

Power Dynamics and Organizational Change: A Comparison of Perspectives

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This article offers a framework for understanding power dynamics and organizational change. We use five perspectives to explore the relationships between change approaches, the power used to effect changes, the agents involved in the change process, the most prominent change strategies and influence tactics, and the behavioural outcomes. The perspectives are related to different levels of analysis and contingency factors. New research questions are being raised about the scope and connection of the five perspectives, the institutionalization of power, the way power dynamics hinder organizational change, the will and skill to use power in change processes, and the power of communication and democratic dialogue in organizational learning.

INTRODUCTION

This special issue of the *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* is about power dynamics and organizational change. In this issue theoretical models, research findings and practical experiences are presented to examine power processes, decision making, influence tactics, resistance to change, management of change, and effects of change processes in organizations. As guest editors we wanted to introduce this issue by discussing different perspectives on power and organizational change, and to explore the relationships between power dynamics, organizational change, and the results of change efforts.

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Organizational change processes are influenced by the institutionalization of power and the behaviour of interest groups in and around organizations (Mintzberg, 1983; Pettigrew, 1973, Pfeffer, 1992). For the past decade or so, both the power embedded in formal organizational structures as well as the processes and the existing organizational arrangements have been changing dramatically. The pressures of global competition and deregulation have led many companies and institutions to search for new forms of organization and different models for managing people. Companies become flatter, leaner, and less functionally oriented. Levels of management are being eliminated and corporate staff numbers are being reduced. Questions are being raised about the access of information, the control of resources, and the role of formal authority. Responsibilities, power, and accountability are being channelled to executives in charge. New forms of employment relations are being developed and the roles of labour unions and works councils are changing. The institutional and political systems play an important role in organizational change. When organizations are changed fundamentally, the existing balance of power changes as well (Greiner & Schein, 1988; Pfeffer, 1992). Forces in and around the organization trying to maintain this balance can hinder such changes. Other forces can stimulate the change processes (Argyris, 1990; Beer, 1988; Kanter, 1993).

In organizational change, power is used by CEOs, top managers, change managers, consultants, work councils, employees, and other interest groups. The goal of these groups is to manage and influence the change process by using power and influence tactics. In traditional management views, actions taken to challenge or influence organizational change processes by other groups than management are seen as resistance to change since those actions fall outside the legitimate activities of the change program. (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). Power, organizational change, and resistance are closely related concepts. In change processes, various actors try to influence each other. Consequently, since the concept of power involves power over another person, the use of power can easily lead to resistance (Clegg, 1994). However, not all influence attempts result in resistance. In change processes power and influence can equally well lead to compliance or even a commitment to the change efforts (Falbe & Yukl, 1992).

In organizational change, part of the power dynamics is observable for the groups involved, and the influence attempts can be displayed directly and consciously by the agents. However, power dynamics can also be more difficult to observe and sometimes they are even unconscious. Management can exclude certain issues from decision making during the change process thereby constraining full and equal participation (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). In a process of symbol construction or management of meaning, power can be used to create legitimacy for outcomes, decisions, values, and demands (Pettigrew, 1977). Power dynamics are invisible and almost unconscious when people's perceptions, cognitions, and preferences are shaped in such a way that they identify with the change objectives and unknowingly unconsciously accept the

new organizational structures and systems while their own objectives are less realized than those of other groups (Lukes, 19794).

There is a lot of confusion concerning the definition of power (e.g. Hardy, 1995). We prefer a broad definition and see power as a dynamical social process affecting opinions, emotions, and behaviour of interest groups in which inequalities are involved with respect to the realization of wishes and interests. In studying power dynamics there are many divergent approaches (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). We do not attempt to integrate these approaches because the diversity of perspectives is useful to understand the dynamics of power in organizational change. In this introductory article we present five perspectives on power dynamics, combine them with models of change, and we reflect on the outcomes of the power dynamics and change processes. Our goal is to offer a framework for understanding power dynamics and organizational change, to explore different approaches, and to introduce and relate these approaches to the other contributions to this issue.

PERSPECTIVES ON POWER DYNAMICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

In this section we present five perspectives on power dynamics and relate these perspectives to models of organizational change. These five perspectives are not comprehensive yet they offer a good outlook on important views on power. Moreover, the approaches do not exclude each other but can be used in combinations in organizational change processes.

