. While public intellectuals like Paul Krugman and George Stiglitz have been quite outspoken about the social problems that income and wealth inequality and the lack of an adequate social safety net present to society, voters in America do not seem as excited about these issues. They fail to connect their diminished capacity to consume and provide for their families to the larger political economic forces that have made work more insecure and less remunerative.

So I do not see major resistance coming from the U.S. even as the income and wealth distribution and the growing insecurity of people's lives increase.

4- For you, what is the next agenda to study power in organizations, work and around institutions?

There are a number of frontiers of research. We still do not understand very well the causes of economic growth. That there are so many political-institutional paths to capitalist growth suggests that the main way to attain such growth is for there to be political peace in a country, stable laws and rules, and more or less countervailing powers, such that extreme forms of rent seeking are not possible. If this is true (and I believe it is), defending European systems is easier and realizing that there are many paths to a better future is possible.

Some scholars (like Peter Hall and David Soskice) have argued that all systems of capitalisms must have distinct competitive advantages which allow them to evolve and adjust as new opportunities and crises present themselves. But this gets us back into the business of believing there is one best way to organize.

I also think we understand very little about the transformation of work in the past 30 years, particularly in the advanced industrial countries. Our occupational categories are very out of date and our industrial classification systems barely recognize that 80% of modern economies are in service industries.

This lack of formally being able to classify work and businesses plays out in deeper ways in our research. We do not understand the main dynamics of our capitalisms. So, for example, the finance, insurance, and real estate sector of the American economy account for over 30% of GDP and 40% of profits. This share has doubled since the mid 1980s. But none of our theories of capitalism tell us how and why this should be so. We need historically grounded work that understands how firms have responded to the challenges of the economy. We have to be prepared to see that this has happened differently in different places. So, the American shareholder-value model of capitalism had morphed into a more general «financialization» of both consumers and producers. Firms of all kinds engage in financial engineering. American consumers increasingly have to be their own financial economists, handling their property, stock, and retirement investments. This outlook has affected both the number and extent of such products and their increasing dominance over everyday life. But we have little theorization of this and its effects.

STEWART CLEGG

1- What is your conception and definition of power? Do you consider other concepts like hegemony and resistance in your conception? If yes, are they connected concepts (with power) for you?

Within system terms, the most rational world would be one that accorded with the patterns of a closed system, in which uncertainty had been removed. Uncertainty basically signals freedom rather than closure; it signals the limits of the organization in controlling the actions of others. The conception of open-system organizations presumes that, in principle, a total rationality is possible. However, in practice, as Thompson theorized, although organizations strive to be rational, because they are open systems, they can rarely, if ever, achieve such rationality. The tension between the cult of theoretical rationality and the struggle with irrational practices was characterized by Reed as an intellectual schizophrenia in organization studies. Organizations are always open to irrationalities even as they strive to be rational. When the failure of the system to rationalize all relations within it creates dependencies that are not mapped onto the formally rational structure of dominancy, or, in other words, when what is taken for granted as authority does not extend its remit to all niches, segments or strata of the organization in question, then there is power.

Authority, with its assumptions of legitimacy, implies necessary consent to the rule that is invoked. Within functionalist social theory, the centrality of a cultural institutional viewpoint, values and goals in organizations cannot be treated as empirically contingent on structures of dominancy or as fundamentally problematic. If that were the case, the central value system would not be doing its theoretical work. Nor would power have much of a role to play in organizations because it could only ever be

deployed in the service of goal attainment – as indeed is the case in Parsons' positive theory of power.

The systems-theory view of authority has no place for power; power could only reside in unruly spaces where the remit of authority did not extend. Power is something done against authority – not in its name. It was to be found in the gaps and niches that rationalizing systems neglected or created precisely because rationalizing systems were regarded as equivalent to authority; what they colonized was legitimate and authorized, a priori, by definition, as it emanated from a rationalizing and sovereign center. What is not authority and is not authorized, what is residual and remains obdurate to the will of rationalizations this must be power. Functionalists see power as seen as something deviant to be explained rather than something that is somehow embedded in the normal functioning of organizations, their everyday disciplines and desires.

2. How do you apply your conception (on power and the «connected» concepts) on organizations, work and institutions in the contemporary capitalism?

