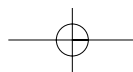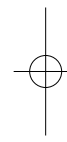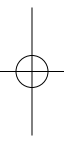# PART I
Theorizing the Field

1.1   Organizational Theorizing: a Historically Contested Terrain

MICHAEL REED

Organization studies has its proximate historical roots in the socio-political writings of nineteenth century thinkers, such as Saint-Simon, who attempted to anticipate and interpret the nascent structural and ideological transformations wrought by industrial capitalism (Wolin 1960). The economic, social and political changes that capitalist-led modernization brought in its wake created a world that was fundamentally different from the relatively small-scale and simple forms of production and administration which had dominated earlier phases of capitalist development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Bendix 1974). The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the growing dominance of large-scale organizational units in economic, social and political life as the complexity and intensity of collective activity moved beyond the administrative capacity of more personal and direct forms of coordination (Waldo 1948). Indeed, the rise of the 'administrative state' symbolized a new mode of governance in which rational, scientific organization transformed human nature:

> The new order would be governed not by men [sic] but by 'scientific principles' based on the 'nature of things' and therefore absolutely independent of human will. In this way, organizational society promised the rule of scientific laws rather than men [sic] and the eventual disappearance of the political element entirely. Organization as power over things – this was the lesson taught by Saint-Simon (Wolin 1960: 338–9).

Thus, the historical roots of organization studies are deeply embedded in a body of writing that gathered momentum from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. This body of research and writing confidently anticipated the triumph of science over politics and the victory of rationally designed collective order and progress over human recalcitrance and irrationality (Reed 1985).

The growth of an 'organizational society' was synonymous with the inexorable advance of reason, liberation and justice and the eventual eradication of ignorance, coercion and poverty. Organizations were rationally designed to solve permanently the conflict between collective needs and individual wants that had bedeviled social progress since the days of Ancient Greece (Wolin 1960). They guaranteed social order and personal freedom by fusing collective decision-making and individual interest (Storing 1962) through the scientific design, implementation and maintenance of administrative structures that subsumed sectional interests within institutionalized collective goals. The perennial conflict between 'society' and 'individual' would be permanently overcome. Whereas Hegel had relied on the dialectic of history to eradicate social conflict (Plant 1973), organization theorists put their faith in modern organization as the universal solution to the problem of social order.

> The organizationists looked upon society as an order of functions, a utilitarian construct of integrated activity, a means for focusing human energies in combined effort. Where the symbol of community was fraternity, the symbol of organization was power … organization signifies a method of social control, a means for imparting order, structure and regularity to society (Wolin 1960: 325–6).

Viewed from the historical vantage point of the late twentieth century, however, the practice and study of organization look very different today. The earlier meta-narratives of collective order and individual freedom through rational organization and material progress have fragmented and frayed into a cacophony of querulous 'voices' totally lacking in general moral force and analytical coherence (Reed

1992). The once seemingly cast-iron guarantee of material and social progress through sustained technological advance, modern organization and scientific administration now looks increasingly threadbare. Both the technical effectiveness and moral virtue of 'formal' or 'complex' organization are called into question by institutional and intellectual transformations that push inexorably towards social fragmentation, political disintegration and ethical relativism. Who amongst us can afford to ignore Bauman's (1989: 75) argument that 'the typically modern, technological-bureaucratic patterns of action and the mentality they institutionalize, generate, sustain and reproduce' were the socio-psychological foundations of and organizational preconditions for the Holocaust?

In short, contemporary students of organization find themselves at a historical juncture and in a social context where all the old ideological 'certainties' and technical 'fixes' that once underpinned their 'discipline' are fundamentally being called into question. Over the last two decades, a meta-theoretical debate over the nature of organization and the intellectual means most appropriate to its understanding has been underway. This has badly shaken, if not totally undermined, the philosophical foundations of and substantive rationale for contemporary organizational analysis (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Reed and Hughes 1992; Casey 2002; Tsoukas and Knudsen 2003; Westwood and Clegg 2003). Underlying assumptions about the inherently rational and ethical quality of modem organization are challenged by alternative voices that radically undermine the 'taken-for-granted' objectivity and integrity of corporate agency (Burrell 1997; 2003; Cooper and Burrell 1988). Key texts published in the 1950s and early 1960s bridled with self-confidence concerning their 'discipline's' intellectual identity and rationale, as well as its critical policy significance (see Haire 1960; Blau and Scott 1963; Argyris 1964). However, this self-confidence simply drained away in the 1980s and 1990s, to be replaced by uncertain, complex and confused expectations concerning the nature and merits of an organization studies increasingly racked by philosophical self-doubt, theoretical fragmentation and ideological polarization.

In Kuhnian terms, we still seem to be in a phase of 'revolutionary' rather than 'normal' science (Kuhn 1970). Normal science is dominated by puzzle-solving activity and incremental research programmes carried out with generally accepted and strongly institutionalized theoretical frameworks (Lakatos and Musgrave 1970). Revolutionary science occurs when 'domain assumptions' about subject matter, interpretative frameworks and knowledge are exposed to continuous critique, reevaluation and redesign (Gouldner 1971). Research and analysis are shaped by the search for anomalies and contradictions within prevailing theoretical frameworks, generating an internal intellectual dynamic of theoretical struggle. It signifies a discipline racked by internal conflict and dissension over ideological and epistemological fundamentals whose various supporters occupy and represent different paradigmatic 'worlds' between which communication, much less mediation, becomes impossible (Kuhn 1970; Hassard 1990). Fragmentation and discontinuity become the dominant features of a field's identity and rationale, rather than the relative stability and cohesion characteristic of 'normal science' (Willmott 1993; Van Maanen 1995; Clark 2000; Hancock and Tyler 2001; Casey 2002).

One, very potent, response to the divisive impact of the break with the functionalist/positivist orthodoxy is the retreat into a nostalgic yearning for past certainties and the communal comfort they once provided (Donaldson 1985; McKelvey 2003). This 'conservative' reaction may also demand an enforced and tightly policed philosophical and political consensus within the field to repair intellectual tissue scarred by decades of theoretical infighting and to re-establish the theoretical hegemony of a particular research paradigm (Pfeffer 1993; 1997). Both 'nostalgic' and 'political' forms of conservatism aim to resist the centripetal trends set in motion by intellectual struggle and to return to ideological and theoretical orthodoxy. A robust combination of 'back to basics' and 'paradigm enforcement' can be a very attractive option for those unsettled by the intellectual fermentation routinely occurring in contemporary organization studies.

Rather than 'paradigm enforcement', others look towards 'paradigm proliferation' through the separate intellectual development and nurturing of distinctive approaches within different domains, uncontaminated by contact with competing, and often more entrenched, perspectives (Morgan 1986; Jackson and Carter 2000; Hassard and Keleman 2002). This response to intellectual upheaval provides sustenance for a 'serious playfulness' in organization studies where postmodern irony and

humility replace the sanctimonious platitudes typical of a rational modernism that is incapable of seeing that 'objective truth is not the only game in town' (Gergen 1992).

If neither conservatism nor relativism appeals, a third option is to retell organization theory's history in ways that rediscover the analytical narratives and ethical discourses that shaped its development and legitimated its character (Reed 1992; Willmott 1993; Shenhav 2003; Starbuck 2003). Such approaches question both a return to fundamentals and an unrestrained celebration of discontinuity and diversity: neither intellectual surfing or free riding on the rising tide of relativism, nor retreating into the cave of orthodoxy, are attractive futures for the study of organization. The former promises unrestrained intellectual freedom, but at the price of isolationism and fragmentation. The latter falls back on a worn and outmoded consensus, sustained through continuous intellectual surveillance and control.

This chapter adopts the third response. It attempts to reconstruct the history of organization theory's intellectual development in a way that balances social context with theoretical ideas, and structural conditions with conceptual innovation. It offers the prospect of rediscovering and renewing a sense of historical vision and contextual sensitivity that gives both 'society' and 'ideas' their just deserts. Neither the history of organization studies nor the way in which that history is told can be regarded as neutral representations of past achievements. Indeed, any telling of history to support reconstructions of the present and visions of the future is a controversial and contested interpretation that is always open to challenge and refutation. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to map organizational theory as a historically contested terrain within which different languages, approaches and philosophies struggle for recognition and acceptance.

The next section examines theory making and development in organization studies as an intellectual activity that is necessarily implicated in the social and historical context in which it is made and remade. The chapter then examines seven interpretative frameworks that have structured the field' development over the last century or so and the socio-historical contexts in which they attained a degree of, always contested, intellectual preeminence. The penultimate section considers the most significant exclusions or silences that are evident in these major narrative traditions. The chapter

concludes with an evaluation of potential future intellectual developments in organization studies, set within the wider intellectual context provided by the narratives outlined earlier.

Theorizing Organization

This conception of organizational theorizing is based on Gouldner's (1980: 9) view that both the process and the product of theorizing should be seen as a 'doing and a making by persons caught up in some specific historical era'. The theoretically informed analysis of and debate about organizations and organizing are outcomes of a precarious combination of individual vision and technical production located within a dynamic socio-historical context and the diverse intellectual inheritance that it offers to contemporary generations. As such, theory making is always liable to subvert institutionalized conventions that have petrified into unreflectively accepted orthodoxies that can never be contained completely within established cognitive frames and conceptual parameters. However, the probability of specific theoretical initiatives metamorphosing into much more significant conceptual 'paradigm shifts' is largely dependent on their cumulative impact on the particular intellectual communities and traditions through which they are mediated and received (Willmott 1993; Tsoukas and Knudsen 2003). Thus, while theory making is always potentially subversive of the intellectual status quo, its actual impact is always refracted through existing knowledge/power relationships and the 'contextual receptiveness' of particular socio-historical conditions and structures to specific intellectual developments (Toulmin 1972).

In short, theory making is a historically located intellectual practice directed at assembling and mobilizing ideational, material and institutional resources to legitimate certain knowledge claims and the political projects which flow from them. The intellectual and social contexts in which theoretical debate is embedded have a crucial bearing on the form and content of particular conceptual innovations as they struggle to attain a degree of support within the wider community (Clegg 1994; Thompson and McHugh 2002; Westwood and Clegg 2003). As Bendix (1974: xx) maintains, 'A study of ideas as weapons in the management of organizations could afford a better understanding of the relations between ideas and actions'.

Table 1   Analytical narratives in organization analysis

Meta-narrative interpretative framework	Major problematic	Illustrative/exemplary/perspectives	Contextual transitions
Rationality	Order	Classical OT, scientific management, decision theory, Taylor, Fayol, Simon	from nighwatchman state to industrial state
Integration	Consensus	Human relations, neo-HR, functionalism, contingency/systems theory, corporate culture, Durkheim, Barnard, Mayo, Parsons	from entrepreneurial capitalism to welfare capitalism
Market	Liberty	Theory of firm, institutional economics, transaction costs, agency theory, resource dependency, population ecology, liberal OT	from managerial capitalismto neo-liberal capitalism
Power	Domination	Neo-radical Weberians, critical/structural Marxism, labour process, institutional theory Weber, Marx	from liberal collectivism corporatism to bargained
Knowledge	Control	Ethnomethod, organizational culture/symbol, poststructuralist, post-industrial, post-Fordist/modern, Foucault, Garfinkel, actor-network theory	from industrialism/ modernity to post-industrialism/ postmodernity
Justice	Participation	Business ethics, morality and OB, industrial democracy, participation theory, critical theory, Habermas	from repressive to participatory democracy
Network	Complexity	Post-Bur/network theory, Castells, Beck Giddens, Lash and Urry	from post-indust to network society

It does not mean, however, that no recognized, collective basis exists on which contradictory knowledge claims can be evaluated. At any point in time, organization studies is constituted through shared lines of debate and dialogue which establish intellectual constraints and opportunities within which new contributions are assessed. Negotiated rules and norms are generated through which collective judgements concerning new and old work are made and a vocabulary and a grammar of organizational analysis emerge. This 'grounded rationality' (Reed 1993) may lack the universality associated, however mistakenly (Putnam 1978), with the 'hard' sciences, but it nonetheless establishes an identifiable framework of procedures and practices 'that

provide for their own relevant discourse about proof' (Thompson 1978: 205–6). Thus, organization theory is subject to shared, although necessarily revisable, methodological procedures by means of which reasoned evaluations of competing analytical narratives and explanatory theories are negotiated and debated. The interaction and contestation of rival intellectual traditions imply the existence of negotiated, historicized and contextualized understandings that make rational argumentation possible (Reed 1993; 2003).

