

M@n@gement

ISSN: 1286-4892

Editors:

Emmanuel Josserand, *HEC, Université de Genève (Editor in Chief)*

Jean-Luc Arrègle, *EDHEC (editor)*

Stewart Clegg, *University of Technology, Sydney (editor)*

Martin Kornberger, *University of Technology, Sydney (editor)*

Philippe Monin, *EM Lyon (Editor)*

José Pla-Barber, *Universitat de València (editor)*

Linda Rouleau, *HEC Montréal (editor)*

Michael Tushman, *Harvard Business School (editor)*

Thibaut Bardon, *Université Paris-Dauphine, CREPA - HEC, Université de Genève (editorial assistant)*

Florence Villeseche, *HEC, Université de Genève (editorial assistant)*

Martin G. Evans, *University of Toronto (editor emeritus)*

Bernard Forgues, *EMLyon Business School (editor emeritus)*

Unplugged

■ Stewart R. Clegg, William H. Starbuck 2009

Can we still fix M@n@gement? The narrow path
towards a brighter future in organizing practices
M@n@gement, 12(5), 332-359.

M@n@gement est la revue officielle de l'AIMS



M@n@gement is the official journal of AIMS

Copies of this article can be made free of charge and without securing permission, for purposes of teaching, research, or library reserve. Consent to other kinds of copying, such as that for creating new works, or for resale, must be obtained from both the journal editor(s) and the author(s).

M@n@gement is a double-blind refereed journal where articles are published in their original language as soon as they have been accepted.

For a free subscription to M@n@gement, and more information:
<http://www.management-aims.com>

© 2009 M@n@gement and the author(s).

Can we still fix M@n@gement? The narrow path towards a brighter future in organizing practices

Stewart R. Clegg

Professor in Management and Director of Research
University of Technology, Sydney
Stewart.Clegg@uts.edu.au

William H. Starbuck

Courtesy Professor in Residence at University of Oregon
and Emeritus Professor at New York University
starbuck@uoregon.edu

While global warming stimulates debate on how to make organizations greener, the overheating of the world economy urges us to reconsider the ways in which we conceive management and organizing practices both as researchers and teachers. Exploitation as we know it may be behind us, but does this entail ideating a revolution to prepare a brighter future? Or are we simply facing a time of evolution? To put it more simply: is it time to unplug an overheating system and start from scratch, or can we still fix management and organizing practices? The path between an abstract scientism disconnected from reality and our subjection to short-term managerial interests is a narrow one. Both criticisms offer insight into our responsibility as researchers and teachers in the world as it is today. They can help us to redefine our connection with managerial practices and define the path we can follow to play a part in securing a brighter future.

To contribute to this overarching debate, we have invited two preeminent scholars to stretch boundaries and set the agenda for forthcoming research and teaching. Stewart Clegg (University of Technology, Sydney) and William H. Starbuck (University of Oregon) disclose their thoughts on the misconceptions in which we have been trapped and the challenges we have to face in order to reinvent management. Bill and Stewart have both had incredible careers. They have been influencing research in organization and management for several decades through their prolific publications, communication and engagement with practice. They are also both closely connected to M@n@gement. Bill participated in the first advisory committee of the journal. Stewart is currently one of the editors of M@n@gement and very actively involved in it, with all the passion he shows towards the many projects in which he participates.

Both Bill and Stewart are also very critical of what is being done in the field of management in terms of teaching, research and the way we do or do not engage with practice. They have still not lost faith, however, and they both answered my questions and generously offered their views on what the narrow path towards a brighter future in organizing practices could be. This confrontation of an advocate of skeptical reflection and an advocate of incremental efforts was initiated in the form of a moderated conversation at the 2010 EGOS colloquium (video available online at <http://www.management-aims.com/>), and was then developed into the present dialogic essay. This exchange, sometimes a confrontation, sometimes a convergent dialogue, inaugurates our "Unplugged" series, in which we give world-class scholars a wild card to share their own perspective on novel ways in which to conceive of management today.

Emmanuel Josserand

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS RESEARCHERS AND TEACHERS IN THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WORLD?

Stewart Clegg (SC): I believe that there is only ever one responsibility of researchers and teachers and that is to try and speak truth to power, by which I mean that we should not be dominated by extraneous interests or conventions in the questions we ask, the answers we give, or the evidence we recount. There are many such interests and conventions and we all have to try and work around these as best we can.

The major interests compromising the scholars' task are several: first, government funding for research is increasingly oriented towards mandated priorities. These are not insurmountable: good proposals will gain funding some of the time and, once funded, there is considerable freedom to do the research. I do not believe that this is a major problem. A larger problem resides in getting ideas published: the effect of research assessment exercises has been to make certain, mostly North American, journals obligatory passage points for career-ambitious scholars. Nothing wrong with being career-ambitious, except that the institutional channels often favoured by journals tend to conservatism – not so much of a political but an intellectual kind, in terms of certain biases towards paradigms, methods, genres. Smart people work this out pretty quickly and accordingly adopt a rule of anticipated reaction, narrowing down the range of ultimately publishable material. A further effect of the various research assessment processes has been the denigration of the book as a scholarly vehicle: increasingly, early career researchers learn that books do not count as much as journal articles. Again, the range of variation narrows. One effect is to minimize the impact of really good ethnographies – which rarely can be expressed in the conventional 8,000 words or so of a standard journal article oriented towards testable hypotheses – often tautological in nature – that serve to encourage the fable of social science prediction.

I am not enamoured of the belief that a social science that is not predictive is a poor thing. I have yet to see much in the way of useful prediction in the fields in which we work, given the indeterminacy of closure, the complexity of variables, and the inescapable openness of being and becoming. The assumption that systems can be closed and hypotheses about these systems promulgated that will find correspondence in reality is deeply simplistic in terms of contemporary accounts of the philosophy and sociology of science. More especially, it is socially dangerous: Ironically, however, I do think that the research agenda prior to the crisis did, in fact, contribute to it by creating an arena in which, at its apex, dominant ideologies were produced that helped to create the crisis. I hold the view that I learned many years ago from my colleague and friend, Bryan Turner, that dominant ideologies are basically organised and ruling-class rather than disorganised and working-class. The dominant ideologies that I have in mind, the organising ideas that animated and organised the crisis, did so not so much through producing justifications about broad matters for public consumption but

by producing innovations for capital that created rationalisations for strategic initiatives. Business school scholars have been quite culpable in contributing to a dominant ideology that has manifested itself in this recent world financial crisis of capitalism. Business schools are a prime source of dominant ideologies for capitalist reproduction, and these clearly played a part in creating that crisis. Dominant ideology is to be found in the organising ideas that animate and organise specific elites, not so much producing justifications for consumption by the broad masses but innovations for elites. In a link with the work of theorists such as Flyvbjerg (1998) and Gordon (2007), one can say that such innovations produce rationalisations of strategic initiatives. Nobel prize-winning economists, such as Black and Scholes (1973; see also Merton 1973), who helped create instruments that had the ability to renew capital (even though such renewals may have had longer-term destructiveness built into them) should thus be thought of as organic intellectuals of capital, producing rationalisations of and for the dominant ideology. Their algorithms were the intellectual basis for the whole extension into collateralised debt obligations (CDOs) etc.