A decade after the political scientists Morton Bartaz and Peter Bachrach first articulated the second face of power, Lukes published his slim book on power. In this text he introduced the idea that there was a third dimension to power; power could be exercised through the management of meaning in such a way that people – members of organizations, for instance – were unable to formulate an independent account of where their interests lay. They could think about and see the world only through subaltern concepts that already positioned them as subjected to, and as subjects of, a power that had no need to exercise itself crudely through one-dimensional manoeuvres. In fact, he saw power as operating much more insidiously through the way in which the categories of consciousness were already pervaded by the taken-for-granted world views and categories of the powerful – a conception that he related to the idea of hegemony as promulgated by the Gramsci.

Each of the accounts proffered has a normative view of what power is and should be. For the one-dimensional theorists the ideal is clearly a world of plural power relations. For the two-dimensional theorists the ideal is clearly a world in which those things that are issues for those who feel the yoke of power relations are not regarded as so hot to handle that they languish as unspoken and unarticulated but barely repressed non-issues. Theorists of ethnicity, gender, and of the intersectional issues that fuse with these, have, not surprisingly, been attracted to this perspective.

Pragmatists are not concerned with telling people how power 'ought' to be in organizations, rather they are concerned with studying 'how' power comes to be exercised in the way that it is. Here the impulse is resolutely empirical and descriptive, and is often regarded as dangerously amoral because of the emphasis on the workings of power irrespective of the niceties of its actual deployment.

My sympathies are clearly with the more pragmatist orientations ra-

Power and Resistance :
Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"

M@n@gement vol. 14 no. 1, 2011, 1-46
Unplugged

ther than those that are more idealist because the former places an emphasis on processes and learning as opposed to the latter's grand narrative of the way things ought to be arranged as authority, without power. The less normative the orientation, the less likely it is there will be a destructive war between authorities and resisters in a pluralist world. Pragmatist accounts stress the interpenetration of power with knowledge as socially constructed and thus culturally significant and context dependent, used as resources in strategic local games of politics. For these theorists, ultimately, all politics is local. At the core of pragmatic conceptions of politics is the centrality of the ways that people make sense.

3- Regarding your conception, do you see emerging forms of power, hegemony and resistance in organizations, work and around institutions?

Yes; the credit crunch has sundered, disrupted, and interrupted the pragmatic local stories that legitimated power and minimized resistance to it. Economic rationalists had been remarkably successful in persuading people that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, the more these worlds were constructed as markets. Marketing these beliefs became the major form of sophistry of the recent age. As long as the appearances of an increase in value, a circulation of capital, a rising stock of house process and cheap credit could be maintained, then the citizens bought the myths, accepted the sophistry. Power was hugely successful in constructing a world of appearances that were dominated by the markets, at the core of which were those possessive individualists characterized by Macpherson, the Canadian political philosopher, made up as a free economic subject, choosing freely, whose preferences are the end of the matter because they can be attributed only to the choosing subject. It was a huge fiction and the collapse of the system at the present time, the nationalization of major financial institutions in many countries, notably the US and UK, has pulled the veil away from it. Many individuals have been revealed as dupes of system rhetoric, as fools caught up in the sophistry marketed to them in the boom that was supposed to go on forever, the boom that made them free to choose. Defining freedom through the market created the conditions in which the desires that could fuel its expansion were cultivated. The collapse of these conditions reveals a democracy based on the freedom of individuals to possess to be hollow indeed, as superannuated retirement pensions, mortgaged house possession, jobs and personal security melt into air. Democracy has been uncoupled from the market – even the US has nationalized the mortgage business. The ex-Governor of the Bank of England calls for a need for citizens to retain their 'faith' in markets! When the card trick depends on faith we should know that, as descendants of reason, we are in deep trouble. The morality that was attached to contemporary capitalism is no longer believable – the morality of the market becomes like some holy representation whose reality can only be sustained by 'faith'. When markets cannot do what markets are supposed to do, the foundations of morality disappear – only faith

can restore the appearances while the rotten essence behind the appearances can only be cleaned up by defying every rule that sustained the appearances for so long.

In such a situation hegemonies break up; legitimacy languishes, resistance will grow and develop in innovative and unforeseen ways through the ingenuity of power.

4- For you, what is the next agenda to study power in organizations, work and around institutions?

Much organization theory shares with neo-classical economics a curious regression to a mean marked by equilibrium. At the equilibrium point it is as if there was no history. There is no account of how preferences might be subject to formation, historically, structurally, comparatively – organization actors' preferences just exist rather than being seen as historically constituted causal powers as Harré has it. Causal power, of course, involves more than negation, retardation of a theoretically correct consciousness or creation of one that is false. With Follett, Parsons, Arendt and Foucault, power can also be positive.