The interpretative frameworks in Table 1 constitute the historically contested intellectual terrain on which organization analysis developed. They constitute a terrain that must be mapped and traversed in

relation to the interplay between the procedural and contextual factors that shape the debates around and through which 'the field' has emerged and been structured (Morgan and Stanley 1993). These frameworks have shaped the emergence and subsequent development of organization studies as a recognizable intellectual field over a century or more. They provide a grammar and a context through which analytically structured narratives can be built and communicated; symbolic and technical resources through which the nature of organization can be debated; and a communal store of texts and discourses that mediate these debates for both specialist and lay audiences alike. They develop in a dialectical relationship with historical and social processes as loosely structured and contested ways of conceptualizing and debating key features of organization. Each is defined in relation to the central problematic around which it developed and the socio-historical context in which it was articulated. The discussion, thus, provides a grounded appreciation of the strategic analytical narratives through which the field of organization studies is constituted as a dynamic intellectual practice, permeated by theoretical controversies and ideological conflicts concerning the ways in which 'organization' can and ought to be.

Rationalism Triumphant

As Stretton (1969: 406) argued, 'we take in rationality with our mother's milk'. Yet, this belief in the naturalness of calculated ratiocination has definite historical and ideological roots. Saint Simon (1958) has a very strong claim to being the first 'theorist of organization'. He

> was probably the first to note the rise of modern organizational patterns, identify some of their distinctive features, and insist on their prime significance for the emerging society … the ground rules of modern society had been deeply altered and the deliberately conceived and planned organization was to play a new role in the world. (Gouldner 1959: 400–1)

The belief that modern society is dominated by a 'logic of organization' recurs throughout the history of organization studies, promoting a principle of social organization in which rationally assigned technical function defines the socio-economic location,

authority and behaviour of every individual, group and class. According to Saint Simon, it provides a cast-iron defense against social conflict and political uncertainty by establishing a new structure of power based on technical expertise and its pivotal contribution to the smooth functioning of society. Social order is to be based upon 'organization' rather than on randomly allocated or 'anarchic' market advantages or birth privileges.

The conception of organization as a rationally constructed artifice directed to the solution of collective problems of social order and administrative management is reflected in the writings of Taylor (1912), Fayol (1949), Urwick and Brech (1947) and Brech (1948). Such work advocates that the theory of organization 'has to do with the structure of coordination imposed upon the work division units of an enterprise … Work division is the foundation of organization; indeed, the reason for organization' (Gulick and Urwick 1937: 3). It legitimates the idea that society and its constituent organizational units will be managed through scientific laws of administration from which human emotions and values can be totally excluded (Waldo 1948). Epistemological principles and administrative techniques translate highly contestable, normative precepts into universal, objective, immutable and, hence, unchallengeable scientific laws. The 'rational individual is, and must be, an organized and institutionalized individual' (Simon 1957: 1012). Human beings became the 'raw material' to be transformed by modem organizational technologies into well-ordered, productive members of society unlikely to interfere with the long-term plans of ruling classes and elites. Thus, social, political and moral problems could be transformed into engineering tasks amenable to technical solutions (Gouldner 1971). Modem organizations heralded the triumph of rational knowledge and technique over seemingly intractable human emotion and prejudice.

This model insinuated itself into the ideological core and theoretical fabric of organization studies in such a pervasive and natural manner that its identity and influence were virtually impossible to ascertain, much less question. As Gouldner (1959) argued, it prescribed a 'blueprint' for an authority structure where individuals and groups were required to follow certain laws. Principles of efficient and effective functioning were promulgated as an axiom to direct all forms of organizational practice and analysis. It provided a universal characterization

of the 'reality' of formal organization, irrespective of time, place and situation. Once this blueprint was accepted, it legitimated a view of organizations as autonomous and independent social units, above and beyond the purview of moral evaluation and political debate (Gouldner 1971).

Although the 'age of organization' demanded a new professional hierarchy to meet the needs of a developing industrial society, superseding the claims of both moribund aristocracy and reactionary entrepreneurs, this view was profoundly anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian. A technically and administratively determined conception of hierarchy, subordination and authority had no truck with rising socio-political agitation based on notions of universal suffrage in either workplace or polity (Wolin 1960; Mouzelis 1967; Clegg and Dunkerley 1980). Rational bureaucratic organization was socially and morally legitimated as an indispensable form of organized power, based on objective technical functions that were necessary for the efficient and effective functioning of a social order founded on rational-legal authority (Presthus 1975; Frug 1984).

These principles are deeply embedded in the epistemological and theoretical foundations of those analytical perspectives that constitute the conceptual core of organization studies. Taylor's 'scientific management' is directed towards a permanent monopolization of organizational knowledge through the rationalization of work performance and job design. It is the first modern attempt to design and impose a form of 'knowledge management' that will universally subject work behaviour and relations to rational surveillance and control (Burawoy 1979; Sewell 2001; Alvesson 2004). As Merkle (1990: 62) argues:

> Evolving beyond its technical and national origins, Taylorism became an important component of the philosophical outlook of modern industrial civilization, defining virtue as efficiency, establishing a new role for experts in production, and setting parameters for new patterns of social distribution.

As both ideology and practice, Taylorism was extremely hostile towards entrepreneurial theories of organization that focused on the political and technical needs of a small ownership elite (Bendix 1974; Rose 1975; Clegg and Dunkerley 1980). As Bendix (1974: 9) stresses, 'the managerial ideologies

of today are distinguished from the entrepreneurial ideologies of the past in that managerial ideologies are thought to aid employers or their agents in controlling and directing the activities of workers'.

Fayol's principles of organization, although modified by a perceptive awareness of the need for contextual adaptation and compromise, were driven by the need to construct an architecture of coordination and control to contain the inevitable disruption and conflict caused by 'informal behaviour'. Classical organization theory is founded on the underlying belief that organization provides a principle of structural design and a practice of operational control that can be rationally determined and formalized in advance of actual performance. Indeed, it assumed that work performance automatically follows the design rationale and control instrumentation entailed in the organization's formal structure (Massie 1965).

Simon's (1945) concept of 'bounded rationality' and theory of 'administrative behaviour' flow from a penetrating critique of the excessive rationalism and formalism of classical management and organization theory. However, his ideas are framed within an approach that sees rational choice between clearly delineated options as the basis of all social action (March 1988). It reduces the vital 'interpretative work', performed by individual agents and corporate actors, to a purely cognitive process dominated by standardized rules and operating programmes. Politics, culture, morality and history are significant by their absence from this model of 'bounded rationality'. Treated as random, extraneous variables beyond the influence, much less control, of rational cognitive processes and organizational procedures, they become analytically marginalized, left outside the conceptual parameters of Simon's preferred model.

Rationalism exerted a profound influence over the historical and conceptual development of organization analysis. It established a cognitive frame and research agenda that could not be ignored, even by those who wished to take a radically different line (Perrow 1986). It also generated a powerful discursive resonance and elective ideological affinity with the development of political institutions and economic structures during the early and mid-twentieth century, rendering the corporation and political state 'knowable' (Rose 1999). Finally, it provided a representation of emerging organizational forms that legitimated their increasing power and influence as

inevitable features of a long-term historical trajectory through discourses of rational technocratic administration and management (Ellul 1964; Child 1969; Gouldner 1976). This legitimation strategy 'lifted' the theory and practice of organizational management from an intuitive craft into a codified and analysable body of knowledge that traded on the immensely powerful cultural capital and symbolism of 'science'. In due course, it would come to provide the intellectual and ideological bedrock of a theory of 'managerialism' that would dominate much of twentieth century thought and practice in the domain of work organization and management (MacIntyre 1981; Anthony 1986; Locke 1989; Enteman 1993; Townley 1994).

Rationalism underpinned a conception of organization theory and analysis as a portmanteau intellectual technology. It's geared to the provision of a 'mechanism for rendering reality amenable to certain kinds of action [and] it involves inscribing reality into the calculations of government through a range of material and rather mundane techniques' (Miller and Rose 1990: 7). The 'organization' becomes a tool or instrument for the authorization and realization of collective goals through the design and management of structures directed to the administration and manipulation of organizational behaviour (Donaldson 1985). Organizational decision-making rests on a rational analysis of all the options available, based on certified expert knowledge and deliberately oriented to the established legal apparatus. This 'logic of organization' became the guarantor of material advance, social progress and political order in modern industrial societies as they converged around a pattern of institutional development and governance through which the 'invisible hand of the market' was gradually replaced by the 'visible hand of organization'.

Despite the primary position of the rational framework in the development of organization theory, its ideological and intellectual dominance was never complete. It is always open to challenge by alternative narratives. Challengers often shared its ideological and political 'project' of discovering a new source of authority and control within the processes and structures of modern organization, but used different discourses and practices to achieve it. In particular, many saw the rational framework's inability to deal with the dynamism and instability of complex organizations as a major intellectual and operational failure. This growing

sense of its conceptual and practical limitations and the utopian nature of the political project which it supported provided organicist thought with an intellectual and institutional space where it could prosper in a field of study previously held in the sway of mechanistic forms of discourse.

The Rediscovery of Community

The substantive issue that most perplexed critics, from the 1930s and 1940s onwards, was the failure of rationalistic organization theory to address the problem of social integration and the implications for the maintenance of social order in a more unstable and uncertain world. This approach remained blind to the criticism that authority is ineffective without 'spontaneous or willing co-operation' (Bendix 1974). Critics, uneasy about the highly mechanistic and deterministic character of rationalism, emphasized both a practical and a theoretical need for an alternative foundation of contemporary managerial power and authority to that provided by formal organization design. Organicist thinking was also concerned with how modern organizations combine authority with a feeling of community and collective identity among their members:

> The mission of the organization is not only to supply goods and services, but fellowship as well. The confidence of the modern writer in the power of organization stems from a larger faith that the organization is man's [sic] rejoinder to his own mortality … In community and in organization modern man has fashioned substitute love-objects for the political. The quest for community has sought refuge from the notion of man [sic] as a political animal; the adoration of organization has been partially inspired by the hope of finding a new form of civility (Wolin 1960: 369).

This issue is at the forefront of the emergence of a human relations perspective in organization analysis that sets itself apart, in terms of solutions if not problems, from the rational model.

The *Management and the Worker* monograph (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939) and the writings of Mayo (1933; 1945) thus accuse the rational tradition of ignoring the natural and evolutionary qualities of the new social forms which industrialization generated. The whole thrust of the human relations perspective and project is a view of social isolation

and conflict as a symptom of social pathology and disease. The 'good society' and the effective organization are defined in relation to their capacity to facilitate and sustain the socio-psychological reality of spontaneous cooperation and social stability in the face of economic, political and technological changes that threaten the integration of the individual and group within the wider community.

Over time, this conception of organization – as the intermediate social unit that integrates individuals into modern industrial civilization, under the tutelage of a benevolent and socially skilled management – became institutionalized in such a way that it began to displace the dominant position held by exponents of the rational model (Child 1969; Nichols 1969; Bartell 1976; Thompson and McHugh 2002). It converged in more abstract and sociologically-oriented theories of organization that held an elective affinity with the naturalistic and evolutionary predilections of the human relations school (Merton 1949; Selznick 1949; Blau 1955; 1974; Parsons 1956; Blau and Schoenherr 1971). Thus, the origins of organicist thought in organization studies lay in a belief that rationalism provided an extremely limited and often misleading vision of the 'realities' of organizational life (Gouldner 1959; Mouzelis 1967; Silverman 1970). It stressed mechanically imposed order and control instead of integration, interdependence and balance in organically developing social systems, each with a history and dynamic of its own. 'Interference' by external agents, such as the planned design of organizational structures, threatens the system's survival.