We need to consider the “business” in “business school”. Over a long period of time, the conception of the power relations embedded and nurtured in Business Schools changed. Initially, they were positive: business schools would build power to manage organisations ethically and professionally. Management is not a profession in any sense that sociologists of the professions would ever recognise. A business card can make one a manager. It is as simple as that. Recent commentators such as Khurana (2007) are not altogether pessimistic; he believes that the time is right for business schools to discover a commitment to professionalism, based on leadership that will educate, train and inspire, and reclaim their rightful place in the respect of their peers. As an explicit model, he suggests the professionalism of the military, such as is found at West Point. However, I have doubts about the renewal of the professional project. First, note that Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, and other professional disciplines are all premised on a licence to practice. You cannot operate as a professional in these disciplines without virtue of an exclusive licence that the state polices. These professions have an effective monopoly. Such a situation has never prevailed in business and never will, because of the famed creative destruction and dynamism that drives it. Anyone can become a businessperson, and many who would be better advised not to do so do anyway. Second, note the institution of the business *school* and the institution of the *business school* differ markedly (Starkey and Tiratsoo 2007: 50-76). The former is oriented to the institutions of research, peer-evaluation and competitive journal publication. It demands scholarship. The latter is oriented far more to whatever is current in business circles. Scholarship is a handicap: it is slow, not fast; cautious not bold; reserved rather than committed; often lengthy rather than snappy, and quite difficult to read for people not used to its discrete charms. Sacrifice these qualities and the risk is it would hardly look like scholarship. In the early days of management education the idea was that ethics would address a duty of care, embedded in ideas of enhancing the

professionalism of management. Such ideas characterized the early twentieth century, especially after the Wall St crash of 1929: in the latter quarter of the century the scope of ethics and power relations narrowed considerably for many scholars to a focus on the relation between financial principals and management agents constituted largely in terms of the guilefulness and untrustworthiness of the latter with respect to the former (Jensen and Meckling 1976; Williamson 1979). Ethics were narrowed down to caring largely for shareholder dividends. In such a context, as critics of paradigm plurality such as Pfeffer (1993) failed to realise, the apparent unanimity of the economists formed around the science fictions of neo-classicism was only ever apparent; there has always been a strong residue of Keynesians, Kaleckians and others who never bought the neo-classical line despite the neo-classical line being an attractive bulwark of professionalism in economics. A discipline that takes preferences for granted and has no means of accounting for the ways in which preferences may be systematically constructed and distorted was never likely to be problematic for business. By contrast, those of a more social-constructionist or political-economy bent, who were not prepared to take for granted the apparentness of the real that was fictionally constructed, were a lot less comfortable bedfellows. These scholars were largely marginal figures, however. As John Kay (2004) noted, the predominant contemporary models and values of business schools globally were tangled up in policies of unrestrained pursuit of self-interest, market fundamentalism and minimal state intervention (Starkey and Tiratsoo 2007: 215). As Starkey and Tiratsoo note, these views are increasingly being questioned in the broader community and, indeed, in the marketplace. Faced with the risks of global warming and climate change, an increasingly dystopian view of current myths about unrestrained and competitive markets is clearly prescient. If one's petard has been hoist on the flagpole of free markets then regulation can never be the answer to the problems that such markets create.

Against the currents of orthodoxy and the free marketeers, critical research has had momentum; however, it is just as institutionalized as other areas. It has its stars, its star journals, its panels, its conferences, and these are all nicely wrapped up in a brand of CMS (Critical Management Studies). Does CMS make a difference? Will CMS have more of a contribution to play in the future? I do not know. There are so many strands within the brand; maybe not 57 varieties like Heinz, but there are certainly plenty. Some of them are focused on specific substantive issues while others are focused on importing ever more obscure continental philosophers and positioning themselves in privileged relations to the truths believed to be racked up in the often obtuse prose of their protagonists, a motley cast of critical deconstructivists, existentialists, critical theorists, critical interpretivists, fragments of various factions of the left, and labour process theorists, all of whom have begun collecting under the CMS umbrella. I am unsure what unites them and what, if anything, they can contribute to resolving the present crisis.

On the one hand, as forms of neo-classicism seeped into areas and approaches, such as agency theory and transaction-cost economics, the managerialists became partially culpable in creating conditions within

which the crisis could occur and its tendencies not be recognised while, on the other hand, many ostensible critics seemed largely uninterested in any meaningful engagement with the issues created by the managerialist issues and non-issues. Managerialist ideologies drawing on neo-classicism and its derivatives, which because of their dominance, made sense to many people, occurred in parallel with various forms of exclusive language game that hardly seemed to engage with everyday people and their concerns, least of all those seeking to make their careers as Business School scholars.

Today, increasingly sophisticated research students are being produced in a context in which the rhetoric of the business school posits its function as being to serve the business constituency. Its star products clearly do not always do so – it is not so much relevance or immediacy or a problem-orientation so much as rigour that engages journal editors who function as the sluice-gates for careers. One can go along to sessions at the Academy of Management and hear both really dull work as well as interesting work: whether or not it serves any larger purpose that is related to the mission of business schools is, I think, quite coincidental to its level of interest, rather than essential.

Under the pressures of immediacy, at a moment of crisis such as that we have been going through for the past 18 months or so, there have been renewed calls for business schools to play a more ethical and normative role in an economy and society which seems wicked in so many ways. I am not sure that the business schools are (a) up to addressing these things or (b) the right place in which they will be addressed, in as much as these are not problems that a market-dominated discourse can easily address. I should much prefer to see a reanimation, a reengagement of a discourse of the import of public management to provide a way of engaging with these issues on both a national and global scale. Most business schools with which I am familiar have run away from the idea of public management with glee and delight, because this is not a very lucrative part of the market.

Nor have ethics been central to the agenda of business schools in the recent past. I guess ethics may make a ritual reappearance in the wake of the crisis, and, if enough government money is committed to the greening of industry as part of the strategies for renewing competitiveness, more MBA students may elect to study sustainability on the basis that it will not harm their intellectual portfolios. In the past, in my institution, the takers for either ethics or sustainability were not so many. To teach ethics properly to people who have no real philosophical education is, of course, not easy. Indeed, to teach anything that is fairly intellectual to students with little in the way of disciplinary foundations is not very easy – a problem not simply of business schools, of course. If ethics are taught as rules, codes, standards, they are hardly likely to do much good other than to remind tomorrow's executives that they need insurance policies. Business students are often the ethical outliers: taught that it is accepted that agents will transact with guile and obfuscate in the interests of business it should hardly be surprising if, indeed, they do. It is unsurprising that they should say that; in a lot of what many teach they are told that is the case.

For the future, problems such as global warming and issues related to global poverty may well be present in the classroom but I do not think that they can be addressed to a sufficient degree either through a focus on the market or on the institutions of the corporation. They will have to be addressed through the development of both national and global state-like agencies and interventions. Those who are optimistic about corporations and the market seem to be asking for the globalisation of the American model on a world scale; I would say the globalisation of the American model on a world scale has done enough damage already.

Bill Starbuck (BS): I have held different opinions about the responsibilities of professors at different times through my life. Probably every five or ten years, I have changed my mind about what is important. Likewise, other professors have their own ideas about what is important, and their ideas are going to evolve over the coming years. Certainly, there is a lot of diversity among us. Some professors honestly believe that studying and writing about a purely academic topic such as population ecology or discourse constitutes a significant contribution to humanity. If you really hold such a belief, you should pursue your passion with great enthusiasm. However, it is unclear how such research benefits people outside narrow segments of academia. I am hoping that some small fraction of academic researchers will decide not to serve themselves, not to do only what is intellectually interesting to themselves, but rather to devote part of their time to working to meet some of the serious challenges facing the world.

Industrialization from 1850 to 1900 stimulated widespread and dramatic social change, including much strife and diverse new social problems. This idea of studying human resources, management, organizations, or strategy arose out of efforts to ameliorate strife and to solve some of the social problems (Starbuck and Baumard, 2009). One theme that drove thought about organizations was dissatisfaction with bureaucratic behavior by governments. The basic principles of bureaucracy go back many millennia, but modern concepts of bureaucracy owe much to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the Comptroller General of Finance under King Louis XIV. Colbert used rules to control government officials, to rein in corruption, and to create confidence that the French government was operating fairly. Less than 80 years after Colbert, however, Jean-Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay became France's Administrator of Commerce. Gournay decided that bureaucracy was making government administrators apply inappropriate rules without regard for their consequences. To dramatize the issues, he coined the sarcastic term "bureaucratie" – government by desks. By the 1880s, many writers were expressing concern about bureaucratic autonomy and indifference. How could people make government more responsive to the populace? Complaints about bureaucracy escalated greatly in the early twentieth century as industrialization brought needs for social change and people saw that governments were restricting the possibilities for social change. Commentators wrote many books and articles about the harm that bureaucracies were inflicting on their societies.