The first perspective deals with observable and intentionally used authority and legitimate power of agents. This perspective is rooted in a social psychological research tradition that investigated power bases. Viewed from this perspective, change in organizations is demanded by top managers and they need their position power in order to effect change.

The second perspective also has power bases as a starting point. However, in this perspective personal power is required to make change happen in organizations. It is assumed that power dynamics are mostly visible. In change processes managers and consultants exercise influence by referring to facts and logical arguments thereby mainly relying on their expertise.

The third perspective is rooted in management and organization theory which emphasizes the distribution of power in organizations and the use of power by agencies to control processes of organizational change. Power use becomes visible when different interest groups negotiate about the direction of the change process.

The fourth perspective also has its foundations in management and organization theory but its focus shifts towards the less observable and unconscious forms of power use. Central issues in this view are the construction of perceptions, values, and norms through management of meaning. Transition

can be achieved by following a sales model that stresses the positive aspects of the change process.

The fifth perspective assumes open discussion, visible power processes, and agents that mutually influence each other's attitudes and opinions through democratic dialogue. The change model in this perspective has many characteristics of the organizational learning and organizational development schools.

Position Power, Domination and the Power Model of Change

Early social and organizational psychological research of power focused on describing power bases of managers. In this perspective power is viewed as the potential ability of an agent to influence a target within a certain system or context (French & Raven, 1959). The use of power requires that you control or possess relevant power sources in order to get another person to do what you want. Bass (1960) distinguished two power sources: position power and personal power. Position power stems from a person's formal position and implies the legitimate authority to use positive and negative sanctions such as rewards and coercion. Thus, position power mostly refers to the existing organizational hierarchy that renders management the ability to control the behaviour of others and to change the organizational structure and processes. The use of power is observable and direct. In order to employ sanctions it is necessary to know to what extent employees perform the required actions. Therefore, management uses control systems. The power embedded in formal organizational structures and processes is directed at domination. Actions taken to challenge this domination or to question the proposals of management to change the organization are seen as resistance (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). In this view resistance to change is illegitimate behaviour and an attack on organizational interests.

The model of organizational change related to this perspective can be described as a *power model* of change (Bouwen, 1995). In this model, the leader is an authority figure who imposes and declares organizational change and effects the changes by using legitimate power. The criteria for effectiveness are quick technical and financial results. Decision making is based on the exclusion of employees and the one-sided realization of interests of management and shareholders. Change is being enforced by using power-coercive strategies (Chin & Benne, 1976; Dunphy & Stace, 1988). When management is protected by its legitimate power in a social system and able to use economic sanctions, it can use power-coercive strategies to effect changes which they consider desirable, without much questioning of the part of those with less power. In these situations a power-coercive way of decision making is accepted as in the nature of things and is seen as functional to the organization. The use of such an approach is

common when an organization is in crisis and rapid action is needed. This strategy will result in compliance when the groups in the organization depend on each other, share a sense of urgency to take immediate action, and are not aware of alternative strategies. When individuals or groups in the organization realize that their interests are not being served by those who are in control and show resistance to organizational change, the coercive power of the leaders can be challenged.

The limitations of the power model are related to the strong top-down approach to change. The top management of an organization initiates, leads, and controls the process, which is characterized by economic and technical rationality. Such processes follow a linear design and have a clear starting point and desired situation. A tight planning is necessary to attain the goals of the change. Many of these design approaches fail or experience difficulties with the realization of goals (Boonstra, 1997; Boonstra & Vink, 1996). These problems partly arise because the power model allows little participation of members of the organization and disregards learning possibilities.

In her contribution to this issue, Bradshaw describes this perspective on power and organizational change as surface-personal power because it is visible and based on the power bases of persons in the organization. Munduate and Dorado also make a distinction between personal power and position power of managers, and they relate position power to hierarchical position in the organization. Emans and Van Tuuren illustrate how formal power and sanction power are used in a merger operation. They conclude that these forms of power are not employed effectively and result in resistance to change. The contribution of Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra focuses on influence tactics used by agents in constructive change processes. Their study shows claiming authority or referring to organizational policies, rules, and practice, is not used frequently to establish the legitimacy of organizational change. The use of demands, threats, and control to influence targets is used more frequently in change processes. Neither of the two influence tactics is successful for getting people committed to change programmes. In his contribution to this issue, Pichault concludes that an autocratic style of management will result in clandestine practices and rejection of the objectives of change. Pettigrew and McNulty describe that it is possible to challenge the position power of board members and chief executive officers. However, to challenge the position of the chairman effectively requires the leadership and organization of a coup and the will and skill to use other power bases and influence tactics than the formal ones.