The organization as a social system facilitates the integration of individuals into the wider society and the adaptation of the latter to changing, and often highly volatile, sociotechnical conditions. This view is theoretically anticipated, in embryonic form, by Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939: 567). They see the industrial organization as a functioning social system striving for equilibrium with a dynamic environment. This conception draws on Pareto's (1935) theory of equilibrating social systems in which disparities in the rates of socio-technical change and the imbalances which they generate in social organisms are automatically counteracted by internal responses that, over time, re-establish system equilibrium.

Organizational structures are viewed as spontaneously and homeostatically maintained. Structural change is accounted for as the cumulative and unintended outcome of unplanned, adaptive responses to, actual and potential, threats to the equilibrium of the system as a whole. Responses to problems are thought of as taking the form of organically developed defense mechanisms and being importantly shaped by shared values that are deeply internalized in the members. The empirical focus is thus directed to the spontaneously emergent and normatively sanctioned structures in the organization (Gouldner 1959: 405–6).

In this way, emergent processes, rather than planned structures, ensure long-term system stability and survival.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, this conception of organizations as social systems geared to the integrative and survival 'needs' of the larger societal orders of which they were constituent elements established itself as the dominant theoretical framework within organization analysis (Stinchcombe 1965). It converged with theoretical movements in 'general systems theory', as originally developed in biology and physics (von Bertalanffy 1950; 1956), which provided considerable conceptual inspiration for the subsequent development of socio-technical systems theory (Miller and Rice 1967) and 'soft system' methodologies (Checkland 1994). It was, however, the structural-functionalist interpretation of the systems approach which assumed the intellectual 'pole position' within organization analysis and which was to dominate theoretical development and empirical research within the field between the 1950s and 1970s (Silverman 1970; Clegg and Dunkerley 1980; Reed 1985; Casey 2002). Structural functionalism and its progeny, systems theory, provided an 'internalist' focus on organizational design with an 'externalist' concern with environmental uncertainty (Thompson 1967). The former highlighted the need for a minimum degree of stability and security in long-term system survival; the latter exposed the underlying indeterminacy of organizational action in the face of environmental demands and threats beyond the organization's control. The key research issue that emerges from this synthesis of structural and environmental concerns is to establish those combinations of internal designs and external conditions that will facilitate long-term organizational stability and growth (Donaldson 1985).

Structural functionalism and systems theory also effectively 'de-politicized' the decision-making processes through which the appropriate functional

fit between organization and environment was achieved. Certain 'functional imperatives', such as the need for long-term system equilibrium for survival, were assumed to impose themselves on all organizational actors, determining the design outcomes that their decision-making produced (Crozier 1964; Child 1972; 1973; Crozier and Friedberg 1980). This theoretical sleight of hand consigns political processes to the margins of organization analysis. In keeping with the wider ideological resonance of systems theory, it converts conflicts over valued means and ends into technical issues which can be 'solved' through effective system design and management. As Boguslaw (1965) indicates this conversion relies on a theoretical facade, not to say utopia, of value homogeneity in which the political realities of organizational change, and the strains and stresses they inevitably cause, are glossed as frictional elements in an otherwise perfectly functioning system. It also gels with the ideological and practical needs of a rising group of systems designers and managers who aspire to overall control within an increasingly differentiated and complex society that reaches its apogee in Bell's (1973) model of a 'post-industrial society'.

Thus, the general enthusiasm with which systems theory was received by the organization studies community in the 1950s and 1960s reflected a wider renaissance of utopian thinking which presumed that the functional analysis of social systems would provide the intellectual foundations for a new science of society (Kumar 1978). The process of socio-organizational differentiation, perhaps with a helping hand from expert social engineers, would solve the problem of social order through naturally evolving structures capable of handling endemic, escalating tensions between institutional demands and individual interests. The conceit that society itself would solve the problem of social order depended on a 'domain assumption' that 'the whole of human history has a unique form, pattern, logic or meaning underlying the multitude of seemingly haphazard and unconnected events' (Sztompka 1993: 107). Functional systems analysis provided the theoretical key to unlock the mysteries of this socio-historical development, enabling social and organizational scientists to predict, explain and control both its internal dynamics and its institutional consequences. This view traded on a form of socio-organizational evolutionism and functionalism that had its roots in the writings of Comte, Saint-Simon and Durkheim (Weinberg 1969; Clegg and Dunkerley 1980; Smart 1992). The latter reached its first intellectual high water-mark in the work of those social scientists who contributed to the development of the convergence theory of industrial society in the 1950s and 1960s (Kerr et al. 1960) and who displayed little, if any, of the historical circumspection and political sensitivity of their academic predecessors. It would rise even further in the rash of post-industrial theorizing that spread like a virus in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Consequently, the functionalist/systems orthodoxy which came to dominate, or at least structure, the intellectual practice and development of organization analysis between the 1940s and 1960s was merely one part of a much broader movement that resurrected the evolutionary form of the nineteenth century (Kumar 1978: 179–90). In organization theory, it reached its theoretical consummation in the development of 'contingency theory' between the late 1960s and early 1970s (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967; Thompson 1967; Woodward 1970; Pugh and Hickson 1976; Donaldson 1985; 1995). This approach exhibited all the intellectual virtues and vices of the larger theoretical tradition on which it drew for ideological and methodological inspiration. It also reinforced a managerialist ethic that presumed to solve, through expert social engineering and flexible organizational design (Gellner 1964; Giddens 1984), the fundamental institutional and political problems of modern industrial societies (Bell 1960; Lipset 1960; Galbraith 1969).

Yet, as the 1960s progressed the virtues of organicist thought were eclipsed by a growing appreciation of its vices, especially as social, economic and political realities refused to conform to the explanatory theories promulgated by this narrative. In time, alternative interpretative frameworks, grounded in very different historical and intellectual traditions, would emerge to challenge functionalism. Before we can consider these perspectives, however, we need to take stock of market-based theories of organization.

Enter the Market

Market-based theories of organization seem a contradiction in terms: if markets operate in the way specified by neo-classical economic theory, as perfectly functioning 'clearing mechanisms' balancing price and cost, there is no conceptual role or technical

need for 'organization'. As Coase (1937) realized in his classic paper, if markets are perfect, then firms (and organizations) should not develop in perfectly regulated market transactions based on voluntary exchange of information between equal economic agents. Coase was, however, forced to recognize the reality of firms as collective economic agents, accounting for them as 'solutions' to market failure or breakdown. As mechanisms for 'internalizing' recurring economic exchanges, firms reduce the cost of individual transactions through standardization and routinization. They increase the efficiency of resource allocation within the market system as a whole by minimizing transaction costs between economic agents who are naturally distrustful and suspicious of their partners.

Coase unintentionally borrows a great deal from the rational framework in assuming that behaviour is primarily motivated by the goal of minimizing market costs and maximizing market returns. Both rationalistic and economistic traditions in organization analysis rest on a conception of 'bounded rationality' to explain and predict individual and social action. They jointly subscribe to theories that account for organization in terms of efficiency and effectiveness and pay collective intellectual homage to the organic framework by emphasizing the 'natural' evolution of organizational forms that optimize returns within environments whose competitive pressures restrict strategic options. Economic theories of organization also trade on elements of the organicist tradition in focusing on organizations as an evolutionary and semi-rational product of spontaneous and unintended consequences (Hayek 1978; Fleetwood 1995; Lawson 1997). Organizations are an automatic response to (and a reasonable price to pay for) the need for formally free and equal economic agents to negotiate and monitor contracts in complex market transactions that cannot be accommodated in existing institutional arrangements.

Such economic theories of organization emerged in response to the inherent analytical and explanatory limitations of classical and neoclassical theories of the firm (Cyert and March 1963). They demand that a more serious consideration be accorded to resource allocation as a primary determinant of organizational behaviour and design (Williamson and Winter 1991). This focus on the 'micro-economics of organization' (Donaldson 1990; Williamson 1990) and a theory of firm behaviour that is more sensitive to the institutional constraints within which

economic transactions are conducted encouraged the formulation of a research agenda emphasizing corporate governance structures and their link to organizational functions (Williamson 1990). This framework also draws intellectual inspiration from Barnard's (1938: 4) conception of organization as cooperation 'which is conscious, deliberate and purposeful', and which can only be explained as the outcome of a complex interaction between formal and substantive rationality or technical requirements and moral order (Williamson 1990). Barnard's original attempt to provide a conceptual synthesis of 'rational' and 'natural' systems conceptions of organization provides the foundations of market-based theories of organization which flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, such as transaction cost analysis (Williamson 1975; Francis 1983) and population ecology (Aldrich 1979; 1992; 1999; Hannan and Freeman 1989).

There are significant theoretical differences between these approaches, particularly in relation to the form and degree of environmental determinism in which they engage (Morgan 1990). Yet, both subscribe to a set of domain assumptions that unify internal administrative forms and external market conditions by means of an evolutionary logic which subordinates collective and individual action to efficiency and survival imperatives largely beyond human influence (Swedberg 2003). Transaction cost theory concerns itself with the adaptive adjustments that organizations need to make in the face of pressures for maximizing efficiency in their internal and external transactions. Population ecology highlights the role of competitive pressures in selecting certain organizational forms over others. Both perspectives are based on a model of organization in which its design, functioning and development are treated as the direct outcomes of universal and immanent forces that cannot be influenced or changed through strategic action.

What is conspicuous by its absence in the market framework is any sustained interest or concern with social power and human agency. Neither the markets/hierarchies approach nor population ecology nor, indeed, Donaldson's (1990; 1994) 'liberal theory of organization' take much interest in how organizational change is structured by power struggles between social actors and the forms of domination which they legitimate (Francis 1983; Perrow 1986; Thompson and McHugh 2002). These approaches treat 'organization' as constituting a

unitary social and moral order in which individual and group interests and values are simply derived from overarching 'system interests and values' uncontaminated by sectional conflict and power struggles (Willman 1983). Once this unitary conception is taken for granted as an 'accepted', 'natural', and virtually invisible feature of organization, power, conflict and domination can be safely ignored as being 'outside' the framework's field of analytical vision and empirical concern.

This unitary conception of organization is entirely in keeping with a wider ideological and political context dominated by neo-liberal theories of organizational and societal governance. The latter raise 'impersonal market forces' to the analytical status of ontological universals determining the chances of individual and collective survival (Silver 1987; Miller and Rose 1990; Rose 1992). From neo-liberal or Darwinian ideologies in the last century (Bendix 1974) to more recent doctrines emphasizing the 'survival of the fittest' (Hodgson 1999), such ideologies and theories advocate the unrestrained expansion of the market, private enterprise and economic rationality. This is advocated at the expense of increasingly residual and marginalized conceptions of community, public service and social concern. Through globalization, nations and enterprises engage in an expanding economic struggle which will be won by those organizations and economies that single-mindedly adapt themselves to market demands (Du Gay and Salaman 1992; Du Gay 1993). In this respect, market-based theories of organization trade on cyclical movements within the encompassing socio-economic, political and ideological context of which they are a part (Barley and Kunda 1992). Nevertheless, they remain consistently silent on the power structures and struggles in and through which organizations respond to putatively 'objective' and 'neutral' economic pressures.

Faces of Power

Power remains the most overused and least understood concept in organization analysis. It provides the ideological foundations and epistemological scaffolding for a theory of organization that stands in sharp contrast to the analytical narratives and interpretative frameworks previously discussed. It proffers a logic of organization and organizing analytically rooted in strategic conceptions of social power and human agency which are sensitive to the dialectical interplay between structural constraint and social action as it shapes the institutional forms reproduced and transformed through social practice (Giddens 1984; 1985; 1990; DuGay 1992; Layder 1994; 1997). It rejects the environmental determinism inherent in market-based theorizations of organization with their unremitting emphasis on the efficiency and effectiveness imperatives that secure the long-term survival of certain organizational forms rather than others. It also calls into question the unitary assumptions that underpin the rational, organic and market frameworks by conceptualizing the organization as an arena of conflicting interests and values constituted through power struggle.