Consider preferences: they are expressed through effective demand and desire being combined. One desires something and one has the wherewithal to demand its supply. But desire – where does that come from? Whatever preferences can be formed can only be imagined through the categories available from which and with which one can choose. Categories are the means through which we routinely, albeit largely unconsciously, observe and classify events and experiences as we understand them to be in the languages that we ordinarily use. And these categories are necessarily experiential and empirical; they are grounded in our ways of being in the world.

If our 'human nature' is constituted through a power that enables us to realize our essence as members of an organization by facilitating autonomy through collaboration with others, then it would seem that it is only the absolute elites, the 'masters of war' and the 'masters of the universe', who have such power. The rest of us live in the shadows that their machinations create. We have very limited ability to do much other than to affect aggregate changes in line with the reasoning that constitutes the rules for making sense that are embedded in the system; thus we can act as rational choice actors in response to price signals such as the interest rate or salary rates. It would take a 'deep conflict' to overthrow these notions of rational choice; thus, in essence, the dominance of market relations can be seen in the way that their truths frame entirely what is 'rational' and thus prove different systems of thought not only arbitrary but also pointless – they have no meaning in the ways that practices are structured. Hence, the practices produce the personnel rather than the personnel producing the practices. Again, in Foucauldian terms, in the world in which we live there is no escape from the power/knowledge nexus that constitutes these relations, although, of course, wars of position between different fractions and innovations in these relations may challenge and change the actual deployment of forces.

Power and Resistance :
Variations on "what's going on politically in and around organizations?"

M@n@gement vol. 14 no. 1, 2011, 1-46
Unplugged

Those who are capital's 'organic intellectuals' will be those who have the ability to renew capital – even though such renewals may have longer-term destructiveness built into them – these organic intellectuals produce rationalizations. Interestingly, this conception of organic intellectuals sees them not as producing justifications for consumption by the broad masses, but innovations for elites. It is precisely these innovations – the collateralized debt obligations, for instance, that have destroyed 'faith'. We need a new ethics of power founded on care, as Lévinas would suggest.

All forms of organization that are premised on the delegation of responsibilities which make people do things to others that they would not want to do under an ethic of care would be cases in point. Where power is sufficiently routinized that its authority to do what it does runs free of opprobrium, this is not, surely, the same as being legitimate and just? Organizationally it is less the what of that which is routinely done and more the fact that it is done routinely that establishes legitimacy in practice.

Organizationally, one could consider an ethic of care as something that could guide action. There might be customer charters, for instance, setting out duties of care. There could be stakeholder statements setting out duties of care to communities, ecology and so on. Employees could be co-signatories to charters of rights and obligations, all of which took the care of the Other seriously. An organization full of non-instrumentalized people who could justify, ethically, all that they did in terms of Lévinas' conception of care for the Other is entirely feasible. Such a basis for organizational life would sustain practices that were not sources of illegitimate domination. Imperative commands could still be issued but if they were not in accord with the duty of care for the Other, in a generalized way, then they would not be regarded as legitimate and could legitimately not be enacted. Now, I can see that many people might think this sounds like some kind of organizational purgatory for the politically correct, but in the present context of increasing care for the environment and the widespread failures of many conventionally ethical (which is to say unethical) organizations to be financially, socially and ecologically sustainable, the tide may be turning.

Power flows through many different modalities. It is not one thing or in one place. It is not something that people have or do not have. The idea of circuits of power can be used to represent the ways in which power may flow through different modalities. Relatively simple is causal power, where one agency seeks to get another to do what they would not otherwise do. Power in this sense usually involves fairly straightforward episodic power, oriented towards securing outcomes. The two defining elements of episodic power circuits are agencies and events of interest to these agencies. Agencies are constituted within social relations; in these social relations they are analogous to practical experimentalists who seek to configure these relations in such a way that they present stable standing conditions for them to assert their agency in securing preferred outcomes. Hence, relations constitute agents that agents seek to configure and reconfigure; agencies seek to assert agency and do so through configuring relations in such a way that their agency can

be transmitted through various generalized media of communication, in order to secure preferential outcomes. All this is quite straightforward and familiar from one-dimensional accounts of power.