Personal Power, Influence, and the Expert Model of Change

The study of power bases was not limited to position power. French and Raven's (1959) classical typology includes not only legitimate power, reward power, and

coercive power but also expert power and referent power. In subsequent publications this typology was extended and refined (e.g. Raven, 1992; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Typical for most of these extensions is the emphasis on power sources connected to particular abilities, skills, and experience of an actor. Bass (1960) uses the concept of personal power for expertise, referent power, charisma, and the like. In this view, power can be defined as the capacity to influence another person or group to accept one's own ideas or plans (Greiner & Schein, 1988). This perspective on power is derived from the social psychological theory of resource dependency (Emerson, 1962). This theory describes how power bases can be effectively developed and used. Change agents need power bases to influence others.

Research on how change agents gain influence in change processes suggest six important power bases (Beer, 1980). The first power base is *competence, professional capability, and effectivity* as seen by other actors involved in change processes. This power base corresponds to what French and Raven (1959) called expert power. Beer's second and third power bases are related to coalition power. Change agents can increase their power by developing *multiple relationships* in the organization with key power figures. These relationships give change agents access to key individuals who know what is going on in the organization. Multiple sponsorships in powerful places will support the implementation of organizational change and increase the power of change agents. By developing staff support as a power base, managers can multiply the amount of resources and influence strategies because these sponsorships give them access to power figures in the top of the organization. By visibly contributing to the improvement of an organization, change agents can realize a positive reputation, status, and credibility, and *reputation* is the fourth power base. *Group support* is the fifth power base. A group is much more powerful when it is cohesive, when its members agree on common goals and strategies, and when they support each other. The sixth power base is the control over *resources and knowledge* in processes of change. If change agents can offer services to clients when they need to solve problems, they enhance their influence because they have a resource that is needed by important agents.

In addition to these six power bases, *information* power allows a change agent to influence others by providing information, withholding it, distorting it, or redirecting the flow of information towards selected recipients. *Tradition* can be used by the agent to evoke stories and myths, and to give meaning to specific events. *Charisma* is the ability to inspire people and to arouse enthusiasm by appealing to someone's values, ideals, and aspirations. An agent who possesses this power base has an easier job when he or she wants to convince people that change is valuable. As we already mentioned, the power bases described here are important in processes of organizational change. However, as Hardy and Clegg (1996) stated, all lists of power bases are incomplete since different phenomena become resources in different contexts.

The change model that fits best in this perspective on power is the *expert or design model* (Bouwen, 1995; Boonstra, 1997). Although every person and group in an organization has access to power bases, the process of change is often initiated, co-ordinated and controlled by top management. Change agents play an important role in this model. Change agents use expert knowledge to assist groups in the organization with analysing and solving problems. The educational background of the change agents seems to be connected to the way problems are analysed and solved. Change agents with a background in information technology, business engineering or business administration usually start the change process with an information-processing rationality or an economic-technological rationality. Top management, striving for efficient service of organizational goals, employs behavioural expert knowledge in the analysis of sociotechnical systems and in the design of more efficient work systems. In this situation behavioural science becomes a form of social engineering, used to assist management with an efficient implementation operation within the perspective and goals as defined by management.

The expert model emphasizes the design of a new strategies, structures, and systems. In general, the change process starts with the designation of abstract objectives, and particular attention is given to the desired output of the organization, the formal transformation process, and the related information processes. The change process is managed as a special project, with clear-cut targets, and a restricted number of alternatives. The decision making is highly structured and formalized. The implementation is aimed at creating acceptance for the new organization and finding solutions for different forms of resistance during the implementation. The dominant change strategy is the empirical-rational strategy (Chin & Benne, 1976). This strategy depends on knowledge as a major ingredient of power. In this view knowledge is a legitimate source of power. The desirable direction of influence is from experts, that is, from those who know, to those who do not know, through processes of dissemination of information and rational persuasion. The use of the expert model of change and the empirical-rational strategy seems suitable in a predictable and highly structured situation where the problem is known, not too complex, and a solution is within reach.