The power framework in organization analysis is grounded in Weber's sociology of domination and the analysis of bureaucracy and bureaucratization that flows from it (Weber 1978; Ray and Reed 1994). More recently, this Weberian tradition has been complemented by theorizations of power that draw their inspiration from Machiavelli's interest in the micro-politics of organizational power and its contemporary expression in the work of Foucault (Clegg 1989; 1994). Weberian-based analyses emphasized the relational character of power as a differentially distributed capacity or resource that, if deployed with the appropriate degree of strategic and tactical skill by social actors, produces and reproduces hierarchically-structured relationships of autonomy and dependence (Wrong 1978; Clegg 1989). This tends to prioritize the structural forms and mechanisms through which power is struggled over and institutionalized in systems of imperative coordination and domination that achieve temporal continuity and spatial sustainability. The 'emphasis is on wider constraints and the determinants of behaviour – principally the forms of power derived from structures of class and ownership, but also the impact of markets and occupations, and of increasing interest lately the normative structures of gender' (Fincham 1992: 742). Thus, Weber's analysis of the dynamics and forms of bureaucratic power in modern society highlights the complex interaction between societal and organizational rationalization as it reproduces institutionalized structures controlled by 'experts' or 'specialists' (Silberman 1993).

This structural or institutional conception of organizational power has been complemented by a more concentrated focus on the micro-political processes through which power is attained and

mobilized in opposition or in parallel to established regimes and the domination structures through which they rule. This approach resonates very strongly with Foucault's (2003) work on the mosaic of cross-cutting coalitions and alliances mobilizing particular disciplinary regimes (Lyon 1994) which provides a 'bottom-up' or capillary, rather than a 'top-down' or hierarchical, analytical perspective on the detailed organizational practices through which power 'over others' can be temporarily secured. This processual conception of organizational power tends to concentrate on the detailed tactical maneouvrings that generate a shifting balance of advantage between contending socio-political interests (Fincham 1992). However, it is less convincing when attempting to explain the broadly-based organizational mechanisms which become institutionalized as accepted authority structures and discursive regimes legitimating more permanent and taken-for-granted 'imperatively coordinated associations'. Thus, the more recent research focus on the interaction order (Layder 1997) or 'micro-politics' through which power relationships are temporarily sedimented into relatively more permanent and stable authority structures deflects attention away from the 'hierarchical mechanisms that sustain the reproduction of power' (Fincham 1992: 742).

This dialogue between Weberian/institutional and Machiavellian/processual conceptions of power led to a much more sophisticated understanding of the multi-faceted nature of power relations/ processes and their implications for the structuring of organizational forms. Lukes' (1974) analysis of the multiple 'faces of power' has become the major reference point for contemporary research on the dynamics and outcomes of organizational power. His differentiation between three faces or dimensions of power, between the 'episodic', 'manipulative' and 'hegemonic' conceptions of power (Clegg 1989), results in a considerable broadening of the research agenda for the study of organizational power and the theoretical frameworks through which it is approached.

The 'episodic' conception of power concentrates on observable conflicts of interest between identifiable social actors with opposing objectives in particular decision-making situations. The 'manipulative' view concentrates on the 'behind the scenes' activities through which already powerful groups manipulate the decision-making agenda to screen out issues that have the potential to disturb, if not threaten,

their domination and control. The 'hegemonic' interpretation emphasizes the strategic role of existing ideological and social structures in constituting and, thus, selectively limiting, the interests and values – and hence action options – available to social actors in any particular decision arena. As we move from the 'episodic' through the 'manipulativ' to the 'hegemonic' conceptions of power, there is a progressive analytical and normative shift occurring. This moves from the role of human agency in constituting power relations to that of structural and ideological mechanisms in determining the forms of domination and control through which the latter are institutionalized (Clegg 1989: 86–128). There is also an increasing explanatory emphasis on the macro-level structures and mechanisms that determine the organizational designs through which micro-political power struggles are mediated and a corresponding downgrading of the organizationally specific practices that produce and reproduce institutional forms.

Researchers (e.g. Knights and Willmott 1989; Fincham 1992; Clegg 1994) attempted to overcome this potential split between institutional/structural and processual/agency conceptions by focusing on the general but 'localized' organizational practices through which patterns of domination and control are sustained. They attempted to synthesize a Weberian-based concern with the institutional reproduction of domination structures and a Foucauldian interest in the micro-practices generating changing forms of disciplinary power. The focal point, both analytically and empirically, is the 'expert' discourses and practices through which particular patterns of organizational structuring and control are established in different societies or sectors (Larson 1979; 1990; Abbott 1988; Miller and O'Leary 1989; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Reed and Anthony 1992; Dean 1999; Rose 1999; Alvesson and Karreman 2000). These discourses and practices create specific types of disciplinary regimes (at an organizational and institutional level) that mediate between strategic governmental policies formulated by centralized agencies and their tactical implementation within localized domains (Miller and Rose 1990; Johnson 1993; also see some of the recent work on labour process theory, e.g. Burawoy 1985; Thompson 1989; Littler 1990; and total quality management, e.g. Kirkpatrick and Martinez 1995; Reed 1995; Knights and McCabe 2003).

This research programme accounts for the decay and breakdown of 'corporatist' structures (within the political economies and organizational practices of advanced industrial societies) by focusing on their internal contradictions and failure to respond to external ideological and political initiatives led by a resurgent neo-liberal right (Alford and Friedland 1985; Cerny 1990; Miller and Rose 1990; Johnson 1993). It also raises questions about the analytical coherence and explanatory range of a power framework with limited capacity to deal with the material, cultural and political complexities of organizational change.

Knowledge is Power

The knowledge-based framework is deeply suspicious of the institutional and structural bias characterizing the analytical frameworks previously reviewed. It rejects their various forms of theoretical and methodological determinism and the 'totalizing' logic of explanation on which they trade. Instead, this approach treats all forms of institutionalized or structured social action as the temporary patterning of a mosaic of tactical interactions and alliances which form relatively unstable and shifting networks of power always prone to internal decay and dissolution. It explains the development of modern 'systems' of organizational discipline and governmental control in terms of highly contingent and negotiated power mechanisms and relationships whose institutional roots lie in 'the capacity to exert effective management of the means of production of new forms of power itself' (Cerny 1990: 7).

In this context, the cultural and technical mechanisms through which particular fields of human behaviour, such as health, education, crime and business, are colonized as the preserves of certain specialist or expert groups emerge as the strategic focus of analysis. These mechanisms take on a far greater explanatory significance than sovereign political and economic powers such as the 'state' or 'class'. Knowledge, and the power that it potentially confers, assume a central explanatory role. It provides the key cognitive and representational resource for the application of a set of techniques from which disciplinary regimes, however temporary and unstable, can be constructed (Clegg 1994; Scarbrough 2001). Highly specialized and seemingly esoteric knowledge, which can potentially be accessed and controlled by any individual or group with the required training and skill (Blackler 1993; Alvesson 2004; Amin and Cohendet 2003), provides the strategic resource from which the appropriation of time, space and consciousness can be realized. Thus, the production, codification, storage and usage of knowledge relevant to the regulation of social behaviour become strategic considerations in the mobilization and institutionalization of a form of organized power that facilitates 'control at a distance' (Cooper 1992).

Reworked within this problematic, 'organization' becomes a portable carrier of the sociotechnical knowledge and skills through which particular patterns of social relationships emerge and reproduce themselves in specific material and social circumstances (Law 1994a). It has neither inherent ontological status nor explanatory significance as a generalizable, monolithic structure or entity. Contingency, rather than universality, reigns – both in the localized and constrained knowledge that makes organizing possible and in the power relationships they generate. The research focus is directed to the 'interaction order' that produces 'organization' and the locally embedded stocks of knowledge through which agents engage in the situational practices constitutive of the structures through which 'organization' is reproduced (Goffman 1983; Layder 1994; 1997).

A number of specific theoretical approaches draw on this general orientation to develop a research agenda for organization analysis that takes the knowledge production processes through which 'organization' is reproduced as its strategic research interest. Ethnomethodology (Boden 1994), postmodernist approaches to organization culture and symbolism (Calas and Smircich 1991; Martin 1992; 2002), neo-rationalist decision-making theory (March and Olsen 1986; March 1988), actor-network theory (Law 1991; Hassard 1993; 1994b; Amin and Cohendet 2003) and post-structuralist/modernist theory (Kondo 1990; Cooper 1992; Gane and Johnson 1993; Clegg 1994; Perry 1994; Kilduff and Mehra 1997; Linstead 2004) have collectively contributed to a substantial shift of analytical focus and explanatory concern. This moves us away from macro-level formalization or institutionalization and towards micro-level social ordering or 'heterogeneous engineering'. These approaches (many of which are represented in this book) radically re-define and re-locate the study of organization away from its intellectual roots in rationalist/functionalist ontologies and positivist epistemologies. The organization is

transformed from a materially determined mechanism for functional coordination and control into a socially constructed and sustained 'order' necessarily grounded in the localized stocks of knowledge, practical work routines and technical devices mobilized by communities of social actors in their everyday interaction and discourse.

Taken as a whole, contemporary studies of the knowledge/power discourses through which organizational members engage in organizational ordering to generate dynamic and ambiguous relational networks reinforce a view of organizations as 'the condensation of local cultures of values, power, rules, discretion and paradox' (Clegg 1994: 172). They resonate with the images and prejudices of a 'post-industrial' or 'postmodern' Zeitgeist in which organization is deconstructed into 'localized, decentred, on-the-spot decision-making ... transformations and innovation in organizations occur at the intersection of information and interaction' (Boden 1994: 210). In many respects, this in keeping with general theories of post-industrial society (Bell 1973; 1999), flexible specialization (Piore and Sabel 1984; Sabel 1991) and dis-organized or informational capitalism (Lash and Urry 1987; 1994; Webster 2002). Within these, more macro-level, theories, the axial institutional forms or structures once deemed constitutive of modern 'political economy' dissolve, or more appropriately implode, into fragmented information flows and networks. These theories will, again in time, provide the intellectual and empirical foundations for the development of another analytical narrative around the leitmotif of 'network' that will come to re-orient much social and organizational analysis in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Clark 2003).

There is, however, a lingering doubt as to what is lost in this 'localization' of organization analysis, and its seeming obsession with micro-level processes and practices, which makes these approaches seem strangely disengaged from the wider issues of justice, equality, democracy and rationality. What of the classical sociological concern with the macro-structural features of modernity (Layder 1994; 1997) and their implications for how we 'ought' to lead our organizational lives?

Scales of Justice

The analytical retreat into the local aspects of organizational life takes the study of organizations a long way, theoretically and epistemologically, from the normative themes and structural issues that shaped its historical development and intellectual rationale. At the very least, it radically re-defines the 'intellectual mission' away from ethical universals and conceptual abstractions towards cultural relativities and interpretative schema that are inherently resistant to historical and theoretical generalization. Yet, the turn towards 'the local' in organization analysis and the disinclination to engage with wider ideological and structural issues have not gone unnoticed. A number of commentators have attempted to redirect the study of organizations back towards institutional forms and the analytical and normative questions they raise.

One relatively obvious example of this development is to be found in 'neo-institutionalism' (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Meyer and Scott 1992; Perry 1992; Whitley 1992; Scott 1995; Greenwood and Hinings 1996; Barley and Tolbert 1997; Lounsbury and Ventrescu 2003). Another can be seen in the resurgence of interest in the political economy of organization and its implications for the extension, in a complex range of institutional practices and forms, of bureaucratic surveillance and control in 'late modernity' (Alford and Friedland 1985; Giddens 1985; 1990; 1994; Wolin 1988; Cerny 1990; Dandeker 1990; DuGay 1993; Silberman 1993; Thompson 1993; 2003b; Courpasson 2002). Finally, debates about the immediate and longer-term [AQ1] prospects for organizational democracy and participation within the corporate governance structures which developed in political economies dominated by neo-liberal ideologies and policies during the 1980s and 1990s (Lammers and Szell 1989; Fulk and Steinfield 1990; Morgan 1990; Hirst 1993; McLaughlin et al. 2002) have re-awakened interest in the 'global' issues which organization analysis must address.

Each of these bodies of literature raises fundamental questions about the types of corporate governance and control prevailing in contemporary organizations and their grounding in moral and political judgements concerning justice and fairness, as measured against certain preferred interests and values. They also re-assert the centrality of issues relating to the institutionalized distribution of economic, political and cultural power in developed and developing societies that tend to be marginalized in postmodernist and post-structuralist discourses centred on local representational and

interpretative practices. These approaches re-vivify a conception of the organization as an institutionalized structure of power and authority over and above the localized micro-practices of organizational members.

DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 8) argued that 'new institutionalism' necessarily entailed a:

> rejection of rational-actor models, an interest in institutions as independent variables, a turn towards cognitive and cultural explanations, and an interest in properties of supra-individual units of analysis that cannot be reduced to aggregations or direct consequences of individuals' attributes or motives.

They argued for a sustained focus on organizational structures and practices found across different institutional sectors, the 'rationality myths' which legitimate and routinize prevailing arrangements, and 'the ways in which action is structured and order made possible by shared systems of rules that both constrain the inclination and capacity of actors to optimize as well as privilege some groups whose interests are secured by prevailing rewards and sanctions' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 11). Their emphasis on practices which penetrate organizational structures and processes, such as the state, social class, professions and industry/sector recipes, reveals the strategic role played by power struggles between institutional actors over 'the formation and reformation of rule systems that guide political and economic action' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 28).

While recognizing that the generation and implementation of institutional forms and practices 'are rife with conflict, contradiction and ambiguity' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 28), neo-institutional theory takes its central concern to be the cultural and political processes through which actors and their interests/values are institutionally constructed and mobilized in support of certain 'organizing logics' rather than others. In this way, the macro-level contexts that indelibly shape organizational behaviour and design assume explanatory primacy. They are constituted by and through 'supra-organizational patterns of activity through which human beings conduct their material life in time and space, and symbolic systems through which they categorize that activity and infuse it with meaning' (Friedland and Alford 1991: 232). As institutionalized forms of social practice, organizations are seen as 'structures in which powerful people are committed to some value or interest' and that 'power has a great deal to do with the historical preservation of patterns of values' (Stinchcombe 1968: 107). Thus, the historical, structural and contextual positioning of collective actors' values and interests, rather than their local (re)production through micro-level practices, emerges as the analytical and explanatory priority for neo-institutional theory.

Over the last decade or so, neo-institutional theory has oscillated between this primary explanatory focus on the strategic role of macro-level institutional structures and cultures in determining situated organizational forms and practices and, a somewhat under-developed, concern with the complex and overlapping organizational discourses in which 'institutionalization' is practically grounded and precariously realized (Tolbert and Zuker 1996; Phillips and Hardy 2002). This underlying ontological and analytical tension between 'structure' and 'agency' has tended to be resolved in favour of the former. However, it continues to frame much of the ongoing research and debate within neo-institutionalism, as it does within other theoretical communities and research programmes in contemporary organizational studies.

The sustained explanatory focus on the historical development and structural contextualization of organizations characteristic of the 'new institutionalism' is reflected in recent work on the changing 'surveillance and control' capacities of modern organizations which, as Giddens suggests, takes the theme of 'institutional reflexivity' (Beck 1992) as its strategic concern. This is regarded as:

> institutionalization of an investigative and calculative attitude towards generalized conditions of system reproduction; it both stimulates and reflects a decline in traditional ways of doing things. It is also associated with the generation of power (understood as transformative capacity). The expansion of institutional reflexivity stands behind the proliferation of organizations in circumstances of modernity, including organizations of global scope. (Giddens 1994: 6)

The rise of modern organizational forms and practices is seen to be intimately tied to the growing sophistication, scope and variety of bureaucratic systems of surveillance and control that can be adapted to very different socio-historical circumstances (Dandeker 1990). The emergence and institutional

sedimentation of the nation state and professional administrative structures play a crucial role in advancing the material and social conditions in which organizational surveillance and control can be extended in ways that facilitate in much more self-reflexive social engineering regime to emerge (Cerny 1990; Silberman 1993). Relatively new technological, cultural and political changes encouraged the creation and diffusion of more unobtrusive surveillance systems that are much less dependent on direct supervision and control (Zuboff 1988; Lyon 1994; 2001; Reed 1999; Rosenberg 2000). The growing technical sophistication and social penetration of more highly interdependent control systems also serve to reassert the continuing relevance of Weber's concern about the long-term prospects for meaningful individual involvement in a social and organizational order that seems increasingly close to, yet remote from, everyday lives (Ray and Reed 1994; Reed 1999; Rosenberg 2000).

Organization analysis seems, then, to have come full circle, both ideologically and theoretically. The perceived threat to freedom and liberty presented by 'modern', bureaucratic organizational forms at the beginning of the twentieth century is echoed in debates over the prospects for meaningful participation and democracy in the much more technologically sophisticated and socio-politically unobtrusive 'surveillance and control regimes' emerging at the end of the century (Webster and Robins 1993; Rosenberg 2000; Lyon 2001). In so far as the 'postmodern' or 'post-bureaucratic' organization becomes a highly dispersed, dynamic and de-centred mechanism of socio-cultural control (Clegg 1990; Heckscher and Donnellon 1994) that is virtually impossible to detect, much less resist, questions relating to political responsibility and citizenship are as important now as they were a hundred years ago. As Wolin (1961: 434) so elegantly argued, organizational and political theory 'must once again be viewed as that form of knowledge that deals with what is general and integrative to man [sic]; a life of common involvements'.

This aspiration to retrieve an 'institutional vision' in organization analysis that speaks to the relationship between the citizen, organization, community and state in modern societies (Etzioni 1975; 1993; Arhne 1994; Feldman 2002) is a potent theme. Research on organizational authority, democracy and participation suggests that efforts to develop more open, participative and egalitarian organizational designs, grounded in sustainable traditions of collective ethical and political engagement, have had an extremely difficult time over the last fifteen years or so (Lammers and Szell 1989). Long-term prospects for democracy seem equally pessimistic in an increasingly globalized and fragmented world that destabilizes, if not destroys, established socio-political traditions and coherent cultural identities, corroding the ideological certainty and cognitive security they once bestowed (Cable 1994; Feldman 2002).

The combination of neo-libertarian policies and sophisticated surveillance that has exerted such a corrosive, not to say destructive, impact on communal social capital and collective political action (Putnam 1990) has not succeeded, however, in eradicating a continuing challenge to unobtrusive and self-reinforcing forms of organizational discipline and control (Lyon 1994). As Cerny (1990: 35–6) argued in relation to institutional changes at the turn of the twentieth century:

> Individuals and groups must define themselves strategically and maneuvre tactically in the context of the logic of the state, whether conforming to legal rules, competing for resources distributed or regulated by the state, or attempting to resist or avoid the influence of control of other state and non-state actors … the state itself is constituted by a range of middle-level and micro-level games, which are also characterized by contrasting logics, interstitial spaces, structural dynamics and ongoing tensions.

Within these overlapping, and often contradictory, political games (Parker 2000), new organizing principles and practices are emerging that require a fundamental reconsideration of the rapidly changing relationship between the individual and the community in a socio-political context where the 'agenda for identity politics' has become much more diverse, unstable, fragmented and contested (Cable 1994: 38–40). Lyon's (1994) survey of the social movements, interest groups and political coalitions challenging centralized and undemocratic regimes of surveillance and control indicates that there are options available other than 'postmodern paranoia' and the extreme political pessimism that it seems to encourage. Similarly, writers such as Hirst (1993) and Arhne (1994; 1996) re-discovered civil society and the diverse range of 'associative' forms of social and economic governance that it continues to generate and support, even in the teeth of socio-technical pressures for enhanced centralized power and control.

Thus, this narrative demands that we re-connect, analytically and politically, the local with the global; organizationally situated practices and processes with institutional rationalities and structures; negotiated order with strategic power and control. In short, we must address the fact that:

> We live in a massively but unevenly, unequally, interconnected and interdependent world, where 'organization' (and disorganization), and particular kinds of organizations, represent fundamental 'nodes', conceptually, practically, but where a dominant big business vision, for example, can only be blinkered and imperialistic, conceptually, practically. Seeking to understand and analyse such complex intersections and their ramifications must, it seems to me, represent a key component for the future development of the field if it is to meet the intellectual and practical challenges posed by such. (Jones 1994: 208)

Thus, the analytical structured narrative of organizational justice and democracy seeks to reconnect the study of locally contextualized discourses and practices with institutionalized orders of power, authority and control that possess a societal rationale and historical dynamic that cannot be understood, much less explained, through a limited focus on 'everyday' interaction and events (Layder 1994). It forces us to re-discover the vital link between the practical demands and intellectual needs of the study of organizations, the 'points of intersection' between the normative and the analytical, that must be realigned if organization studies is to retain its relevance and vitality in a world where long established structures are under extreme pressure to change, indeed metamorphose, into very different institutional forms.

The Rise of Network Society

The theme and concept of 'network' has come to exert a powerful intellectual influence within organization studies over the last decade or so. It constitutes the seventh, and final, interpretative framework/analytically structured narrative reviewed in this opening chapter.

The theme/concept of 'network' is by no means radically new or original in organization studies – having figured prominently, if implicitly, in a wide range of work concerned with intra-organizational behaviour/design and inter-organizational relations from the 1950/1960s onwards. However, it has come to attain something close to an iconic theoretical status and political significance far beyond these, relatively humble, intellectual beginnings (Nohria and Eccles 1992). This is not to say that its ontological status and explanatory significance is unchallenged or unchallengeable (Reed 2005a). However, it has begun to shape and direct much of our understanding of the complex interpenetration of strategic global change and local organizational restructuring within a geo-political context characterized by increasingly polarized 'power blocs' and the much more fragmented, but deep-seated, ideological, cultural and political conflicts this has generated (Harvey 2003). This is largely due to the theoretically diverse ways in which the theme/concept of 'network' has been developed and extended over the last two decades or so to describe and explain many of the most significant, not to say putatively 'transformational' or 'revolutionary', changes occurring in OECD societies and organizations at the turn of the century. Indeed, the theme/concept of 'network' has come to symbolize and signify momentous changes in the global, societal, institutional and organizational forms and logics that collectively define an epochal 'paradigm shift' in the dynamics, form and content of 'modernity' as it came to be identified and debated in twentieth century social science (Kumar 1995). Thus, the forms of theorizing and research that have emerged out of the network framework/narrative are less significant in relation to what they may have to say about any particular phenomena or changes to those phenomena than what they have to say about putative system-wide transformations at all levels of social organization and analysis. Network theory and analysis has generated new and important insights into phenomena as diverse as corporate structures, inter-organizational exchange relations, industrial networks, communication systems, supply chains, incentive systems, expert groups and communities, bureaucratic control systems, comparative business systems, governance systems and information technologies. However, it is the 'big story' that it has to tell about the emergence, development and impact of 'discontinuous or disjunctive change' (Unger 1987a; b; Blackler 1993; 1995) that signifies its crucial importance for organizational analysis now and in the foreseeable future. This larger and more inclusive analytical

narrative speaks to wide-ranging and subterranean structural and ideological changes that are fundamental to our understanding of the contemporary world and the various developmental trajectories along which it may travel over the coming decades. These include the putative emergence of new forms of globalized and 'informationalized' capitalism; a new mode of socio-technical innovation driven by integrated information and communication technologies; systems of knowledge generation, production and diffusion that overcome temporal and spatial barriers to global transformation in political economies and cultural systems; and new forms of collective cognition, action and governance that dissolve conventional distinctions between the individual and society. Considered in these terms, the emergence of network theory and analysis (as the 'leading-edge' intellectual framework and agenda in organization studies at the present time) can be interpreted as a collective response to the perception of escalating levels of endemic complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty that seem to defy the rationalist/functionalist/positivist verities in which the field became embedded from the second-half of the nineteenth century onwards. Such a response also radically calls into question whether or not 'organization' can be sustained as a general theoretical category and practical device generating the kind of intellectual resources and institutional forms necessary to maintain social order in the twenty-first century. If 'organization' – as a materially-anchored, cognitively-ordered, socially-structured and rationally-managed entity or reality – doesn't exist anymore (assuming it ever did?), then what is the point of maintaining a commitment to an intellectual and ideological edifice that is well-past its ontological and epistemological 'sell-by date'?