A second prevalent theme during the late 1800s was justified outrage over the behavior of capitalists, as symbolized by Marx's cry for workers to rise up. Trade unions sprang up to consolidate workers' power, and capitalists retaliated with force. Amazingly, consultants intended many of their early redesigns of work to ameliorate the social strife that was arising because of the great differences in wealth in society. Some people thought that if they could make businesses more productive, there would be more wealth to share and therefore there would be fewer conflicts. Thus, one theme throughout the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was how people could mitigate social problems through better understanding of organizations. What would be alternative ways of doing things? There were many writings on this theme, not usually by professors, however, but by former business executives such as Henri Fayol, James Mooney and Chester Barnard, or consultants such as F. W. Taylor, Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick. Many writings on this theme conjectured that scientific research might enhance understanding. This hope drew the interest of such people as F. W. Taylor, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, Chester Barnard, Herbert Simon, and researchers at the Tavistock Institute.

By the 1950s, yet another theme was stirring public concern: the effects of large business firms on their societies. It appeared that large firms were impeding their employees' maturation, fracturing traditional family structures, and taking over welfare activities from national governments. These issues inspired books, movies and legislative debates. The study of organizations became a significant focus of doctoral students and prominent researchers in political science, psychology and sociology for a decade or more.

Thus, the study of management originated in attempts to solve real problems that existed in the real world. However, another trend deflected the attention of academic researchers away from social concerns and inward toward the cultures of academia. Starting in the 1950s, there was accelerating enthusiasm for college degrees in business. Enthusiasm was especially great for MBAs (Tarondeau, 2007). Between 1950 and 2000, the number of Americans graduating from undergraduate business programs multiplied more than seven times, and the number graduating from MBA programs multiplied more than 40 times. Money flowed into business schools, and business professors could do whatever they pleased, even if their work did not benefit other people or society in general. Professors could demand that students study what they taught, students could not receive their degrees until they did study what the professors taught and these requirements were independent of whether the teaching was relevant to the students' future occupations. As a result, generations of professors have not had to think about what they should contribute to the world outside academia.

Finance professors have often found interesting research problems in financial markets, but management professors, and especially organization theorists, have investigated topics that mainly hold academic interest. Research methodology has received much more respect than

the substance of findings. The most prevalent types of empiricism isolate observers from those observed and allow observers to maintain intellectual and emotional detachment. Subtopics have proliferated and derived their popularity from their intellectual attractions. Although the old social problems still exist and new ones have appeared, business students do not like to discuss the bad aspects of their future occupations. Few organization theorists have been trying to make organizations more productive, efficient or effective. Management fads – such as Japanese management, re-engineering, quality circles, the learning organization and outsourcing – have originated with managers and consultants. The prominent organization theorists have generally ignored long-run changes in organizations' characteristics that have been stimulated by technological and population changes such as rising educational levels, computerization, telecommunication capacities, or globalization of firms.

I believe professors have a responsibility to try to benefit their fellow humans. I was incredibly lucky with my choice of parents, who were smarter than the average and who lived in an area of the world where there is great wealth. I have never had to face starvation and I have lived in comparative luxury. However, one sixth of the people in the world are literally starving to death at this very moment, and another half of the people in the world have inadequate nutrition and no meaningful medical care; they are digging in the dirt with sticks or they are trying to catch rats or anything else for something to eat. I think it is immoral for someone in a state of great wealth to remain indifferent about this lack of equality across the world. No one has a solution for these inequalities, but great inequalities cause unhappiness, not only for the starving and malnourished, but for everybody. People are going to try to swim across the Straits of Gibraltar to get something to eat in Spain. People are going to attack their neighbors to usurp food or land or other resources. Today, there are about 60 armed conflicts going on around the world, and forecasts of increasing inequalities over the next 50 years imply that the armed conflicts will double. It is also very likely that global warming will make southern France, Italy and Spain look like the Sahara desert. The world therefore confronts many serious problems, and I hope some professors of business or social science will devote some of their time to searching for solutions. To be critical, cynical or reflective is not enough. There is good sense in a saying that may (or may not) be an ancient Chinese proverb: 'It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.'

SHOULD WE CONNECT MORE WITH PRACTICE?

BS: Let me describe one kind of academic research that could possibly help to solve some of the world's serious problems. I think humans need to give more power to large multinational corporations. Of course, I do not want to give more power to the kinds of corporations that exist today. Corporations as they exist today are exploitative, sociopathic, predatory organizations. I could write at length about corporations'

harmful properties.

However, large multinational corporations are also the most effective social instruments humans build. They are an interesting combination of democracy and hierarchy. They focus their goals in a remarkable way; they are able to reduce complex problems to simple goal functions. Hierarchy and goal simplification enable them to act with speed. Quick action allows them to find opportunities amid threatening situations. Global corporations think globally, not locally, and they span national borders. Corporations thrive on affluent populations. They need middle-class suppliers and customers, so they support the growth of middle classes. They use markets and legal proceedings to settle disputes among themselves, so they rarely bog down in chronic jurisdictional disputes. Under supportive market and legal conditions, corporations pursue long-run goals and economic stability.

Much of what goes wrong with corporations goes wrong because they involve human beings and many human beings are venal, nasty creatures. However, these nasty creatures work in governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as in corporations. Governments, NGOs and corporations all exhibit venality and corruption, and all of them produce benefits and harm. NGOs are not solving the world's problems, not even denting them, because NGOs are too busy running after money. A tsunami strikes Indonesia so most of the NGOs announce efforts to help Indonesia, Malaysia and India. They remain there only as long as the money flows for that purpose, however. As soon as that money flow begins to dry up they rush off to another crisis somewhere else. Governments are not solving the world's problems, not even denting them, because they are focused almost entirely on what is happening inside of their borders. Governments have been ineffective with global distributional issues because their resources originate entirely within their borders, and their control is much greater inside their borders. Thus, they do not really care what happens outside their borders if they can ignore it. Democracies, especially, focus on short-run outcomes, and government officials have told me that they think this short-run time horizon is contracting. Governments find power differences troubling because of their fictional equality and reluctance to yield to international courts. National identities have been a major cause of armed conflicts. Many governments have inflicted great harm on their own citizens.

I believe that humanity needs to create a "basket-weave society" that uses corporations to counteract the undesirable characteristics of governments and NGOs, and uses governments to counteract the undesirable characteristics of corporations. I call this a "basket-weave" society because governments and corporations would work at cross-purposes to each other, and thus each would moderate the undesirable properties of the other. Because national or regional governments attend mainly to local issues, people need to use large corporations to address issues that extend across national boundaries. Some large corporations have been changing in this direction, in that globalizing corporations have been losing their national identities. Globalizing corporations acquire senior executives from many countries, employees

in many countries, customers in many countries, and suppliers in many countries. More and more of these globalizing corporations have been saying 'we are not American businesses' or 'we are not French businesses.' Although this change has been gradual, it has been going consistently in one direction – toward corporations that see themselves as citizens of the entire world.

The challenges facing the world are very serious and they have proven intractable. Governments and NGOs have been ineffective with global and distributional issues. To meet these challenges, people need more powerful tools than they have been using. Corporations are the most powerful instruments people have invented. If people are to create a better world, business leadership is going to be essential. Business has a history of finding opportunities in threatening situations. Globalization is an example. Financial instruments such as insurance policies and hedging to stabilize materials costs are also examples. However, a central issue is whether people can modify corporations to make them more beneficial without rendering them feeble. What should a corporation be? How should it operate?

Existing concepts about corporations show the strong influence of two arguments. The first of these arguments began as academic theorizing by German sociologists in the late 1800s, who used the analogy that a house is more than the total of the bricks that compose it (Starbuck and Baumard, 2009). Later, Gierke (1868-1913) argued that each corporation has a distinct personality; this idea won supporters first in Germany, then in France and Italy, and around 1900, in Britain and the United States. Before long, in Europe and North America, social scientists and legal scholars developed a consensus that a corporation is a distinct person, something that exists apart from its owners or its employees or whatever, and legal decisions about corporations began to use singular pronouns and verbs, implying that a corporation was a united entity. This reasoning eventually led courts to rule that a corporation is a legal person that has eternal life and that only has to answer to itself for what it does (Lamoreaux, 2004). What an amazing set of thoughts!