The problems with the expert model of organizational change lie in an insufficient consideration of the cultural and political impediments and the rise of resistance to change within line management and other groups in the organization. Presently, it is argued that resistance can be prevented or averted by propagating a vision, by elaborately communicating about the changes, and by having line managers and other groups participate in the process of change (Boonstra, 1997). Behavioural science knowledge is now used to realize compliance or commitment with the change effort. Of course, it is possible to use expert knowledge and power sources in a process of organizational development and bottom-up changes. We will now have a look at these possibilities.

This approach of personal power and the use of power bases by agents connects to what Bradshaw calls surface-personal power in the next contribution to this issue. The use of this kind of power is visible most of the time and agents are consciously using their power bases to influence others. Emans and Van Tuuren describe the use of expert power in a merger process. Decision makers only had moderate expertise, while the expert power in the organizations was high and functioned as a neutralizer of the expert power of the decision makers. This finding nicely illustrates both the relational aspect of power and the fact that the possession of a power base in itself is not enough. A power base becomes more valuable when it is relatively scarce, that is, when other players do not have access to the same power base. Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra conclude that the use of logical arguments and the use of theories, models, and experience to persuade others is frequently used by agents in change processes. However, they also refer to a study by Yukl and his colleges that showed this influence tactic to result more often in compliance with proposals for change than in commitment. The importance of personal power bases and the will and skill to use power is illustrated in the contribution of Pettigrew and McNulty. They show that there is a relationship between experience and perceived influence in the boardroom. Also, they conclude that board members use multiple relationships, sponsorship, group support (coalition power), and information power in actions to dismiss the chairperson. Pichault shows that resources such as knowledge and expertise are important contextual factors in power games and in the structuring of organizations.

Structural Power, Exchange, and the Negotiation Model of Change

In the two perspectives on power already discussed, we focused on people trying to get others to do what they want them to do. In the perspective of structural power, the emphasis moves away from power of individuals towards the power of interdependent groups working in organizations. The relational networks of the interdependent groups are characterized by co-operation and competition. On the one hand, we see that people are dependent on each other and on the other hand they pursue their own interests. Organizational processes are influenced both by mutual harmonization of parts of the system, and by the way power is structured and used. In organizations, the distribution of power is characterized by stability. This stability results from a commitment to decisions concerning the realization of the business strategy, the structuring of the organization, and the distribution of power that emerged from the past (Pfeffer, 1981). The existing structure and the distribution of power are believed to be natural and unquestionable. In organizations there is a balance of power between the interests of individuals and of the interdependent groups. Sometimes these interests are at odds, which can result in conflicting objectives, power games, and controversies

in decision making (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971; Pfeffer, 1992). The tension between interest of individuals and groups is viewed as inevitable and as a normal part of the way getting things done (Dalton, 1959; Pettigrew, 1973). This perspective on power in organizations is also known as the pluralist view (Emerson, 1962; for an overview, Hardy & Clegg, 1996). The pluralist view is related to the exchange theory in social psychology in which the power of an actor is derived from the possibilities this actor or his or her group have to provide others with relevant resources (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

The pluralist view maintains that groups and departments have to co-operate and that agreement between them is necessary for the functioning of the organization and to warrant its continuity. The power process is characterized by negotiation and exchange of resources. Some departments have more power than others. The departmental power bases are related to what the work unit does, but the power of different departments varies among organizations and can change over time (Perrow, 1970; Pfeffer, 1992). There are three underlying dimensions that determine departmental power bases (Hickson et al., 1971). The first dimension is the ability to cope with uncertainty that influences the day-to-day operation of an organization. Departments that can cope effectively with uncertainty can increase their power and their position in negotiation processes. The second dimension is the substitutability of the department's functions and activities of the organization. Departments can prevent substitution and acquire control over scarce resources through shielding from others how the work is actually performed. The third dimension is centrality. Centrality refers to the power of a department that derives from the dependency of other departments and their significant role in the flow of work.

The change model related to the pluralist approach is characterized by *conflict management and negotiation*. All interest groups play their roles in the change process, based on their position in the organization, their departmental power sources, and their own interests. In change processes, both the structure and systems of the organization and the balance of power are brought up for discussion. In the process, different coalitions will direct their attention at securing their interests, objectives, and power positions (Kanter, 1993; Steensma & Boer, 1997). Resistance to change is seen as a result of the exercise of power and can be understood as a struggle to achieve power or to escape from it. The change managers focus on preventing conflict in the change process by regulating participation of the groups involved, by top-down decision making and implementation, or by negotiation about the objectives of the change process and the way it is organized and managed.