A number of overlapping but sometimes contradictory clusters of literature constitute the body of knowledge associated with the network framework/narrative at this juncture. First, extremely wide-ranging and broadly focused studies that attempt to develop general theories of network-based organization and management on a global scale. Most of these works are pitched at the level of international/comparative political economy and socio-technical/cultural systems, while having their roots in the post-Fordist/postmodernist debates that dominated social scientific research and analysis in the West for much of the 1980s and 1990s. Secondly, a more narrowly focused, 'middle-range'

rather than 'macro-level', body of work that uses network-based theories, concepts and models to understand the dynamics and outcomes of change within and between specific institutional fields or sectors. Thirdly, a more micro-level, situated and contextually-specific body of research and writing that attempts to identify, map and describe the highly complex networking activities and relations that 'lie beneath' the surface level of institutionalized orders and regimes. Each of these bodies of work and literature draw on a highly diverse and extremely rich matrix of intellectual resources to do their respective 'thing'. However, taken as a complete, if loosely tied, package, they seem to signify a very distinctive 'turn' towards a configuration of issues and a set of theoretical practices and discourses that break with much of the inherited intellectual capital that previous generations of organization theorists have bequeathed to their successors.

As 'grand theory', the network framework/narrative has played a pivotal role in fundamentally re-shaping our understanding of the intersecting material, structural and cultural transformations that are re-defining globalized systems of economic, social and symbolic exchange. Seminal contributions from Giddens (1990; 2000), Castells (1989; 1996; 2000), Harvey (1989; 1996; 2001; 2003), Beck [AQ2] (1992; 1994; 1997; 2000), Bauman (1992; 1995; 1997), Fukuyama (1992; 1995) and Lash and Urry (1987; 1994) have set a new agenda concerning the underlying dynamics that are driving structural transformation on a global scale and their long-term implications for social action and organization. Of course, there are fundamental intellectual and ideological differences between each of these authors in relation to the theoretical resources they draw on, the ways in which these are deployed and its implications for the diagnoses and prognoses that they proffer to their respective readerships. In particular, there is an underlying tension between those who continue to rely on neo-Marxist political economy (Harvey/Castells) to provide a basic understanding of the structural dynamics that continue to drive global capitalism and those who are much more reliant on postmodernism and post-structuralism to provide theoretical insight into the 'culture of globalization'. Nevertheless, there is sufficient analytical and substantive consistency in this body of work as it tracks, dissects and projects the emergence of a new phase in the restructuring of contemporary capitalism on a global scale (Whitley

[**AQ3**] 1998). They are all agreed that networks constitute the fundamental texture of social structuration at all levels of social organization. They also indelibly shape the socio-technical circuits (of information, knowledge, power and control) through which new, network-based organizational forms are reproduced and sustained (Clark 2003). In short, that the social architecture of global capitalism is strategically dependent on spatio-temporal flows (of money, symbols, ideas, people and technologies) that have to pass through highly complex relational networks and the modes of collective action that they sustain (Thrift 2004). These network configurations have become pervasive within the vertical and horizontal chains of interaction and exchange through which global capitalism and transnational corporations go about their business of capital accumulation and profit maximization. They are the critical levers of power and control that are struggled over by individual actors and corporate agents within the new divisions of labour and allocations of authority and governance emerging in global capitalism.

Middle-range research and analysis within the network framework/narrative has been more concerned to identify and explain the specific organizational forms that are taking shape within the network morphology characteristic of global capitalism and the 'new political economy' that it repro- [**AQ4**] duces (Sabel 1982; 1991; Heckscher and Donnellon 1993; Harrison 1997; Castells 2000; Clark 2000; 2003; Adler 2001; Child and McGrath 2001; DiMaggio 2001; Leicht and Fennel 2001; Ackroyd 2002; Jessop 2002; Hudson 2003; Thompson 2003a; Thrift 2004). A plethora of descriptive labels have been developed to try and highlight the major structural and cultural features of these new organizational forms such as 'mobius strip organization', 'virtual corporation', 'post-bureaucratic organization', 'horizontal firm', 'network enterprise', 'knowledge-intensive organization' and 'the neo-entrepreneurial workplace'. Again, there is a considerable range of theoretical and empirical variation in the type of conceptual modelling and sectoral location through and in which these ideas have been developed and applied. However, there is a shared explanatory focus on the more complex corporate forms and flexible organization structures that have emerged in response to the network morphology that now dominates both the political economy and socio-technical infrastructure of contemporary capitalism

on a world-wide scale. Thus, the shift from vertically integrated, centrally managed, bureaucratically administered and task-continuous corporate structures (that dominated the Fordist era of national/international capitalist development between the mid-1940s and late 1970s) to horizontally dispersed, team managed, knowledge-driven and continuously innovating networked enterprises constitutes the central explanatory problem for this 'middle range' body of research and writing. There is a considerable degree of caution regarding the speed, scale, depth and range of this putative general movement to network enterprise. However, there is broad agreement that most Western transnational corporations are re-structuring themselves into much more complex inter-firm and intra-firm networks under the new conditions generated by the shift from a 'materials-based' to an 'information-based' economy (Powell 1990; Gulati et al. 2000; Child and McGrath 2001). Yet, these very same capitalist corporations are also seen as retaining selected, but strategic, elements of the multi-divisional form and the organizational norms and routines associated with it (Pettigrew and Fenton 2000; Whittington and Meyer 2000; Marchington et al. 2005). Within this 'hybridized' context, the business project, enacted by and through a network, emerges as the basic operating unit, and project management becomes the major coordinating and controlling mechanism counteracting endemic tendencies towards excessive differentiation and consequent fragmentation. Thus, the rise of network enterprise seems to signal a dramatic shift in corporate strategy and management away from 'system reproduction' by means of bureaucratic mechanisms of hierarchical command and control and towards 'system transformation' by means of network mechanisms that compress and stretch time-space resources and relations combining rapid global mobility and flexible local diversity (Clark 2003).

The third stream of writing and research developed within the network framework/narrative has been concerned to unpack the micro-level or workplace implications of network-based restructuring at a global and corporate level. Its primary explanatory focus has been directed towards the longer-term impact of global/corporate restructuring on the dynamics of workplace re-organization and the struggles for power and control within and between different occupational groups and cultures caught up in the socio-political upheavals that globalization

has produced. A broad range of research issues have emerged to frame a new research agenda for the sociology of workplace behaviour and organization. These encompass high risk/low trust work environments and cultures, shifting occupational and organizational identities, more extensive and intensive technologies of surveillance and control (Scarbrough and Corbett 1992), and hybridized regimes of enterprise/workplace governance in which the search for 'continuous innovation' and 'high performance' are the major drivers of change. Much of the research and analysis conducted in this area has been focused around the discursive technologies through which organizational identities are reconstructed in post-Fordist/postmodern economies and societies (Kondo 1990; Townley 1994; Casey 1995; DuGay 1996; Jacques 1996; Grant et al. 1998; McKinlay and Starkey 1998; Barker 1999; Whetten 1999; Sewell 2001; Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Knights and McCabe 2003). Professional service business and 'knowledge-intensive organizations' have provided particularly fruitful research sites in which the complex dynamics of discursive innovation and change and their longer-term impact on the emergence of new 'professional' and 'managerial' identities can be explored (Cohen et al. 2002; Dent and Whitehead 2002; Newell et al. 2002; Alvesson 2004; Karreman and Alvesson 2004). The underlying thrust of this work indicates that *hybridized* control strategies and regimes, in which elements of bureaucratic control are selectively combined with elements of concertive control (Barker 1999), are becoming the dominant governance form in high value-added, service sector organizations. Within the latter, the re-engineering of corporate culture and the fabrication of new organizational subjectivities/identities – better aligned with the incessant demands and endemic uncertainties of globalized competition – emerges as the primary focus for managerial action.

Considered in these terms, hybridization is a mutil-level, systemic process that simultaneously responds to and generates increased complexity in organizational forms, relations and practices. Hybrids combine and contain cultures and roles based on contradictory norms and principles by providing mechanisms for loosely-coupling competing 'logics of collective action' that are required in more unstable, uncertain and competitive environments. They tend to facilitate horizontal, rather than vertical, decision-making processes because they have to absorb and cope with much higher

levels of contradiction, tension and conflict than would normally be the case in simpler forms of organizing and managing. Thus, Courpasson (2000: 154) refers to 'soft bureaucracy' as entailing 'the expansion of liberal management based on decentralization and "marketization" of organization and autonomy hand in hand with the development of highly centralized and authoritarian forms of government'.

However, in the more standardized and mass customized 'low value-added' segment of service sector employment, a rather different story emerges of highly individualized and routinized work cultures and relations in which cultural re-engineering and identity management is a somewhat less pressing concern for management teams locked into a 'pile it high, sell it cheap' ethos (Korczynski et al. 2000; Korczynski 2002; 2003). Indeed, within this segment of the service sector the emergence of a neo-Taylorist control strategy (Webster and Robins 1993), in which new information and computer technologies are combined with cultural engineering programmes geared to more indirect forms of work intensification, surveillance and discipline, is the dominant reality (Bunting 2004). Rationalization, through simplification, standardization and intensification, seems to be the order of the day, rather than the enhanced complexity, flexibility and individuality associated with hybrid organizational forms.

Overall, research, analysis and debate around the network theme/narrative have re-shaped the field of organization studies over the last decade or so. They have re-defined the philosophical, theoretical and political terrain on which contemporary organizational studies has developed and challenged the cognitive, intellectual and ideological resources through which that terrain can be mapped, traversed and re-shaped. By mounting a frontal attack on the underlying domain assumptions that have informed the emergence and evolution of the field since the second half of the nineteenth century, network theory and analysis have challenged the compulsory points of departure – the neo-Weberian model of bureaucracy (DuGay 2005), empiricist/objectivist ontology, rationalist/positivist epistemology, social engineering philosophy and managerialist ideology – from which those who wished to traverse the terrain necessarily had to begin their journey. Once these, seemingly fixed and immutable, points of departure have been removed, then all sorts of intellectual possibilities and institutional

potentialities are opened up that were previously denied or at least hidden from view. In turn, these might lead to very different kinds of ideological and practical destinations than those envisaged in more orthodox approaches based on outmoded assumptions of long-run continuity, stability and order.

Nevertheless, considerable scepticism remains as to whether the 'world we have lost' and the 'world we have gained' are as fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed as many network theorists and analysts seem to suggest (Child and McGrath 2001; Jessop 2002; Hudson 2003; Thompson 2003b; Courpasson and Reed 2004; Reed 2005a). For all the academic talk and media hype around highly decentralized networks and dispersed self-managing teams embedded in complex flows of collectively distributed resources, effective strategic power and control remain highly centralized and remote from local needs and aspirations. The academic discourse that has crystallized around 'networks' belies a brute reality in which institutionalized hierarchical power structures stubbornly refuse to conform to their allotted role as social dinosaurs on the verge of extinction in a 'brave new world' of unprecedented spatial mobilities and temporal mutations (Urry 2000). Corporate power and control may be forced to adapt to new conditions of 'high velocity change' and the endemic risks and uncertainties that it generates. This may indeed call for more streamlined organizational flows and more flexible routines and structures in which communities of 'knowledge workers' enjoy levels of work autonomy and socio-economic reward only dreamt of by their counterparts in the 'low value added' service sector. However, these new, network-based organizational forms and cultures remain embedded in power structures and control regimes that are there to protect and legitimate the material, social and political interests of dominant classes and elites. Thus, the rather inflated claims made for the radical impact of network-based forms of organizing on governance structures and control regimes need to be tempered by the realization that:

> One might well question this celebration of the miracle of ICT-enabled global networking in the light of the continued importance of vertical divisions of economic power and authority as well as horizontal divisions of labour in economic networks and the network state … we have yet to see the state dissolve itself into a series of free-floating, self-organizing networks with no overarching co-ordination and

preservation of the right to re-centralize control if the operation and/or results of networks do not fulfill the expectations of state managers, affected interests or public opinion (Jessop 2002: 237).