Lawyers constructed the second argument without significant academic influence, through a series of American court decisions about acquisitions. Judges ruled that executives' plans for future accomplishments have little long-term value in comparison with cash here and now, and that executives may have better judgments about what is good for shareholders than do shareholders themselves. These rulings not only made acquisitions much easier, thus promoting corporate growth, they made corporations more hierarchical and they greatly increased corporations' emphasis on short-run profits versus long-run profits.

I urge academics to get to work rethinking how people can and should redesign corporations so that they do more good and less harm to humanity and the environment. Obviously, academics cannot accomplish significant changes by themselves. However, academic thinking and debate strongly influenced the current properties of corporations and academics can exert influence on corporations' future properties. Moreover, it is far from obvious what properties corporations ought to have, and changes might have undesirable consequences. Academics

are well suited to debate the many pros and cons and to weigh the contingencies. Can people turn corporations into exemplary citizens of the world? Of course not. Wily managers will counteract or circumvent whatever changes people attempt. At best, people can keep trying, keep making changes, keep looking for problems and trying to correct them.

SC: Utopianism never goes out of fashion but again the cynic and the realist in me is not convinced. Marx, in *Capital*, referred to Saint Simon as the chief cookbook writer and recipe maker of the bourgeoisie's Utopian solutions. Such remarks are not directed at Bill, but I do think that we have to be realistic in our grasp of the structures of domination and subordination that exist globally, nationally corporately and in terms of citizenship. As for corporations being democracies, I find that a stunning statement. It seems to me that in most business organisations of my acquaintance, we, as citizens of democracies, do not have those kinds of democratic rights that we might expect in the polity; we surrender our rights and our abilities to control our self and time. All of this is surrendered to the capital that employs us and, although I am not a Marxist, I do not think you can go past that fundamental point. The corporation is not a democracy; organisations and corporate firms are not democracies. They have a very tight focus, they are able to be extraordinarily goal-oriented and they can move very fast, but they do so in terms of very narrow calculations of an interest which can always be reduced to a bottom line. Other organisations such as NGOs or governments have to work with a logic that is far more complex. They have to balance the life chances, the citizenship rights, the health and welfare, the ecology and demography of all member populations that cannot be reduced to a single calculable device. And it is the ability of the corporation to be able to do that which renders it so harmful because virtually anything can be justified in terms of the movement of the bottom line. I am sorry to have to write this, but I think it outrageously Utopian and unrealistic to imagine that a few intellectuals sitting around in business schools should cook up recipes and that anybody should take the recipes very seriously.

Most managers' concerns are multiple, rapidly shifting and immediate, if research such as Mintzberg's is to be believed. It is hard to be tightly coupled to a management agenda and do seriously scholarly work. Many of management's concerns are extremely faddish, driven by the consulting industry. They come and they go and they are hardly the basis for a sustained scholarly career. Scholarly careers are not managerial careers. We are working in a quite different institutional field, where the rituals and markers are very different. Publishing in the journals is our source of prestige and advancement. Few people read most of what we write. Very few managers do, outside of digests, extracts and one or two popular magazines. On balance, it hardly matters what we write; it is a ritual that only people like us attend to and, as an institutionalised ritual, the main thing to notice is how deeply uncoupled most journal publications are from the practical concerns of management. Would it be better if they were more tightly coupled? I doubt it. The degrees of irrelevancy would probably be pretty similar but for different reasons: yesterday's

fads provoking tomorrow's research publications; an inability to render institutional translation very effectively in most cases, and an almost complete lack of alignment between interest and reward systems.

HOW COULD WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

SC: I should like to see most of the neo-classicists fade away and more political and comparative economists hired who know about history and specific business systems. I would like to see CMS thinking that is not hung up on what is but on what might be, seeking to develop more democratic, responsive and participative models, with a little more realism and maybe less obtuseness in them. I should like to see more engagement in policy work. If we want to speak truth to power this is the best place to do it. Maybe we should be seeking new questions for new times. We may simply return to 'business as usual', and given all the forces of institutional inertia, I think this most probable. I suspect that new ideas are busy being born right now but maybe in places and languages, perhaps even publishing venues, which most people would not recognise.

I probably do not share Bill's view of the past; I do not see the early founders of what is constituted as management as a discipline as noble social reformers. To me they were very explicit social engineers working in very explicit class and business interests. I do not have any problem saying that about the founding fathers or any of that early generation. I do agree that as a result of the Carnegie and Ford Commission enquiries in the United States in the 1950s a very different conception of what business education should be developed. This new conception was very different from the previous one, and one result of that was to institutionalise new sets of language games embedded in institutionally opposed logics. Young people recruited into research careers in business schools learn these games very quickly, through lots of training in the United States, and less training in Europe and Australasia, but still some training. And the name of the game is getting published in top-tier journals and how you get published in top-tier journals is through the quality of your methodology, the quality of your research questions, and the quality of your theoretical contribution. These are increasingly prescribed in narrowing terms embedded within the institutional formation of particular theoretical approaches.

We have a recursive relationship with practice at best. I work closely with a colleague conducting research with a major public-sector provider in Sydney, New South Wales known as Sydney Water. Sydney Water manages all the water resources in the Sydney Basin for a population of nearly five million people. We have written a number of papers on our research with Sydney Water and circulated them to people involved in leadership roles. At first, they have scratched their heads, and come back to us saying something like "We don't really understand all this stuff about the future perfect, all these concepts." Strangely enough, however, after a few months we find that when we went back and had discussions in meetings they were actually using the terms we had used to make sense of their sense – to make their own sense. That is the

kind of relationship, at best, that I think we have as researchers. We are engaged in an essentially recursive relationship. That is the nature of social science. To the extent that we make good sense, that good sense will be picked up. One of the reasons why sociology is common sense is because so much of common sense has been constituted by sociology over the years. I think this is the kind of relationship that we can probably look to. It is small and local; in terms of organisations, it remains fairly circumscribed. But to the extent that we publish, it maybe gets picked up for teaching on a global basis, and it may make a small impact. I think it is very difficult to do anything other than that, but a small and incremental impact is better than making no impact whatsoever and not being noticed.

You might call me cynical, but I do not think that a survey of managers' concerns will show up the fact that there is concern for people who live in shanty towns surrounded by a sub-contractor's factory in the Philippines or in Indonesia or Malaysia or wherever, people who are eating rats for breakfast. I do not think that this is going to be an issue for those at a great physical, psychological and emotional distance from these experiences.

My experience of dealing with managers and business executives is two-fold. When one is able to gain access to the very top people then worthwhile, interesting, engaging and reflective conversations can be had. Indeed, I had one friend who used to run Shell and founded Celltec in the UK, Gerard Fairtlough (1994; 2007), who I think is probably one of the most impressive organisation theorists I ever met, because he not only wrote really good books about organisations but he had actually run major billion-dollar organisations for a very long time. And in doing so he read authors such as Habermas and Clegg and applied what he read to the way that he did his business. I think, however, that Gerard was very much an exception. Once one comes lower down the hierarchical order of managers, most of them want to know what your value proposition is within the first few minutes of your speaking to them. I usually say that I do not have one because it would be false to argue otherwise. I think the presupposition that somehow there should be a necessary and close engagement between what professors of management and researchers do in business schools and what actually happens in organisations more generally is probably a false premise from which to start. I mean if one goes into architectural schools, most of what gets designed represents buildings that are never built. But imagination and design thinking is unleashed.

BS: Again, I repeat my belief that not everybody ought to be doing the same thing. However, no one should ignore the lack of connection between what happens in research in business schools and what happens in the real world. For example, back in the 1980s, professors tried to study business strategies by analyzing companies' letters to stockholders in their annual reports. Some researchers published very elegant analyses of such letters. Indeed, a colleague spent a year studying semiotics so that she could better analyze the letters to stockholders. Another colleague tried to publish an article showing that let-

ters to stockholders issued by companies that later went bankrupt are very like the letters issued by companies that continued to be successful. This man was never able to publish his analyses in management journals because, I suspect, his study showed that lots of published research was nonsense. Nevertheless, many researchers did eventually come to realize that companies hire public relations flacks to write their annual reports. A letter to stockholders from a company going bankrupt strongly resembles one from a successful company because the same PR firm, which knows little about either company, wrote both letters.