The dominant change strategy is the exchange strategy (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977). This strategy implies that a change agent sets the conditions for the way change is realized by providing the material or other means. Positive outcomes are predicted to parties who accept the change. The exchange strategy appeals to

the comparison of costs and benefits parties make and it stresses what will be gained by the change. Negotiations are directed at smoothing opposition, tensions, and differences in opinion between parties and the goal is to accomplish an agreement that does justice to the interest of all involved parties. In the change process most of the negotiations are visible and parties are aware of the power processes. In the negotiations many of the power bases described earlier are used to secure a good starting position and to influence the process by building good arguments, threatening with sanctions, setting the agenda, or controlling the procedures. Management usually possesses a considerable amount of position and personal power. It can use these power bases to win conflicts and to strengthen their position in the negotiation process. This increases the chance that their interests are realized at the expense of the interests of other parties involved in the change process.

The use of an exchange strategy seems suitable in politically sensitive situations. If multiple parties with opposing interests and a balanced power relationship are involved in a process of organizational change, negotiations will be needed to come to an agreement about for instance the goals of the change, the way the change is going to be implemented, and the role of the different parties in the change process.

The pluralist's view has been criticized because it suggests that all involved parties can defend their interests in the negotiation process. However, the power embedded in formal organizational structures and processes support the interests of management more than those of others. Organizational structures, rules, regulations, procedures, decision making, and negotiation are seen as products and reflections of a struggle for control that puts management in a privileged position (Edwards, 1979; Giddens, 1979; Hardy & Clegg, 1996).

In this issue, Bradshaw's surface-structural power is related to the pluralist view of power. The power processes are rooted in the structure and systems of the organization, the power processes are mostly visible, and the exercise of power is a conscious activity, at least for some of the agents or groups involved in the change process. The path to change she suggest is restructuring the organization and redistributing the structural sources of power. As the case study by Emans and Van Tuuren shows, decision making and implementation is troublesome and exhausting for parties involved in fundamental change processes such as mergers. Resistance to change the existing distribution of power results in a complex implementation process. Munduate and Dorado report a field study that examines power bases, conflict styles, and conflict management. They analyse various modes of conflict behaviour that parties develop in conflict episodes in order to achieve effective outcomes in the exchange process. The results of their study support the idea that effective conflict handling by management is based on informal power sources and integrating and compromising styles in negotiation processes by interest groups.

This contribution is a good example of the pluralist view of power in organizations and the way management handles conflicts uses different power bases. Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra describe the use of influence tactics by four groups involved in constructive change processes. Exchange strategies are used moderately frequently by all groups. The use of this strategy by management results mostly in compliance with the change effort, but it can also lead to resistance to change. The importance of structural factors in the use of power is stressed by Pettigrew and McNulty. They maintain that power is inherently situational and has to be understood in its structural conditions and contextual factors such as the outcome of historical exchanges, organizational culture, the way change processes are shaped by features of the content and the environment, and the political, social, and legal context of power processes. Pichault focuses on the contingencies of the distribution and use of power in technological organizational change and stresses the importance of resource dependency, uncertainty coping, the existing power distribution, management styles, and structural factors such as standardization, formalization, and modes of control.

Cultural Power, Management of Meaning and the Sales Model of Change

In the cultural approach to change it is assumed that ideas, the definitions of reality, and shared values are central features of organizing (Alvesson, 1996). Organizing is seen as a process of the creation and reproduction of shared meanings. In this process shared meanings that were formed previously may be destroyed and alternative and new meanings are created (Weick, 1979). Gergen (1991) addresses this social construction of reality from a psychological standpoint. Social relations are characterized by a typical structure and culture, based on rules, habits, institutions, language, communication, use of symbols, and definitions of reality that serve as a foundation. Culture represents relative stability in an organization and is related to power because the power relations are seen as natural and unquestionable. Perceptions, cognitions, and preferences of individuals and groups are shaped by culture that prevents them from seeing alternatives. Lukes (1974) refers to aspects of culture as the third dimension of power. In this perspective on power, basic conditions are taken for granted and the structure, culture, and division of power is regarded as natural, neutral, legitimate (Deetz, 1986), and rooted in the use of language (Alvesson, 1996). Thus, it seems that parties act out of free will and that conflict of interests is overcome. Only retrospectively does it become visible that power has been used and that the interests of one group have been met to a greater extent than the interests of other groups. In this perspective, power is defined as the capacity to shape reality and to preform somebody in such a way that he or she does what one wants without any need of explicit power (Clegg, 1987; Lukes, 1974). Conflict

does not arise, demands do not have to be made, and certain actors appear as authorities to whom others voluntarily obey.