Points of Intersection

A number of interconnected themes provide the 'analytical spine' around which the seven narrative frames reviewed in this chapter can be interpreted as historically contested attempts to represent and control our understanding of such a strategic institutionalized social practice as 'organization'. As with the discourse of political theory, the discourse of organization theory must be considered as a contestable and contested network of concepts and theories which are engaged in a struggle to impose certain meanings rather than others on our shared understanding of organizational life in late modernity. As Connolly (1993: 225–31) puts it:

> To say that a particular network of concepts is contestable is to say that the standards and criteria of judgement it expresses are open to contestation. To say that such a network is essentially contestable is to contend that universal criteria of reason, as we now understand them, do not suffice to settle these contests definitely. The proponent of essentially contestable concepts charges those who construe the standards operative in their own way of life to be fully expressive of God's will or reason or nature with transcendental provincialism; they treat the standards with which they are intimately familiar as universal criteria against which all other theories, practices and ideals are assessed. They use universalist rhetoric to protect provincial practices … The phrase 'essentially contestable concepts', properly interpreted, calls attention to the internal connection between conceptual debates and debates over the form of the good life, to the reasonable grounds we now have to believe that rational space. For such contestation will persist into the future, to the values of keeping such contests alive even in settings where a determinate orientation to action is required, and to the incumbent task for those who accept the first three themes to expose conceptual closure where it has been imposed artificially.

Connolly (1993: 213–47) develops this argument to sustain a critique of the 'rational universalism' and 'radical relativism' that dominates political analysis in the arenas of Anglo-American analytic philosophy

and continental postmodernism. He is particularly critical of the artificial and unwarranted 'conceptual closure' of Foucauldian accounts of knowledge/power discourses that construe social actors as arti-facts, rather than agents, of power. According to this view, the 'thesis of essential contestation gives way to the practice of total deconstruction' (Connolly 1993: 233). Thus, Connolly conceives of political theory as an essentially contested domain or space in which rival interpretations of political life can be analytically identified and rationally debated by responsible agents without recourse to the 'tran-scendental provincialism' characteristic of either epistemological universalism or cultural relativism. Such a conception can be used to survey the under-lying themes that emerge from the historical account of organization theory provided in this chapter.

These themes can be summarized as follows: a meta-theoretical debate between positivism, con-structionism and realism about social ontology and its implications for the nature and status of the knowledge that organization theorists produce; a theoretical debate concerning the rival explanatory claims of the concepts of 'agency' and 'structure' as they are deployed to account for key features of organization; an analytical debate between the rela-tive priority to be attached to the 'local' as opposed to the 'global' level of analysis in organization stud-ies; a normative debate between 'individualism' and 'collectivism' as competing ideological conceptions of the 'good life' in late modern societies. Each of the seven narratives contributes to and participates within the contested intellectual spaces that these debates open up.

The Ontology/Epistemology Debate

Meta-theoretical debates over the constitution of social reality and its implications for the ways in which we attempt to generate and evaluate knowl-edge claims in the study of organizations have played a much more strategic role in the develop-ment of organization studies over the last decade or so (Reed 2005b). For much of the 1980s and 1990s, this meta-theoretical debate revolved around the rival claims of positivism and constructionism to provide all-inclusive philosophical paradigms that defined the nature of the social reality in which

'organization' was necessarily embedded and the methodological principles and tools through which it could be explained (Donaldson 1985; 1996; Hassard 1990; 1993; Reed and Hughes 1992; Willmott 1993; Tsoukas and Knudsen 2003; Westwood and Clegg 2003). The rationalist, organi-cist/integrationist and market narratives developed on the basis of a strong commitment to a positivist epistemology and an empiricist ontology (in which individual sense-experience and theory-free obser-vational data are regarded as the only firm founda-tions for scientific knowledge). In turn, positivism severely restricts the range of 'knowledge claims' allowable in organization studies to those who pass a rigorous 'trail by method' and the law-like gener-alizations that it sanctions.

In direct contrast, the power, knowledge and jus-tice traditions have been more favourably disposed towards a constructionist ontology and epistemol-ogy in which actors' interpretations and discourses play a much more central explanatory role. Thus, the first three narratives treat 'organization' as an object or entity existing in its own right that be defined and explained in terms of the general prin-ciples or laws governing its operation that can be uncovered through the application of 'positive science'. However, the social constructionist leanings of the second group of three narratives promote a conception of 'organization' as a social constructed and dependent artifact that can only be understood in terms of sets of highly restricted and localized methodological conventions that are open to infi-nite revision and change (Westwood and Clegg 2003; Linstead 2004). Constructionism also takes a much more liberal, not to say permissive, relativistic stance and falls back on the, necessarily restricted and localized, communal norms and practices asso-ciated with specific research communities as they develop over time (Reed 1993; 2005b). Various attempts have been made to follow a middle course between these opposed philosophical paradigms (Bernstein 1983), but the contested ontological and epistemological terrain mapped out by positivism and constructionism continued to shape theoretical development in organization studies for much of the 1980s and 1990s.

More recently, a third meta-theoretical paradigm or framework has emerged in organization studies to challenge the ontological assumptions and epistemo-logical principles on which both positivism and con-structionism traded to legitimate their respective

philosophical and methodological positions. Realism (Putnam 1990) – or more precisely 'critical realism' – has emerged as a radical meta-theoretical alternative to both positivism and constructionism (Reed 1997; 2001; 2003; 2005b; Fleetwood 1999; Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000; Clark 2000; 2003; Lopez and Potter 2001; Danermark et al. 2002; Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004). It maintains that 'organization' is necessarily embedded in pre-existing material and social reality that fundamentally shapes the structures and processes through which it is generated, reproduced and transformed. This means that the epistemological principles and theoretical practices through which we attempt to understand and explain 'organization' must focus on the underlying 'real or generative' structures and mechanisms through which the interrelated entities and processes that constitute it are generated, sustained and changed. By rejecting the material determinism inherent in positivism and the cultural relativism endemic to constructionism, critical realism provides a meta-theoretical framework in which explanatory theories and models of historical and structural change in organizational forms and processes can be developed. The theories and models give full recognition to the complex interplay between pre-existing constraints and contemporary possibilities generated through forms of corporate agency, such as 'organization'.

Indeed, the seventh narrative of 'network' has become a contemporary theoretical and empirical battleground in which the respective philosophical and explanatory claims of positivism, constructionism and realism are fought out. Those who are most sceptical of the 'miracle' of global transformation through ICT-generated networks and their unrivaled capacity to deconstruct, indeed destroy, governance structures based on vertical command and control through hierarchical power and domination – such as Harvey, Jessop, Webster, Rosenberg and Clark – have been much closer to a critical realistic 'take' on social ontology and its explanatory implications. For them, political economy, rather than global culture, is central to any understanding, much less explanation, of the major structural changes occurring now and likely to emerge in the future. In direct contrast, those who have most enthusiastically embraced the doctrine of an ICT-led neo-liberal global transformation and its revolutionary impact on everything from consumption patterns to belief systems and life styles – such as

Giddens, Beck, Lash and Urry – have been much closer to a social constructionist ontology and a postmodernist epistemology. For them, radical transformations in globalized cultural and symbolic frameworks and the discursive formations through which these are represented and interpreted, rather than underlying continuities in capitalist political economies, are the major focus for analysis and debate. Those who remain closest to policy-making and implementing elites in the dominant OECD countries – such as Fukuyama, Sabel and Pfeffer – are committed to some variant of the positivist paradigm and the legitimacy that it provides for globalized neo-liberalism and market populism (Frank 2000). All the signs currently indicate that this underlying philosophical and theoretical struggle between positivism, constructionism and realism will continue to shape the emerging research agenda that the network narrative has engendered over the last decade.

The Agency/Structure Debate

Layder (1994: 4) argues that the 'agency/structure' debate in social theory 'concentrates on the question of how creativity and constraint are related through social activity –how can we explain their co-existence?' Those who emphasize agency focus on an understanding of social and organizational order that stresses the social practices through which human beings create and reproduce institutions. Those located on the 'structure' side highlight the importance of the objectified external relations and patterns that determine and constrain social interaction within specific institutional forms (Reed 1988).

Within these generic narrative frames, a theoretical fault line has emerged between two fundamental conceptions of 'organization'. One the one side of this line, a conception of organization has appeared that refers to determinate structures which condition individual and collective behaviour. On the other side stands a conception of organization that is a theoretical shorthand for consciously fabricated action networks through which such structures are generated and reproduced as temporary and constantly shifting ordering mechanisms or devices. The rational, integrationist and market narratives come down firmly in support of the structural conception of organization; while researchers working within the power, knowledge and justice traditions support the agency conception of organization.

Much effort has been expended in trying to overcome, or at least reconcile, this theoretical duality through approaches which emphasize the mutually constituted and constituting nature of agency and structure in the reproduction of organization (e.g. Giddens 1984; 1993; Smith 1993; Boden 1994; Willmott 1994). However, the underlying conflict between competing explanatory logics remains a source of creative tension within organization studies and will do for the foreseeable future (Reed 2003; 2005b).

There is always the danger that agency-oriented conceptions will detach the organization from its surrounding societal context and be unable to deal with major shifts in dominant institutional forms. On the other hand, structure-oriented views tend towards a more deterministic explanatory logic in which society can crush agency through monolithic force (Whittington 1994: 64). Whittington's (1994: 71) conclusion is that organization analysis needs a 'theory of strategic choice adequate to the importance of managerial agency in our society'. His rejection of the theoretical extremes of individualistic reductionism and collectivist determinism is well taken. The need to develop explanatory theories in which 'agency derives from the simultaneously enabling and contradictory nature of the structural principles by which people act' (Whittington 1994: 72) constitutes one of the central issues on the research agenda for organization analysis. Again, organization theorists and analysts working within the critical realist meta-theoretical paradigm referred to earlier have focused on the 'agency/structure' debate as a, indeed *the*, major analytical and theoretical issue confronting the field of organization studies. They have argued that the ontological premises and explanatory principles on which critical realism rests can provide exactly the kind of approach that meets Whittington's demand for a non-deterministic theory of collective or corporate agency that fully recognizes the crucial importance of the complex interplay between structural constraint and pro-active agency (Reed 1997; 2003; 2005b).

The Local/Global Debate

The agency/structure debate raises fundamental questions about the logics of explanation that organization analysts should follow and the constructivism/positivism debate highlights deep-seated controversy and contestation over the representational forms through which the knowledge should

be developed, evaluated and legitimated. The localism/ globalism debate that emerges from the narratives focuses on questions relating to the level of analysis at which organizational research and analysis should be pitched. As Layder (1994) maintains, questions relating to levels of analysis crystallize around different models of social reality and the analytic properties of entities or objects located at different levels within those models. Thus, the 'micro/ macro' debate relates to whether the emphasis should be on 'intimate and detailed aspects of face-to-face conduct [or] more impersonal and large-scale phenomena' (Layder 1994: 6).

A range of theoretical approaches developed under the auspices of the power, knowledge and justice frameworks tend to favour a focus on local/micro-organizational processes and practices; while the rational, integrationist and market narratives take a more global/macro conception of the 'reality of organization' as their starting point. Ethnomethodological and post-structuralist approaches take the local focus the furthest; while population ecology, neo-institutionalism and theoretical approaches (such as labour process theory and analysis) based on critical realist principles have a more well-developed global level of analysis. Approaches fixated with the local/micro-level of analysis in organization studies run the risk of basing their research on 'flat ontologies' which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to go beyond everyday practices in which members are engaged (Layder 1994: 218–29; Archer 1995; 2000). As a result, their theoretical capability to perceive, much less explain, the intricate and complex intermeshing of local practices – in all their variability and contingency – and institutionalized structures is severely compromised (Smith 1988). The corresponding danger with 'stratified ontologies' is that they may underestimate the explanatory significance of the dialectic between and mutual constituting of social structures and social practices.

The prevailing tendency in organization analysis to shift the analytical focus so far towards the local/micro-level risks losing sight of the wider structural constraints and resources which shape the process of organizational (re)production or 'ordering'. Some studies, however, manage to keep the highly intricate, but absolutely vital, intermeshing of the local and the global, agency and structure, construction and constraint, constantly in view. Indeed, examples of the most significant recent

research in the study of organizations is to be found in Zuboff's (1988) work on information technology, Jackall's (1988) analysis of the 'moral mazes' to be discovered in large American business corporations, Kondo's (1990) research on the 'crafting of selves' in Japanese work organizations, Zukin's (1993) work on the transformation of urban landscapes and organizational forms and Sennett's (1998) critique of the corrosion of moral character engendered by globalized capitalism. These studies re-discover and renew the mutual constituting of situated practices and structural forms that lies at the core of any type of organization analysis which reaches beyond the boundaries of everyday understanding to connect with the historical, social and organizational dynamics which frame trajectories of long-term socio-economic development.