Another example of academic disconnect from reality is a doctoral student who spent many months preparing a long questionnaire under the supervision of three very well known professors. With the support of his professors, he mailed this questionnaire to the CEOs of the 500 largest corporations in the world. He received only 15 responses, – a response rate of 3%, whereupon he dropped out of the doctoral program. One has to wonder why he and his faculty supervisors were surprised, and why as many as 15 secretaries bothered to answer his questionnaire! Much research is done by professors, doctoral students and Master's students who have no connections with or experience in the world outside their universities. They draw data from databases. They base questionnaires on social science theories and send them to inappropriate respondents who make biased responses. They get extremely bad data that they subject to complex statistical calculations or linguistic analyses. However, their analyses cannot overcome the irrelevance of their questions or the poor quality of their data. Therefore, it would be useful for more management professors to engage more directly with managers or other workers; certainly not all management professors, but some management professors. They should find out what kinds of problems organizations are actually having, and they should ask people who are familiar with the studied organizations to help them to formulate appropriate questions and to help them make realistic interpretations of their findings.

The Marketing Science Institute has been very successful in fostering research that deals with real issues. Every two years, this Institute asks marketing managers in 70 companies what issues they advise researchers to study. The Institute then sends this list of issues to 2000 marketing professors around the world, saying 'if you are interested in studying these issues, we will try to facilitate your studies'. When the Institute sponsors studies, companies' personnel help the researchers figure out how to ask their questions in an intelligent way in their particular companies. Then, after the results are in, the Institute holds seminars in which researchers talk with marketing managers, not only from companies they have studied but from other companies as well, to debate whether the findings are widely valid and whether the researchers' interpretations make sense. Ultimately, these studies lead to publications in marketing journals. In fact, studies sponsored by the Institute have comprised 60% of the articles in the two leading marketing journals. Each year, editors of these journals make four awards for outstanding articles, and over a recent ten-year period, a study sponsored by the Institute won every one of the 40 awards. The studies

won because they had asked better questions, had better support for getting valid data, and had made better interpretations of their findings. The Institute's contributions may be small and incremental, but marketing professors have been judging them to be among the best and the most important increments. The Marketing Science Institute mainly contributes by reminding professors that some companies will actually help them with advice and good data. Why would companies do that? Well, some managers have intellectual interests and they enjoy being involved in research as designers or as analysts. However, managers have to justify the support of research in terms of benefit to their companies. Many managers consider discussions with researchers to be a form of "executive development" that justifies their support of research.

Academic researchers can cooperate with managers, to the benefit of both, because the researchers and managers are pursuing different agendas. What is required to make such cooperation work is the imagination needed to figure out how you can achieve your goals while not interfering with the goals of your collaborators. For example, I am interested in the errors in peoples' perceptions, I want to know how accurately or inaccurately people perceive their worlds. I do not really care whether the people are politicians or farmers or shoemakers, but my association with a business school makes it more logical to study business managers. A colleague and I tried to study the accuracy of the perceptions of participants in two executive MBA programs, and we were dissatisfied with the validity of those data. Therefore, I contacted an executive in one of the world's largest companies and described our interests. The executive said they might be willing to help us, but they were not interested in our subject. I asked what issues interested them most, and the executive said they were focusing on improving the quality of their products. I asked him if they would let us study their managers' perceptions of the quality of their products, and he agreed to let us do so. Indeed, he asked the company's quality-improvement personnel to help us design a meaningful study. It made no difference to us whether we studied the quality of their products or some other aspect of their business. We were not interested in product quality, but in perceptual accuracy. They had no fundamental interest in their managers' perceptual accuracy as such, although they could see that perceptual accuracy might affect the company's ability to improve the quality of their products. We could reconcile our interests mainly because we were pursuing unrelated goals. A year later, the difference between academic researchers and managers became problematic. We had wanted to observe perceptual accuracy for three consecutive years, to see whether accuracy improved with experience. When we returned to the company seeking more data, our liaison explained that the corporate headquarters was no longer engaged in the quality-improvement program.

In general, managers are interested in short-term, immediate issues bearing on practical problems, whereas academic researchers are interested in topics that have long-term value for understanding fundamental questions. Academics can study fundamental questions in a great variety of specific circumstances, and practical problems usu-

ally involve a great diversity of phenomena that relate to fundamental questions. I believe cooperation can happen on a very high frequency if researchers make the effort to think creatively about how to satisfy unrelated interests.

HOW SHOULD WE CONDUCT RESEARCH TO IMPROVE ITS IMPACT AND CONTRIBUTION ON SOCIETY?

BS: I would change many, many elements of academic research – the list is much too long to discuss all of it in a single article. In 2006, I published a book about how researchers can improve the production of knowledge (Starbuck, 2006). The book is partly a cry of protest, partly an advocacy for reform, and partly an expression of hope for better methods in the future. The protest asserts that many of the research tactics in widespread use are not actually helping humans to understand themselves and their environments. The advocacy argues that there is also reason to believe that some alternative research tactics have demonstrated their value. The hope arises from conviction that social scientists would like to conduct research more effectively and awareness that many social scientists are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs.

Researchers generally do what serves them personally in preference to what promotes the creation of reliable knowledge. They disagree about the existence and nature of knowledge, so they focus on producing articles and books rather than knowledge. Research practices preserve uncertainty about what is known so there is never closure, never an end to ambiguity. Ambiguity allows all researchers to claim to have made discoveries, so researchers perceive themselves as having infinite potential productivity; they see no serious challenges to their genius. Research reflects the characteristics of human bodies and social systems, and it typically reveals more about the researchers themselves and their assumptions than about the topics they study. The general effect is to make research a pretence rather than a source of genuine contributions to knowledge.

If social-science research would set higher standards for the dependability of findings, it would bring more value for society and greater respect to researchers themselves. The last half of my book proposes research tactics to improve research results. Although these tactics would certainly not solve all problems, they can weed out noise and foster more robust knowledge that depends less strongly on who did the research. In particular, researchers should challenge their own thinking by disrupting their preconceptions. There are various mental games that researchers can play with themselves in order to become more aware of their preconceptions and to discover alternatives to them. Researchers should also try to demonstrate the validity of their knowledge by observing natural experiments and by displacing studied situations from equilibrium. The statistical methods that currently receive the most use are very prone to mistake random errors for meaningful findings while also overlooking substantively important observations. Research-

ers who use statistical methods should emphasize the production of dependable, robust estimation methods (Schwab and Starbuck, 2009). Finally, researchers should strive to create consensus about what they know. Before knowledge can accumulate, people must agree that they want knowledge to accumulate. Such agreement confronts barriers such as vested interests and widespread practices.

For example, researchers can often learn more valid knowledge about organizations by involving themselves in intentional efforts to change organizations – by engaging in organization design (Dunbar and Starbuck, 2006; Dunbar, Romme, and Starbuck, 2008). Presumably, people want to change things for the better, but people also have different ideas about what would be “better”. One reason to participate in design is to incorporate the diversity of humans’ goals into our understanding of organizations. A more important reason is to develop theories that are more useful. Theories will not improve as long as there are only weak incentives to discriminate between better theories and worse ones. I predict that research will never be able to offer useful insights unless researchers actually test the usefulness of their ideas through prediction or application.

Management textbooks present typologies of organizational structures and coordinating mechanisms; they describe or prescribe how organizations do or should reflect their environments, goals, sizes, and national cultures; and they say organizations should constantly adjust to changes in such factors. Thus, management courses create a misleading impression that design is a central concern for management scholars and that scholars study principles of organization design. However, from a design perspective, organization theory has been preaching the same theories for decades. The theories in textbooks derive from research conducted before 1980, much of which relied on questionable data about the kinds of organizations that dominated the early and mid twentieth century. However, recent research is unlikely to help people to make organizations better. Textbooks are still repeating old ideas because organizational researchers stopped studying individual organizations and focused instead on networks or populations of organizations. Population-level research does not speak to the capabilities of managers. Although many managers can influence events inside a single organization, very few managers can influence evolutionary changes across populations of firms.