Episodes are always interrelated in complex and evolving ways. No 'win' or 'loss' is ever complete in itself, nor is the meaning of victory or defeat definitely fixed, as such, at the time of its registration, recognition or reception. Such matters of judgment are always contingent on the temporalities of the here and now, the reconstitutions of the there and then, on the reflective and prospective glances of everyday life (Schutz 1967). If power relations are the stabilization of warfare in peaceful times then any battle is only ever a part of an overall campaign. What is important from the point of view of the infinity of power episodes stretching into a future that has no limits are the feedback loops from distinct episodic outcomes and the impact that they have on overall social and system integration. The important question is whether episodic outcomes tend rather more to reproduce or to transform the existing architectonics—the architecture, geometry and design—of power relations? How they might do so is accommodated in the model through the circuit of social integration. Episodic outcomes serve to more or less transform or reproduce the rules fixing extant relations of meaning and membership in organizational fields; these fix or re-fix obligatory passage points, channels and conduits, in the circuitry of extant power relations. In this way dispositional matters of identity will be more or less transformed or reproduced, framing the stability of those extant social relations that had sought to stabilize their powers in previous episodes of power. As identities are transformed then so will be the social relations in which they are manifested and engaged.

System integration, achieved primarily through legitimated domination, also needs to be considered. Changes in the rules fixing relations of meaning and membership can facilitate or restrict innovations in the techniques of disciplinary and productive power, which, in turn, will more or less empower or disempower extant social relations that seek to stabilize the episodic field, recreating existing obligatory passage points or creating new ones, as the case might be. Dominant ideologies, for organizing dominant elites rather than subordinating masses, are especially significant here.

Any model of circuits of power must start from the realization that any given arena necessarily intersects with many other episodic circuits in which what is stable and taken for granted in one circuit may well be deconstructed and destroyed. There is no fixed starting point for episodic power – these are always points in a contextually shifting here and now constantly redefined by prospective and retrospective sense making (Weick 1995; Schutz 1967). Moreover, episodes of power can start wholly outside the formally established relations between organizations, and episodic circuits tend to intersect. However much an organization may assume that it has stabilized the circuits of power flowing through a specific arena, that arena is always capable of being reconfigured by other circuits, other actors, just as the credit crunch is doing now.

Most of the time, the economy of power will contain matters in the epi-

sodic circuit, when, as was observed by Lukes with regard to the third-dimension of power, the most effective use of power will be that which overcomes resistance occurring, when compliance becomes routine, when 'power over' and 'power to' merge. When actors join together to act in concert (power to), they do so to realize joint tasks, and in so doing they make each other do things which they would not otherwise do for the purposes of a shared goal. Even when it appears to be most absent, power is always most present; we see this especially in the slippage of everyday organizational life, in the centrality of practical organization members and theorists with concerns such as commitment, culture or motivation. It is the inability of organizations to achieve closed system status that creates opportunities for power as resistance; it is in the attempts of organizations to secure system closure through certainty that power as domination constantly asserts itself; if the attempts are successful then domination shades into legitimate authority. There is no alternative to power relations but how these are expressed is capable of considerable variation.

JEAN-CLAUDE THOENIG

1- What is your conception and definition of power? Do you consider other concepts like hegemony and resistance in your conception? If yes, are they connected concepts (with power) for you?

The way organizations are governed has been a lasting concern for my research agenda as a social scientist. To contribute to the advancement of the theory of power, as if it were a kind of lifelong concern, has not been of major appeal to me.

It is true that several if not many of my studies were dealing with manifest or latent power centers, and with dominant when not hegemonic social configurations such as the headquarters of multinational companies[1], or the French administrative, political and economic elites called Grands Corps, educated and selected by professional schools such as the Ecole Nationale d'Administration and the Ecole Polytechnique[2]. Whenever some findings seemed to be worth being related to agendas about power, I did it. For instance I studied in depth how intergovernmental relationships were key to the allocation of political power and influence across local and national French polities[3]. David Courpasson and I have demonstrated how managerial domination regimes inside firms fuel the emergence and intensity of rebellion phenomena among their managers[4].

Power games and regimes are not discarded. They deserve my attention, as such, as far as they help explain or are related to other dimensions of societal structures and political dynamics. Nevertheless I consider them as marginal concerns, as factors or dimensions not to forget about. In other words, I feel like an amateur when I meet and discuss with power experts and scholars. My attention and my sense of curiosity are attracted by other topics and problems.