The Individualism/Collectivism Debate

The final analytical vertebra constituting the theoretical backbone of this brief history of organization studies is the ideological debate between individualistic and collectivist visions of organizational order. Individualistic theories of organization are grounded in an analytical and normative outlook that sees organizational order as an aggregated outcome of individual actions and reactions that are always potentially reducible to their component parts. Thus, market-based theories of organization, and the rich vein of decision-making theorizing that is woven around this individualistic perspective (Whittington 1994), deny that collective concepts, such as 'organization', have any ontological or methodological status beyond shorthand code for the performances of individual actors. The ideological justification for this ontological/methodological precept lies in the belief that forms of social organization that go beyond direct interpersonal association can only be justified in terms of their positive contribution to the protection of individual freedom and autonomy.

Collectivism lies at the opposite end of the ideological/methodological spectrum in that it refuses to recognize individual actors as constituent components of formal organization; they simply become ciphers for the cognitive, emotional and political programming provided by larger structures. If individualism offers a vision of organization as the unintended creation of individual actors

following the dictates of their particular instrumental and political objectives, then collectivism treats organization as an objective entity that imposes itself on actors with such force that they have little or no choice but to obey its commands (Whittington 1990; 1994; Reed 2003). The integrationist narrative relies on this view most strongly insofar as it identifies a logic of organizational functioning and development which goes on 'behind the backs' of individuals and tightly constrains the decision-making options available to the latter virtually to the point of extinction. While it has become much less fashionable of late, such collectivism continues to offer a conception of organization and organization analysis that directly challenges the dominance of analytical perspectives which are grounded in an individualist/reductionist programme.

[AQ5]

Narrating Theoretical Futures

Law (1994b: 248–9) has suggested that, over the last two decades, organization studies has gone through a 'bonfire of the certainties' in relation to its ontological foundations, theoretical commitments, methodological conventions and ideological predilections. Domain assumptions relating to the analytical dominance of 'order' over 'disorder', 'structure' over 'process', 'internalities' over 'externalities', 'boundaries' over 'ecologies' and 'rationality' over 'emotion' have been put to the flames in a coruscating critique of innate theoretical hubris and methodological pretentiousness. He outlines two possible responses to this situation: 'carry on regardless' or 'let a thousand flowers bloom'. The first option suggests a retreat back into, appropriately refurbished, intellectual fortifications that offer protection against the radically destabilizing effects of continuing critique and deconstruction. It supports a general regrouping around an accepted theoretical paradigm and core research programme that counteracts the fragmentary dynamic let loose by approaches that have broken with orthodoxy. The second calls for a further proliferation of 'more questions and uncertainties and … more narratives that generate questions' (Law 1994b: 249). It need not necessarily result in organization studies slipping into a vortex of anarchic and uncontrollable relativism, Law (1994b: 249) argues, because it sensitizes us to the need to preserve and build on the

intellectual pluralism that critique has made possible and to reveal 'the processes by which story-telling and ordering produce themselves'.

As has already been intimated in earlier sections of this chapter, the urge to retreat and re-group back into reheated intellectual orthodoxy is a powerful tendency within the field at the present time. In their different ways, Donaldson (1985; 1988; 1989; 1994; 2003) and Pfeffer (1993) attempt to revive the narrative of organization studies as a scientific enterprise that speaks directly to the technical needs and political interests of policy-making elites, an aspiration and leitmotiv which has dominated the field's development since the early decades of this century. Their call for paradigmatic consensus and pragmatic discipline around a dominant theoretical and methodological orthodoxy to deliver, cumulatively, codified bodies of knowledge that are 'user-friendly' to policy-making elites resonates with the current desire to re-establish intellectual order and control in an increasingly fragmented and uncertain world. They are intellectual and ideological heirs to the technocratic scientism that pervades the rational, integrationist and market narrative traditions reviewed earlier. Their call for intellectual closure around a refurbished theoretical paradigm and ideological consensus over the restrictive technocratic needs that organization analysis should serve rests on the assumption that a return to orthodoxy is a viable political project.

The alter ego of the 'return to orthodoxy' vision is the 'incommensurability thesis' into which new intellectual life has been pumped by the growing influence of post-structuralist and postmodernist approaches as represented in Foucauldian-inspired discourse theory and actor-network theory (Jackson and Carter 2000). Supporters of the 'incommensurability thesis' luxuriate in epistemological, theoretical and cultural relativism. They reject the possibility of shared discourse between conflicting paradigmatic positions in favour of an unqualified relativism that completely politicizes intellectual debate and adjudication between rival traditions. Relations of mutual exclusivity between paradigms offer polarized visions of organization and languages of organization analysis that cannot be reconciled. Thus, the rival narratives that constitute 'our' field are locked into a struggle for intellectual power with no hope of mediation. A transcendental Nietzschean 'will to power' and a geopolitical Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' impose intellectual and institutional parameters within which this struggle has to be fought. There is no question of sustaining a narrative through argument, logic and evidence; there is simply the power of a dominant paradigm and the disciplinary practices that it generates and legitimates. There is no recognition of negotiated ground rules within which contestation can rationally proceed (Connolly 1993: 233–4), or of a shared interest in mediating mutual suspicion and rivalry. The conception of organization studies as an historically contested and contextually mediated terrain thus gives way to the practice of total deconstruction and the unqualified relativism on which it rests (Linstead 2004).

This 'Hobson's choice' between re-vamped orthodoxy and radical relativism is not the only option: greater sensitivity to the socio-historical context and political dynamics of theory development need not degenerate into unreflective and total deconstruction as the only viable alternative to a resurgent orthodoxy. Willmott's (1993) reworking of Kuhn's approach to the process of theoretical development within natural and social science offers a way out of the intellectual cul-de-sac in which both orthodoxy and relativism terminate. His focus on the communal processes and practices of critical reflection required to identify anomalies within existing theories offers a more attractive alternative to both the hubris of 'carry on regardless' and the despondency of 'anything goes'. Willmott (1993) resists the dogma of paradigm incommensurability, while highlighting the crucial role of institutionalized academic politics in determining access to the resources and infrastructure (appointments, grants, journals, publishers, etc.) that shape the conditions under which different paradigms of knowledge production are legitimated. However, this sensitivity to the 'production practices' that facilitate the acceptance of certain theories of organization and marginalize or exclude others does not go far enough. Willmott's analysis reveals little awareness of the ways in which these production practices mesh with *adjudicatory practices*, built up over a protracted period of intellectual development, to form the negotiated rules through which competing approaches and traditions can be evaluated. We need to develop greater awareness of the subtle and intricate ways in which material conditions and intellectual practices intermesh to generate and sustain the inherently dynamic narrative traditions and

research programmes that constitute the field of organization studies over time.

'Institutional reflexivity' (Giddens 1993; 1994) is not only the defining feature of the phenomena to which organizational researchers attend; it is also a constitutive feature of the intellectual trade they practice. The study of organization is both progenitor of and heir to this institutionalized reflexivity in that it necessarily depends on and systematically cultivates a critical and questioning attitude to its concerns, as mediated through a dynamic interaction within and between the narrative traditions that constitute its intellectual inheritance. Students of organization cannot avoid this inheritance: it sets the background assumptions and moral context that informs the decisions that researchers make concerning ideology, epistemology and theory. These choices are made within an inheritance that is not simply 'handed down', but is constantly revisited, re-evaluated and renewed as it passes through the critical debate and reflection which is the intellectual life-blood of organization studies.

Reflexivity and criticality are institutionalized within the intellectual practices that constitute the study of organization. The specific criteria through which these 'generalized mandates' are defined and the particular socio-economic and political conditions under which they are activated vary across time and space. The material and symbolic power mobilized by different academic communities clearly affects the survival of rival narrative traditions. Nevertheless, the indelible link between practical reasoning, within and between competing analytically structured narratives, and theory development in a dynamic socio-historical context, can be erased by neither conservative orthodoxy nor radical relativism. It is the confrontation between rival narrative traditions, particularly when their internal tensions and contradictions or anomalies are most clearly and cruelly exposed, that provides the essential intellectual dynamism through which the study of organization re-discovers and renews itself. As Perry (1992: 98) argues, 'we cannot escape from either history or the game of culture. All theorizing is therefore partial; all theorizing is selective'. However, this is not a rationalization for a forced paradigmatic consensus or for unrestrained paradigm proliferation. Instead, it calls for a more sensitive appreciation of the complex interaction between a changing set of institutional conditions

and intellectual forms as they combine to reproduce the reflexivity and criticality that is the hallmark of contemporary organization studies.

The underlying thrust of the chapter is to suggest that organization theorists have developed, and will continue to develop, a network of critical debates within and between narrative traditions that will indelibly shape their field's evolution. Three debates seem particularly intense and potentially productive at the present time. The first is the perceived need to develop a 'theory of the subject' (Casey 2002) that does not degenerate into the simplicities of reductionism or the absurdities of determinism (Reed 2003). More recent work on the discursive practices and formations through which new organizational cultures and identities are fashioned and re-fashioned is central to this area of concern (Grant et al. 2004). The second is a general desire to construct a 'theory of organization' that analytically and methodologically mediates between the restrictions of localism and the blandishments of globalism (Calas 1994). This becomes particularly important at a time and within an era in which the 'hybridization' of organizational forms generated by global shifts in contemporary capitalist political economies, and the highly complex macro-, meso- and micro-level networks through which it occurs, necessitates more sophisticated understandings of and explanations for the dynamics of change at a multiplicity of interrelated levels of analysis. Work on the new political economy of globalized capitalism (Clark 2003) and the global 'service or knowledge class' through which it is maintained (Reed 1996; Sklair 2001; Alvesson 2004) is central to this key theme of changing organizational forms and the long-term development of organization theory as a 'critical science' (Willmott 2003). The third key area of contemporary debate is the imperative of nurturing a 'theory of (intellectual) development' that resists the constrictions of conservativism and the distortions of relativism.

The philosophical and theoretical resources through which contemporary organization theory might be most appropriately developed as a 'critical science' remain the subject of continuing intellectual controversy and political struggle. Some look to social constructionism and post-structuralism as a major source of intellectual inspiration for developing understanding and critique of the discursive practices and formations through which

unaccountable concentrations of power and control are generated and sustained (Deetz 1992; Flyvbjerg 2001; Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Hatch and Yanov 2003; Tsoukas and Knudsen 2003; Willmott 2003). Others, while rejecting the search for invariant 'laws or principles of organization' typical of positivist organization theory (Donaldson 1996; 2003), argue that a critical science of organization must consistently retain core philosophical principles and theoretical practices if it is to develop forms of scientific knowledge that simultaneously facilitate 'good explanation' and the efficacious practical action that can flow from it (Clark 2000; 2003; Reed 2003; 2005b; Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004).

Thus, the intellectual and ideological pluralism that has characterized modern organization theory and analysis as it emerged from the second industrial revolution that gathered momentum and pace from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards seem set to remain with us well into the twenty-first century. This should not be seen as providing a justification for a retreat into an intellectual orthodoxy in which all the uncertainties, ambiguities, tensions and conflicts released by the breakdown of the post-1945 'orthodox consensus' in social and organization theory are either unceremoniously 'swept under the carpet' or selectively edited out of their past, present and future. Neither does it justify a celebration of cognitive, linguistic, cultural and ideological 'incommensurability' (Jackson and Carter 2001) in which groups of organization theorists literally inhabit separate worlds and the radical ontological idealism and epistemological relativism that it legitimates. If we are to develop theorizations of organization and organizing that facilitate adequate explanations of the way the world is and efficacious practical political interventions that may flow from them, then we have to engage with our history and the rich intellectual inheritance that it bequeaths to us. Only in this way can we hope to continue our journey across the contested intellectual terrain that defines organization studies as a field of study that has been in the making over the last two centuries.

[AQ6]

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