Management fulfils a special role in these unconscious power processes because it has the opportunity, more than others, to give meaning to events and in doing so management contributes to the development of norms and values in the organization. Pettigrew (1977) describes this as the management of meaning, which refers to a process of symbol construction and value use designed both to create legitimacy for one's own demands and to de-legitimize the demands of others. Management of meaning involves the ability to define the reality of others. Thus, managers are seen as powerful agents creating shared meanings, ideas, values, and reality through communication and the social construction of meaning. However, not all cultural processes of power are intentional or an instrument of management. Ideological power, for instance, goes beyond the intentional control of management. Probably management benefits most from ideology yet management itself is also subjected to ideology.

We would describe the change model related to the cultural view of power as the *sales model*, which is characterized by management of meaning. In the process of change there is a strive for commitment, adoption of the new organizational constellation, and a harmonious development of new meaning. One possible strategy of change is management by seduction (Doorewaard, Benschop, & Brouns, 1997). Management by seduction implies agreement with the existing structure, systems, and culture by those who are influenced. Second, employees identify with the demands of both the structure and the culture of an organization. Third, compliance of employees is achieved by creating seductive situations that simultaneously push less appealing situations into the background. Fourth, there is a change of perspectives that conceals negative consequences of the change and draws attention to the positive effects. The deliberate use of this strategy by managers or change agents would be manipulation. In such a situation one party consciously influences the values, attitudes, and constructions of reality of other parties by using all available power bases. For example, managers can use information in such a way that some alternatives no longer seem desirable, or stress positive outcomes and not mention the risks that are taken. If the use of manipulative strategies is discovered resistance will follow. An atmosphere of distrust develops, which becomes a breeding ground for conflict that can prevent parties coming to agreement about new situations.

A second strategy related to the sales model is the normative-reeducative strategy (Chin & Benne, 1976). In this strategy patterns of action and practice are supported by sociocultural norms and by commitment of individuals to these norms. It is assumed that behavioural change occurs when the persons involved in a change process are brought to change their normative orientations to old behaviours and develop new ones. Changes in normative orientations involve changes in attitudes, values, significant relationships, and shared meanings. Chin

and Benne argue that influencing these non-cognitive determinants of behaviour can be realized in a mutual process of persuasion within co-operative relationships. In the following section this normative-reeducative strategy will reappear.

Using a sales model to effect change seems suitable in situations where the mobilization of knowledge and experiences of employees is desired. Change is implemented gradually and the process allows participation of all involved parties. However, the methods used in the change model vary considerably and are dependent on the flow of the process. A limitation of the approach lies in the danger of manipulation by the change agent and the emergence of a paternalistic attitude towards the recipients of the change.

In this issue Bradshaw elaborates on this cultural perspective when she discusses deep-cultural power. This form of power is assumed to be taken-for-granted and invisible. She describes how ideological hegemony suppresses conflicts and she suggest two possible paths to change. First, reinforce the existing constructions and use them to develop and implement organizational changes, and second, follow a more critical path to change by uncovering and revealing the ways power dynamics constrain individual and collective actions. In their study of the use of influence tactics, Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra found that inspirational appeals were used most frequently by managers in an attempt to create commitment for organizational change. This result stresses the importance of change strategies that arouse enthusiasm by appealing to values, ideals, and aspirations. Pettigrew and McNulty refer to this perspective on power when they account the history of the organization and the culture in the boardroom as essential contextual factors in power processes. In his contribution Pichault describes how management is susceptible to modify the rules and political games by paying more attention to cultural and symbolic factors. However, he also shows the limits of this strategy because it is difficult for managers to manipulate the symbols and values they share themselves. In the last article of this issue Landau describes a case study in the public sector. In the change project, staff members shared knowledge so that the existing working procedures and services could be improved by using their own know-how. At first, the results were amazingly positive. However, after a short period the staff members started sabotaging the innovations which they had designed themselves. The return to old patterns seemed to be related to the existing values and the shared meaning of the staff members and to institutional and cultural barriers to change.