Furthermore, a great preponderance of research examines what *is* rather than what *could be*. Researchers accept the world as they find it rather than investigating how the world reacts when someone tries to influence it. Researchers make passive analyses of retrospective data. To invent a theory that explains what has already taken place is much easier than to invent a theory that predicts what will take place. Researchers who propose retrospective theories know what phenomena their theories must explain, so all serious proposals are consistent with the prominent stylized facts. Tests of such theories do not really challenge the validity of understanding. A first step toward improvement is to attempt to use theories to make short-range predictions. However, the world is sufficiently dynamic that people should not expect to be

able to predict very far into the future. A second step toward improvement is to attempt to steer development toward desired outcomes. Since participants in organizations have their own ideas about what is desirable and what they want to do, organization designers have to be prepared to advocate on behalf of their theories, and to retreat and reformulate when their theories turn out to be inaccurate.

The designing of organizations has to be largely a process of discovery because people cannot base effective designs solely on prior knowledge. Organization theorists ought to be skeptical about what they think they know because so much of their purported "knowledge" is unreliable. In addition, the apparent problems in organizations are not what they seem to be. The participants in organizations present facades that mask many issues (Nystrom and Starbuck, 2006), so would-be designers have to discover the real problems. Of course, researchers who participate in design have to cede control to organizations' members, which introduces quite a bit of uncertainty into their efforts. Lastly, many organizational problems exist because logical analysis and common sense have failed. That is, people in the organizations have seen the problems and have attempted to solve them, but the problems persist nevertheless. An implication is that would-be designers may discover that these problems resist their own solution efforts.

Although researchers can improve their methodology, a fundamental barrier obstructs the path toward consistently useful research: researchers themselves do not agree about the quality of their work (Starbuck, 2003; Starbuck, 2005). A large majority of social and behavioral researchers describe excellent research similarly when they describe abstract properties, but they agree only weakly when they evaluate specific reports of research. The judgments of two evaluators correlate between 0.09 and 0.27, the average being only 0.18. Furthermore, researchers' estimates about the future impacts of unpublished manuscripts correlate only 0.14 with later citations to the published articles (Gottfredson, 1978). Indeed, researchers' ratings of future impact correlate only 0.03 with the later citations for most articles. Evaluators of research also infuse their judgments about methodology with their personal biases. They criticize the methodological defects of studies that contradict their preferred beliefs, and they applaud the credible and reliable methodology of studies that support their preferred beliefs. Knowledge is socially constructed and socially owned. For knowledge to exist, many people must agree with each other about its existence. As long as researchers cannot agree about what effective research looks like, they will remain unable to evaluate their findings meaningfully and reliably.

SC: I think we should be sceptical and reflective in the way we do our own research. There are great precursors available for researchers to emulate: in no particular order, I particularly favour Weber, Bauman, Foucault, Flyvbjerg, Goffman, Weick, March, and Douglas. What these disparate people have in common, I think, is that they are all really good writers; they argue, largely through theory building, narrative and cases. Not all are "management" or "organisation" theorists, but that is hardly surprising, as I do not consider myself to have only such an identity. I

may work in a business faculty but have not always: I have worked in an inter-disciplinary Humanities Faculty, been a Professor of Sociology, as well as more recently a Professor of Organisation Studies and, latterly, of Management. Throughout these appointments I have tried consistently to practise a sociologically, theoretically and philosophically informed social science.

My view is that we live as storytellers, and that stories are the most translatable form of practice for academics to communicate with all those others who are not academics with whom they interact. What others do with the stories – the theories, ethnographies, and histories that we produce - is their business, with which we may help them or not. Of course, we should be interested, but we cannot control what is done with knowledge or where it goes.

Increasingly, there are pleas to bring together practitioners and academics in order to develop knowledge that can be applied (Schön, 1992; Bate, 2007; van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Design sciences have managed to keep descriptive and prescriptive knowledge related to each other. Bate and Robert's (2007) see four lessons of design sciences: first, to include the user of the organisation's products and services in the development of the organisation; second, to address simultaneously all three issues of performance, engineering and aesthetics/experience; third, to create new diagnostic and intervention methods and approaches, and fourth, to show how and where energy can be applied to bring about and sustain change.

Practitioners in the field of design sciences, including, among others, architecture and engineering, focus on prototyping and action and, while solution-centered, also encourage exploration (Coughlan *et al*, 2007:127; Trullén and Bartunek, 2007). Design approaches are based not just on analysis but also joint problem-solving with all communities of users – not just powerful clients; design thinking entails experimentation as well as intervention in unique contexts, where the goals sought are widely negotiated with a wide array of users and stakeholders in addition to sponsors and paymasters (Trullén and Bartunek, 2007: 27).

Design at its best is not a linear and Cartesian process. Design involves a process of conversation, feedback, reconfiguration, and reflections shared during implementation, in which reflexivity takes constantly evolving material form (Weick 1999; Alvesson and Skalborg 2000). It entails fusing expert with local knowledge. It uses ethnographic methods in order to enable strategic action. A good example of such work in the social sciences is the empirical project-related work of Bent Flyvbjerg (1998). *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice* is a detailed case study of planning intended to limit the use of cars in the city centre of the city of Aalborg in Denmark. Soon after the initiation of the project under study, several agencies, trade unions, police, local and national consultants, members of the business community, private corporations, media entities, and interested citizens, all became entangled over issues of traffic management related to a new bus-traffic system. A task force was established to formulate a three-year plan. The first conflict arose between architects and the bus company over the location and

size of a bus terminal. Originally just a minor disagreement, the discussion turned into embittered conflict and division among the main players. There was a public hearing and the production of a counter-plan by the Aalborg Chamber of Industry and Commerce, which produced a revised plan that was approved in 1980.

Small-business people with retail outlets in the planning precinct grew increasingly dissatisfied with the original urban renewal plan. Without a constant stream of cars coming into the city centre they feared they would lose business. They succeeded in halving the original plan to construct the bus terminal. The Environmental Protection Agency then began to question the environmental hazards and impact of the proposed bus terminal, while another source of local conflict concerned a sub-plan designed to try and maintain the authentic charms of the old shopping streets. The Town Council forbade all non-retail businesses (banks, insurance companies, and offices) from occupying ground-floor premises, to try and preserve the street's character. However, non-retail business leaders were also present in the local Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and they agitated against this plan. In its first four years the Aalborg Plan underwent six rounds of reconstruction and modification. Although the overall plan was never actually rejected, specific projects became more and more minute, as well as more problematic in content and scope, generating further subordinate and specific episodes of power between local factions: cyclists and planners, planners and small-business people, motorists and public transport, and so on. Unexpected and unanticipated environmental contingencies had an impact on the project. These included the jailing of the mayor and several high-level local officials on bribery charges. This challenged the overall legitimacy of the urban renewal plan. By this time the original plan had undergone its 11th revision. The Chamber of Industry and Commerce reversed its original stance and began arguing that redirecting traffic would hurt businesses by causing falling revenues. However, the city council survey rejected this fear by revealing that retail profits were increasing. Meanwhile, new Social Democratic politicians came on the scene, deciding to bolster the urban renewal project by emphasising positive aspects of the original plan adopted a decade earlier, which led the Aalborg Project into a total impasse. The outcomes were not what any factions wanted: instead of reducing car traffic, it increased by eight percent; instead of creating an integrated system of bicycle paths, unconnected stretches were built; instead of reducing traffic accidents, the number of fatalities and injuries among cyclists increased 40%; instead of reducing noise, the levels substantially exceeded Danish and international norms, and air pollution increased.