1. Michaud C. and J.C. Thoenig. 2003. *Making Strategy and Organization Compatible,* Palgrave Macmillan, London

2. Thoenig J.C. 1987. *L'ère des technocrates,* L'Harmattan, Paris

3. Thoenig J.C. 2005. « Territorial Administration and Political Control. Decentralization in France », *Public Administration, 83,* 3 : 685-708

4. Courpasson D . and J.C. Thoenig. 2010. *When Managers Rebel,* Palgrave Macmillan, London

The research topics that attract my curiosity combine two dimensions. The first one is that, in my opinion, they are related to empirical phenomena and theoretical problems that have been neglected or at least poorly explored by social science inquiry. The second one is that, despite the fact that Max Weber had already tackled the problem in a such a comprehensive way that seemed to leave too much room to further generations of sociologists, I keep wondering how logics of action that are different and heterogeneous, while not incompatible by their intrinsic standards, could achieve some degree of compatibility. In other words, collective action via organizing and organized arrangements is the main focus of my professional curiosity. This is why organization theory de facto has structured my agenda for more than forty years in a row. One collateral consequence was and still is that I do not separate content from structure, process from substance, power dynamics from cognition building and interpretation aspects when studying collective action taking.

Grand theory has never really been my cup of tea. Middle-level theory fits much more my expectations about scientific achievement. On the one hand, I have been attracted by social sciences partly because global ideologies were, in my opinion, based on questionable beliefs in terms of relevance and dangerous when used as references for social life and action taking. On the other hand, the elegance and plausibility of models are easier to satisfy. So I have tried to get the best, climbing on the shoulders of giants. My purpose was also not to be cornered or blinded by one perspective only for the rest of my scientific life.

I have studied quite different types of organizations - business firms, public agencies, not-for-profit associations, city halls, the European Commission, etc - from very different angles - how they function internally as social and human set ups, how they interrelate with third parties and society, how they impact on the production of public goods and services - and with various interpretative perspectives - bureaucracy, technocracy and democracy, policy analysis, cognitive theory, development, market and economic exchange, etc. To study an organization as a social order structure as well as an action system, I observe how its functioning and change is linked more or less to specific missions, decisions or stakes it is supposed to be in charge of, alone or with others. I also observe what consequences this induces in terms of content of policies and outcomes it is supposed to elaborate and deliver. In other words, I study them under specific circumstances; whenever they are exposed or face a problem or a pressure for change from the environment, from outside stakeholders or from society at large that may challenge their routines, their missions and their existence. I have used the decentralization reforms of public affairs in France as a revealer of the basic characteristics of French public administrations, decentralization as a policy being more a means or an opportunity to detect these fundamental organizational properties than an end or a topic per se.

Such a trajectory may look like an erratically constructed patchwork, a sum of scattered attentions and contributions to quite different specialized domains: public administration, elites and social stratification,

public policy analysis, cognitive sociology, etc. The fact is that I feel at ease and am able to enter into dialogue on equal ground with political scientists as with sociologists, historians or management scholars.

2. How do you apply your conception (on power and the «connected» concepts) on organizations, work and institutions in the contemporary capitalism?

While power as a theoretical issue remains of moderate appeal to me, power as an analytical tool has persistently and intensively been part of my research tool kit.

In terms of heuristics, power provides empirical rules or guidelines that are pragmatic, simple and fast, and that facilitate fact-finding and context analysis. It makes complex problems and situations more easy to grasp, complexity meaning that too many variables and elements to consider would make analysis difficult to start, to handle and to interpret theoretically. More precisely, heuristics provides entrance tactics, ways to start an analysis. Being partly based on intuition and previous experience of similar situations, it suggests the idea of a proof. It is a pre-requisite when complex reasoning patterns are to be handled and explained.

Power as an analytical tool goes back to the heritage of the neo-behavioral revolution that started in Chicago in the 1920s under the influence of Charles Merriam, a political sociologist, and his students Herbert Simon and Harold Lasswell. It has been tested and made even more instrumental in the 1950s and 60s by two major streams in the social sciences. One, located at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, was mainly studying business firms as organizations, trying to understand how they actually function and make decisions. A pioneering contribution to power as an analytical tool was made by James March[5]. Another stream, located in the department of political science at Yale University and headed by Robert Dahl, studied community polities and policy making processes. It gave birth to a seminal definition of power, combining behavioral and relational dimensions[6]. Defining power as the capacity of A to get from B a behavior B would never adopt if A were not present or part of the specific situation linking A to B suggested a fruitful analytical agenda. Several scholars in the USA and in Europe have developed this perspective further. One elaborate and explicit grid or tool kit has been developed by the Centre de Sociologie des Organisations, taking advantage of the research program launched by its founder, Michel Crozier[7].

An analytical agenda means that phenomena are not taken as a given but as a social construct, not as postulates but as hypothesis submitted to inquiry, as questions for research.