Flyvbjerg's (1998) main theme is that power shapes rationality. At various stages in the project the various political actors sought to steer the project through their preferences and to structure obligatory passage points. Different claims were made for participation in different committees; differential participation produced different outcomes at different times, favouring different preferences. Small battles were fought over who, and what, could be introduced in which arenas and meetings. In this way the relations of meaning and membership in the various

locales were contested, reproduced or transformed. As these changed then the obligatory passage points shifted; as these shifted the relations of power that had prevailed shifted also, most dramatically when the mayor and officials were indicted and imprisoned. Thus, small wins in specific episodes of power had the capacity to shift the configuration of the overall circuitry through which power relations flowed. The actors engaged in the plans were constantly seeking to fix and re-fix specific schemes, and although the play of power was very fluid, the underlying social integration of the small business people with each other, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the editorial views of the local newspaper, seemed to mean that the small-business people were the prevailing winners in the many struggles. The attempts to re-specify the system integration of the traffic plan in Aalborg consistently foundered on the reef of social integration. How Aalborg was planned, designed and looked, as well as how it was not planned, not designed and did not look, was an effect of power relations.

Flyvbjerg (1998) alerts us to one very important fact of power relations and rationalities: that when power and knowledge are entwined then the greater the power the less the need for rationality, in the sense of rational means-end justifications. The relation between rationality and power was an uneven relation: power clearly dominated rationality. That is, those who presently configured power sought to continue doing so and were quite ready to define the reality of the project in any way that seemed to them to further their preferences, using whatever strategies and tactics were available to them. In this sense, what was defined as rationality and reality was an effect of power, as it defined and created 'concrete physical, economic, ecological, and social realities' (Flyvbjerg 1998: 227). What was advanced and argued as rationality depended wholly on power relations; the more disadvantaged in these the agents were, the more they were liable to have recourse to conceptions of rationality that downplayed power, and sought to position themselves through factual, objective, reasoned knowledge. The most powerful rationalities took the form of rationalizations rather than authoritatively grounded accounts. Often these were public performances of rationality which other agents who were witness to the rationalizations felt compelled not to reveal because they lacked the powers to do so; they anticipated and feared the reaction that their actions would in all probability produce; should they move, dangers lurked in open conflict and identification of differences.

The greater the facility with which agencies could have recourse to power relations, the less concerned they were with reason, and the less they were held accountable to it. Access to more power produced less reason. In Aalborg, what was most typical was the constant attention to the small things of power relations that continually reproduced the status quo; rather than attempts at transformation, it was largely reproduction that prevailed. The most skilled strategists of power were those for whom reproduction was their preferred strategy; in the case of Aalborg, this was the small-business community, whose institutionalised voice was much more actively represented to governmental rationality than that of the various citizen groups such as the cyclists, greens

and so on. In turn, these relations were embedded in deeply held local loyalties and relations. When, in openly antagonistic settings, these relations came up against contra-points of view that were well researched and represented in rational terms, power-to-power relations dominated over those defined in terms of knowledge or rationality against power. Mostly, power relations were both stable and inequitable. Where power relations could be maintained as stable and characterized by consensus and negotiations, rationality could gain a greater toehold; the more power relations became antagonistic, the easier it was to deploy arguments and strategies that elided it. Thus, rationality must remain within the existing circuits of power if it is to influence them. To challenge them is to play a losing hand.

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO CHANGE IN THE WAY WE TEACH?

SC: I think the fundamental thing we can do is to try and dispel technicist, rationalist myths about organisations and their management (see Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis 2008). We can try and make our social science matter by being engaged (Flyvbjerg 2003). The average management textbook produces a kind of neutered, technicist fantasy world. I call it science fiction; it is actually more fiction than science. Students with some experience of organisations are well aware that they are not at all like the technically ideal and politically neutral representations that many textbooks and models provide. The first thing we need, therefore, is a strong dose of realism in what we write about organisations. We can try and produce students who become less cynical about what we tell them because we tell the things that are more realist in their presuppositions and analysis; thus, second, we should try to produce students more critical and reflective about the world in which they work and whose cynicism, criticism and reflection can be engaged with some purpose in the organisations in which they work. This is lighting a small candle, I suppose, in Bill's view of the world. That seems to be a fairly modest thing to do. I am all for modest projects. It is certainly within our powers as educators to be able to do some of those things. It is not going to change the world in a revolutionary way, but there again, I do not think that most of the things that have been designed to revolutionise the world have done so in ways that are acceptable, ethically and humanely.

Small contributions come from engaging with students and unsettling assumptions that they might have that being educated will furnish them with a set of tools that they can walk away and use in a technically disinterested way. The tool view is erroneous. We should not just produce a situation in which they are dissatisfied with us because they have not got what they want out of it but should engage with them so that they begin to ask perceptive questions about the experience of learning, questions which have to do with interpreting and understanding the complexity and difficulty of organisations, their affairs, management

and their change. We need to get them engaged in projects which make sense to them in terms of who they are and where they work, which make practical reality come alive for them; if you can do those things, then (a) you produce a degree of cynicism towards the superficial tools and techniques approach which you get from consultants and too many colleagues from business schools; (b) you make students more critical about the nature of the realities with which they live and (c) you hopefully make them more reflective. I am unsure whether that will produce anything other than a lot of disillusioned philosophers and frustrated artists who would rather be anywhere than turning up to the hell that is the corporation that they work for, but the world would not be greatly damaged by more philosophers and artists, and it's certainly been damaged by the corporation. We have seen enough damage to last us a lifetime over the last 18 months or so.

BS: After living in seven nations, I have observed a difference in the degree to which their universities try to contribute to the welfare of their societies. In some nations, like Sweden, professors try to contribute to the national economic and social welfare. I shall not name a specific nation as a bad example, but I have lived among professors who see themselves as intellectuals who are separate from the general society and who have very few responsibilities towards their societies beyond pursuing their own specialized interests. In nations where professors try to contribute, they are more cherished by their neighbors, they are paid better, and they get more respect. Conversely, in nations where professors stand further apart from societal events, they receive much lower wages and their neighbors do not view them as important people.

These differences link partly to the kinds of economies that nations have. For example, to maintain a high hourly wage for workers, nations must minimize industries where the hourly wage is low. The Swedish economy emphasizes industries based on engineering and the arts, and the populace has a very high-income level. Other nations have economies that do not depend strongly on knowledge-based industries – they farm, they mine ores, they chop down trees – activities that draw little benefit from university education. These nations do little manufacturing, and big international corporations do not place headquarters there. Although such nations may have high hourly wages, they attain these by exploiting natural resources – with many acres of land for each farmer or each logger, with mines that process large amounts of ore. Their ratios of physical capital to labor are very high and the educational input to their economies is very low.

One very interesting book is “The Teaching-Learning Paradox” by Dubin and Taveggia (1968). Most of this book reviews research about the effectiveness of different teaching methods, after which the authors conclude that no method is consistently better than others are. Dubin and Taveggia say any method can meet students' needs well. However, then they observe that there has been a small amount of research on the effects of students' desire to learn and this research is unequivocal: It shows that students who truly want to learn are more

likely to learn than those who merely sit in classes without wanting to learn. This observation fits my experience: students who want to learn are much more likely to do so than students who do not.

Most of the MBA students in my classes were uninterested in the subject matter I was supposed to teach. This might be a peculiarity of business education in New York City, but my MBA students were mainly interested in getting jobs as accountants or financial analysts or possibly marketing specialists. They saw the study of management as a degree requirement, not as a subject worth knowing. Of course, I tried to persuade the students that knowledge of management would prove useful to them. Sometimes, a few years after they graduated, some of these former students figured out that human behavior matters.