Power is contextual. For example, it is not by definition linked to personality characteristics – age, social origin, charisma - or to formal positions in an institutional set up – being the CEO of a firm or the mayor of a city. Local circumstances make a difference. Authority as such does not imply power. A recurrent finding of organizational sociology is that, most of the time, both do not coincide along the hierarchy of autho-

5. March J.G. « The Business Firm as a Political Coalition », *Journal of Politics, 24,* 662-678.

6. Dahl R. 1957. « The Concept of Power », *Behavioural Science, 2,* 18 : 201-15

7. Crozier M. 1963. *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

rity. Power holders are not only the persons or the groups at the top. Context refers more precisely to the goals actors want to achieve, to the problems they address and would like to solve. Herbert Simon had suggested that preferences, goals, stakes and problems actors want to satisfy, achieve, manage or solve, are volatile. Their content and intensity vary according to the specific situation in which, at a given moment, the actor operates. They blend content – preferences, goals, problems or stakes - with context – how far the actor is dependent from the behaviors of other actors such as B or C to address them, that B's or C's behaviors are more or less unpredictable by A, that A may have to pay a cost in return for their cooperation.

Power is relational. More precisely it is structured around and by interdependencies between actors. Heuristically speaking, to state that A has power is poor analysis. Inquiry has to verify more information empirically. Over whom does A have power and over whom less or not, when and how far? In return, this does not mean that B and C are by definition powerless. Asymmetries are a question subject to verification. A more heuristic approach aims at verifying the cards as they are distributed and handled inside a web of interdependencies and interactions at work, between A and B, A and C and C and B. A may have more power over B or C than B has over A or C.

Power is enacted via behaviors. A may control some uncertainties on which B's stakes may depend. But to exert his power on B, A has to behave in a certain manner, which is discretionary. Being transparent, therefore predictable by B, A loses his power capacity. In a way power games come close to poker games. Those that control winning cards have to play them to win, and they do it most of the time. And those that have the losing cards in their hands lose whenever they play with A.

Mutual but unbalanced dependence relationships are quite common. Though deprived of any resource in his relationship with the master who exerts full and global control over the life of his slave, this latter controls one uncertainty of which the master is dependent: his own life. Suicide or death may be a tragic resource for the slave, but his master faces it as a constraint or a limit to his power, force or domination. Without slaves a master no longer remains a master if his stake is to be a master. And formal control systems dictated by the hierarchy about how to behave are reinterpreted by those who have to implement them giving birth to local arrangements that are considered as legitimate by those who apply them and are tolerated by those at the top who have the formal authority to write them. Therefore power explains or is a key factor in explaining actual daily behaviors. What are the key stakes actor A wants to satisfy, from what kind of resources controlled by third parties is A dependent from to satisfy his stakes, what kind of constraints does A control that these third parties are dependent from to satisfy their own stakes, are key factors that shape the actual behaviors occurring between A and such or such third party, and determine the conditions of exchange and the limits not to violate in their relationships.

Such a framework is heuristically fruitful because it pushes the ana-

lyst to study actual behaviors, acts and non-acts and decisions. To understand the real functioning of an organization at the level of specific actors, as well as at the level of the organization as such, requires specific techniques of in-depth interviewing, and, whenever it is possible, of shadowing. Attitude and opinion-based questionnaires may provide raw materials. Nevertheless they have to be interpreted by the analyst. Interpretation means in this case that their content has to be referred to actual behaviors in interdependence relationships, for instance how an actor handles such contexts he may face or be part of. Tools such as sociograms – characterizing the feelings and judgments each actor expresses about other actors of the actions set - and behavioral grids – defining for each actor his stakes, resources, constraints, and behaviors in his relationship with other actors of the action set - help identify the usually latent stakes an actor tries to satisfy – avoiding being exposed to third party discretionary intervention, etc. Hypotheses about such behaviors and stakes should be considered as intermediary steps to identifying power coalitions at the local as well as at the top level, who are their members, around what arrangements these coalitions are built and what their limits are, and why other groups are dependent on them[8].

Power games and political dynamics provide heuristic added value as far as they open up organizations as black boxes. They allow the analyst not to be blinded by a narrow top down approach, and not to overestimate the importance of the formal design of an institution. Heuristics means in the case of power that it provides a procedure robust enough to check how far the design or the hierarchy of authority really shapes the actual functioning and decision making processes. They also help to identify the latent norms and the implicit coalitions of vested interests around specific issues. To put it bluntly, though not an end in itself, such heuristics pave the ground for further inquiry about collective action in organized settings, even if power as such is not the problem a researcher wants to explore, solve or explain in the end. Any organization is subject to power phenomena. Political dynamics are not pathological symptoms, they are key vectors for achieving compatibility. According to the consequences such power games generate for the organization, its missions, its members and its stakeholders, analysis shall determine whether or not the social production of compatibility is dysfunctional and of a pathological nature.

Such heuristics can be applied to approach and explore other social configurations than just formal organizations. Whenever two or more formal organizations become interdependent around a common task, problem or policy, whether they are linked by formal ties or because each of them, in a way that is specific to it, is a stakeholder or is part of a common action set, power dynamics occur and compatibility is at stake. Organizing and organized are processes at work well beyond the world of institutionalized organizations. One relevant contribution for methodological purposes I made early on in my career was tested by a study of cross-regulation processes linking through mutual action interdependence French mayors and local elected officers to State representatives heading local agencies of the national ministries[9].

8. Crozier M. and E. Friedberg. 1980. A*ctors and Systems : The Politics of Collective Action.* University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

9. Crozier M . and J.C. Thoenig. 1976. « The Regulation of Complex Organized Systems », A) *Administrative Science Quarterly, 21,*4: 547-570

3- Regarding your conception, do you see emerging forms of power, hegemony and resistance in organizations, work and around institutions?

Power as a tool kit is fruitful not only to study formal organizations such as business firms and public administration agencies, but also to improve knowledge about other social objects and economic configurations. Policy analysis studies from a political science or sociology perspective have underlined that in more that 70% of the cases a policy fails to generate the impacts policy-makers had in mind when designing the policy. What happens during the implementation stage is not in line with what the policy was formally supposed to achieve. Implementation has to be considered as a specific political and social arena where, when applying the formal rules, instruments and instructions, those in charge of it tend to set up standards and to adopt behaviors that are different, given the specificities of the local contexts of which they are in charge. Implementation gives birth to local power arenas including those who execute, but also to outside stakeholders. Specific impacts, some not intended and others expressing resistances are generated not because the parties involved in implementation processes are dumb, lazy or corrupted, but because of pragmatic purposes or of vested interests that have no direct relation with the policy itself. Those who implement locally set up compromises and arrangements that do not jeopardize their own local stakes, that are also to some extent acceptable by local constituents and that policy-makers at the top may tolerate. Quite common illustrations are linked to the way street bureaucrats such as police forces appropriate crime and law policies and regulations dealing with road freight transportation[10]. Such a phenomenon is quite identical to what has been observed in industrial plants where workers and foremen, when not their local managers, enforce work instructions designed by the headquarters. It has been defined by Jean-Daniel Reynaud as conjunct social regulation, the people at the local level inventing autonomous rules or informal norms that are not the same as the control rules imposed at the top[11].

Heuristics and tool kits are not or should not be substitutes for the absence of specific theoretical agendas. To refer to power dynamics and structures as an analytical entry scheme or as an intermediary methodology does not imply that the agenda of a study deals by definition with collective action. Power is a means, not an end. Otherwise power as heuristics may be a substitute for a theoretical framework entering through the back door, more or less in a clandestine manner. For the concept of power carries by itself some specific theoretical postulates or assumptions.

One major postulate is about behaviors in interdependent local contexts. Individuals and groups are considered as strategic actors. Vested and particularistic interests drive them. Here the danger lies in the fact that an analyst may forget about other factors that shape behaviors and that are exogenous to the relationships studied such as culture, ideologies and social stratification, to name but a few.

Another set of postulates is that power games tend to give a premium

10. Dupuy F. and J.C. Thoenig. 1979. « Public Transportation Policy Making in France as an Implementation Problem », *Policy Science, 11*, 1: 1-18

11. Reynaud J.D. 1997. *Les règles du jeu : l'action collective et la régulation sociale.* Armand Colin, Paris.

to a Weltanschaung that defines organizations or polities as being poly-archic or pluralistic by definition. Here the danger may lie in the fact that the analyst underestimates the existence of domination macro-structu-res or games of the game that are, for instance ,oligarchic regimes and cultural domination vectors – as illustrated for the capitalist regime in the first third of the 1900s by Antonio Gramsci and his theory of hege-mony[12].

In other words, methodologies as ends, heuristics forgetting about their underlying theoretic postulates, pave the way for two dangers or scien-tific abuses.