The most interesting course I have taught was a course for executive MBAs about organization design (Barnett, 2007). It provided a great way for learning by mature people in responsible jobs. These were students in their late 30s or early 40s who had completed a year of courses in organizational behavior and organization theory. The executive students were very involved in the learning because they were trying to use ideas from the course in real organizations. The course sought to teach only a few concepts, but the students tried to apply those few concepts and they got a clear understanding of what these concepts meant in practice. In particular, the knowledge needed to alter the world includes knowledge about how to identify problems, how to persuade other people to do things, and how to find out whether a proposed solution is producing desirable results. As Paul Nystrom and I taught this course, the executive students tried to solve real-life management problems. Working individually, in twos, or in threes, they tried to identify problems, proposed solutions, attempted to put those solutions into effect, and observed the results. To make the course more interesting, Paul and I asked that the problems be ones that someone had previously tried and failed to solve, although not all of the students found such persistent problems. One of the most prevalent results was the students' discovering that the problems they had thought they were trying to solve were not the core problems. As a result of misdiagnosis, their first efforts to solve problems either worked poorly or made situations worse because the situations were not what they had appeared to be. Efforts to produce changes forced unlearning, and the students discovered the importance of iteration. I learned much from teaching this course. Over 10 years, I watched about 150 efforts to solve very diverse problems. Perhaps once a year, students came up with some incredibly simple solutions for recalcitrant problems, solutions that dazzled me with their dramatic and profound effects. Such solutions are not in textbooks. One of the most useful readings was a book by and for psychiatrists (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

Unfortunately, it is impossible to produce a course that deals with real-life problems in a realistic way for most MBA students. The executive MBA students in this course had jobs with significant responsibilities and high-enough statuses to be able to propose changes in their organizations. At some business schools, the so-called executive MBA

students are merely people with somewhat more job experience and somewhat larger budgets for tuition. Few of these would be able to tackle problems that would have meaning beyond their immediate colleagues. When I later attempted to offer a similar project course to ordinary full-time MBA students, only two students signed up. Why? Few full-time MBA students are sufficiently involved in organizations that they can see real problems that they can bring into classrooms. For many MBA students, working in an organization is an abstract concept with no concrete reality. In addition, change agents can make more meaningful changes if they have responsible positions in the organization.

As a result, I wonder how management education could be distributed over more years, so that management professors do not have to force-feed human-behavior content to students who have little interest in it (Tarondeau, 2007). Students who want to become stock analysts should not have to study leadership or organization theory if these topics do not interest them. Instead, they should have opportunities to study these topics later in their careers when they begin to supervise other people. A corollary implication would be that career-oriented curricula such as MBA programs should distribute their courses over long periods – a decade or longer – by maintaining long-term relationships either with individual students or with employing organizations.

William H. Starbuck is professor-in-residence at University of Oregon and professor emeritus at New York University. He has held faculty positions in economics, sociology, or management at Purdue University, Johns Hopkins University, Cornell University, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and New York University, as well as visiting positions in England, France, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. He was also senior research fellow at the International Institute of Management in Berlin. He edited *Administrative Science Quarterly*, chaired the screening committee for Fulbright awards in business management, directed the doctoral program in business administration at New York University, and was President of the Academy of Management. He has published over 150 articles on accounting, bargaining, business strategy, computer programming, computer simulation, forecasting, decision making, human-computer interaction, learning, organizational design, organizational growth and development, perception, scientific methods, and social revolutions. He has also authored two books and edited seventeen books. His latest book, *The Production of Knowledge*, reflects on lessons from his own academic journey and on the challenges associated with management and social science research.

Stewart Clegg is Research Professor and Director of the Centre for Management and Organization Studies Research at the University of Technology, Sydney and he is also a Visiting Professor at Copenhagen Business School and EM-Lyon. A prolific publisher in leading academic journals in social science, management and organization theory, he is also the author and editor of many books, including the following Sage volumes: *Handbook of Power* (with Mark Haugaard 2009), *Handbook of Macro-Organization Behaviour* (with Cary Cooper 2009), and *Handbook of Organization Studies* (with Cynthia Hardy, Walter Nord and Tom Lawrence, 2006).

REFERENCES

- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Barnett, M. L. (2007). (Un)learning and (mis)education through the eyes of Bill Starbuck: An interview with Pandora's playmate. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 6(1), 114-127.
- Bate, P. (2007). Bringing the Design Sciences to Organization Development and Change Management: Introduction to the special Issue. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 43, 8-11
- Bate, P., & Robert, G. (2007). Towards More User-Centric OD: Lessons From the Field of Experience-Based Design and a Case Study. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 43, 41-66.
- Black, F., and Scholes, M. (1973). The pricing of options and corporate liabilities. *Journal of Political Economy*, 81(3), 637-654.
- Clegg, S. R., Kornberger, M. M., & Pitsis, T. (2008). *Managing and Organizations: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Coughlan, P., Fulton S., Jane, & Canales, K. (2007). Prototypes as (Design) Tools for Behavioral and Organizational Change: A Design-Based Approach to Help Organizations Change Work Behaviors. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 43, 122-134
- Dubin, R., & Taveggia, T. C. (1968). *The Teaching-Learning Paradox*. Eugene, OR: Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon.
- Dunbar, R. L. M., Romme, A. G. L., & Starbuck, W. H. (2008). *Creating better understanding of organizations while building better organizations*. In D. Barry & H. Hansen (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of New Approaches in Management and Organization* (pp. 554-564). London: Sage Publications.
- Dunbar, R. L. M., & Starbuck, W. H. (2006). Learning to design organizations and learning from designing them. *Organization Science*, 17(2), 171-178.
- Fairtlough, G. (1994). *Creative Compartments: A Design for Future Organizations*. London: Adamantine Press.
- Fairtlough, G. (2007). *Three ways of getting things done: Hierarchy, Heterarchy and Responsible Autonomy in Organizations*. Axminster: Triarchy Press.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (1998). *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2003). *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gierke, O. F. von (1868-1913). *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* (4 volumes). Diverse publishers.
- Gordon, R. D. (2007). *Power, knowledge and domination*. Copenhagen: Liber and Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Gottfredson, S. D. (1978). Evaluating psychological research reports: Dimensions, reliability, and correlates of quality judgments. *American Psychologist*, 33(10), 920-934.
- Jensen, M. C., & Mecklin, W. M. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs, and ownership structure. *Journal of financial economics*, 3, 305 - 360.
- Kay, J. (2004). *The Truth about Markets*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Khurana, R. (2007). *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lamoreaux, N. R. (2004). Partnerships, Corporations, and the Limits on Contractual Freedom in U.S. History: An Essay in Economics, Law, and Culture. In ed. K. Lipartito & D. B. Sicilia (Eds.), *Constructing Corporate America: History, Politics, and Culture* (pp. 29-55). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Merton, R. C. (1973). Theory of Rational Option Pricing. *Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science*, 4, 141-183.

- Nystrom, P. C. & Starbuck, W. H. (2006). Organizational facades. In W. H. Starbuck (Ed.), *Organizational Realities* (pp. 201-208). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pfeffer, J. (1993). Barriers to the advance of organizational science: paradigm development as a dependent variable. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 599-620.
- Schön, D. A. (1991). *The reflective turn: case studies in and on educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Schwab, A., & Starbuck W. H. (2009). Null-hypothesis significance tests in behavioral and management research: We can do better. In D. Bergh & D. Ketchen (Eds.), *Research Methodology in Strategy and Management*, Volume 5 (pp. 29-54). New York: Elsevier JAI.
- Starbuck, W. H. (2003). Turning lemons into lemonade: Where is the value in peer reviews? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12, 344-351.
- Starbuck, W. H. (2005). How much better are the most prestigious journals? The statistics of academic publication. *Organization Science*, 16, 180-200.
- Starbuck, W. H. (2006). *The Production of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Starbuck, W. H., & Baumard, P. (2009). Les semailles, la longue floraison et les rares fruits de la théorie de l'organisation. In J. Rojot, P. Roussel & C. Vandenberghe (Eds.), *Comportement Organisationnel, Tome III: Théorie des Organisations, Motivation, Engagement*. Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- Starkey, K., & Tiratsoo, N. (2007). *The Business School and the Bottom Line*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarondeau, J-C. (2007). Produire la connaissance et éduquer les managers: Le point de vue de William H. Starbuck". *Revue Française de Gestion*, 33(178-179), 71-89.
- Trullén, J., & Bartunek, J. M., (2007). What a design approach offers to organization development. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences*, 43(1), 23-40.
- Van de Ven, A. H. & Johnson, P. E. (2006). Knowledge for theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 31, 802-821.
- Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J. H. & Fisch, R. (1974). *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution*. New York: Norton.
- Weick, K. (1999). Theory construction as disciplined reflexivity: Tradeoffs in the 90s. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 797-806.
- Williamson, O. E. (1979). Transaction Cost Economics: The Governance of Contractual Relations. *Journal of Law and Economics*, 22(2), 233-261.