A first danger is that they are used as hammers looking for nails. The confusion made between methodology and theory opens the door to the illusion that anything can be analyzed and explained in a relevant manner though power lenses. The fallacy of misplaced concreteness means that any empirical phenomenon could be studied without ques-tioning the relevance of their theoretical postulates for the problem under inquiry. This critique makes sense for strategic neo-behavioral approaches, local power dynamics being disconnected from broader structural factors and evolutions of societies, economies and polities. Local orders explain it all. Institutions do not matter much. And no global or exogenous factors are considered.

A second danger is that any social context and collective construction could be basically considered as understandable mainly as a power arena, and not much more, as if power would be, in a way, the ultimate key to social order and action. Such a deviation could be applied to approaches inspired by a biased understanding of class struggle pa-radigms or postulating that one hidden hand, center, elite or ideology manipulates and has full control of the periphery of an organization or of society. Why bother about local orders?

Epistemological over-simplification is a kind of infantile disease still at work today. Academic scholars having not benefited from a solid edu-cation in the basics of sociology and political science, as it is the case sometimes for business school faculties, ignore the lessons as well as the analytical trades of former generations of scholars. They are prone to follow the latest intellectual fads. An exclusive reference to quantita-tive measurement and statistical data banks in some cases, the accu-mulation of fishing expeditions, meaning research without theoretical frameworks and without fruitful heuristics, for others, are two common sins among their ranks.

One of the least desirable consequences has to do with the disconnec-tion between global and local, between macro and micro, as if social action and order would be a struggle between two extremes. Organiza-tions and organized set ups as meso levels or action arenas, or are un-derestimated as having their own dynamics. For instance, institutional theories of all kinds are misunderstood when they become substitutes for hyper-deterministic paradigms, or network analysis ignoring its in-trinsic limits to explain collective action and order, becomes a hammer looking for nails of any kind. Societies, polities and economies are as-sumed to be linear and simple constructs, as if observing what happens

12. Gramsci A.1971. *Selections from the Prison Note-books*. International Publishers

at the top would suffice to understand what happens at the bottom or, vice-versa, what happens at the micro-level may give the key to understand in a relevant manner what happens at the macro-level. The hypothesis of meso-order and action arenas, therefore of discontinuities, is discarded or perceived as not worth considering. Discontinuities and variations at the intermediary levels are just exceptions to an iron law: at the end of the day what matters is either what is global and macro, or the global is nothing else than an addition or combination of micro or very local set ups and dynamics. Power as heuristics gives a better chance to consider at the same time an action and order system as driven by endogenous dynamics and as determined by exogenous forces.

Using power analysis as a heuristic tool does not imply that no other tool kits have to be discarded. Other methodologies are needed according to the problem to be studied. More importantly, power analysis is compatible with theoretical agendas that are not linked to power theory. To give just one example, I have recently studied firms, their functioning, their government and their policy-making processes from a cognitive perspective. How the various actors involved at the level of the business units and in the executive suites build and mobilize implicit knowledge and interpretation schemes for action taking was my theoretical agenda. Actors, whether single or collective, are not mere power players, which means mere cultural idiots. They also think, interpret, theorize and believe. How they create compatibility by sharing cognitions is a key to clarifying by research. Specific methodologies were required for that purpose. Nevertheless, power heuristics helped a lot to make sense of how cognitions circulate, evolve or not, and are made compatible between actors or not[13].

13. See Michaud and Thoenig, above.

4- For you, what is the next agenda to study power in organizations, work and around institutions?

Is the agenda about power nowadays of declining return in terms of knowledge? No, much is still to be explored.

Social scientists sometimes define as "emergent" or "new" facets of power that are not new or emergent from a historic perspective, but that they have not yet studied. Marketing is part of their trade. Not enough importance is usually given to forms of power, hegemony, domination and resistance that are declining or disappearing in societies, polities and economies. Zones of ignorance are still numerous and provide research niches for several years to many social scientists. What kind of problems, topics or issues would attract my own curiosity if I were to study power in the coming years?

> 3- Which consequences will the current evolutions of the academic institutions, its emphasis on standardization of performance and excellence, its growing reference to quasi-market mechanisms of management and competition, have now that the importance of academic professions seems to plateau, that state steering is transforming, and that organizational rationales get more and more importance at the level of single universities?

4- Is it true or not that the social elites in business and in politics have seen their forms, resources and positions of power and authority modified since globalization experienced an extraordinary acceleration?
5- Do old forms of cultural hegemony inside work organizations really decline, and do new forms have a growing influence, how, how far, and with which implications?