Power Dynamics, Dialogue, and the Developmental Model of Change

Thus far we have seen that power can be used directly, visibly, and consciously by managers, change agents, and other interest groups. In addition, we saw that the individuals, groups, and even whole organizations involved in processes of

change can be indirectly subjected to invisible and sometimes unconscious power dynamics. We have not yet addressed the question of how power dynamics can be used to facilitate changes in organizations and with respect for the different interest of individuals and groups involved in the change process. Is it possible to effect power redistribution in a change process and to facilitate organizational change by using change strategies that are overt and open to all organizational members and embrace the interests of those with less power?

Greiner and Schein (1988) suggest an effective combination of the use of power and organizational development to realize organizational improvements by way of an educational process that encourages people to work together in making decisions that effect their own destiny. This approach means that all potential participants have the same opportunity to initiate and maintain a dialogue on all issues of organizing and change. French and Bell (1995) state the positive face of power is intended to enable others to reach their goals and along with letting the person exercising power reach his or her own goals.

Alvesson and Deetz (1996) refer to the critical modernism of Habermas (1972, 1984), which takes the ideal of emancipation by dialogue very seriously. In this view knowledge can counteract the realities of domination and allow for emancipation based on unrestricted freedom. This can be achieved by critical reflection and independent thought and by way of thoughtful evaluation of various viewpoints and arguments in an open dialogue. In dialogue, human consciousness, cognition, and the nature and potential of communication are critical elements for a systematic improvement of the work environment. It is assumed that in dialogue and open discussions, based on good will, rational argumentation, and questioning, consensus can be reached about present and desirable states of the organization.

The importance of dialogue to effect changes in social systems is supported by Schein (1994). Genuine dialogue offers the possibility for exchanging ideas and cross-influencing attitudes and opinions of each other. Such a process allows the development of both a shared set of norms and values, and shared language to understand events that occur in the change process. Understanding each others perspectives, interests, and convictions is a prerequisite for developing a common image of a desirable future. In this view of power and organizational change it is neither position nor personal power, nor structural power, nor manipulation and ideology that are essential to realize sustainable change. The most important thing that counts is true dialogue which facilitates open communication and rational arguments that are open to exploration.

The change model in this fifth perspective is a *model of organizational learning* with a strong emphasis on participative design and development (Boonstra, 1997; Emery, 1993) and democratic dialogue (Bouwen, 1995; Gustavsen, 1992). In the change process the concerns of all parties are involved and appreciated. Decision making is based on consultation and the exchange of experiences, ideas, and arguments of participants. The dominant strategy of

change is normative-reeducative (Chin & Benne, 1976). In this strategy research, training, and action are integrated to realize solutions for human problems. The strategy stresses the involvement of organization members in programme of change. The way participants see themselves and their problems must become the subject of a dialogue in which different perceptions are exchanged. Such a dialogue makes clear that problems are related to the definition of the situation and the underlying attitudes, values, norms, and relationships. Thus, we can learn that alternation and re-education are required as a condition for solutions. According to this strategy, members of organizations must learn to co-operate in problem identification and the formulation of solutions that improve organizational learning.

In the participative design and developmental approach members of all echelons of the organization are brought together to analyse the problems in the organization, describe their work situation, redesign the work organization, and learn from their efforts. Methods to facilitate the changes are workshops, conferences, and project groups, which search for common grounds and design their own work organization (Axelrod, 1992; Emery, 1993; Weisbord, 1992). In the developmental approach the organization is considered to be a source of knowledge and experience that should be optimally utilized. The organization's ability to change is enhanced by involving members of the organization in problem analysis and teaching them gradually to shape changes themselves. In the process, attention is given to the culture of the organization and the capability of the people to solve problems. Decision making is aimed at attaining shared objectives through consultation, dialogue, and negotiation. Participation of all members of the organization is possible, because the existing organization is the starting point. The experience of current problems by members is established and gradual adjustments and improvements are facilitated. Much consideration is given to group dynamics. In the change process an attempt is made to change behaviours, values, and norms, to develop shared meaning, and to enhance the change capacities and learning abilities of the organization and its members. The results of the participative design and developmental approach in realizing organizational change, redistribution of power, and the enhancement of organizational learning are promising for the future (Boonstra & Vink, 1996).

The approach of democratic dialogue focuses on networks of organizations that try to learn from each other's experiences by means of conferences. In addition, projects are carried out simultaneously within each organization. Communication and open dialogue are the most important methods in the change process. The change agent is a facilitator with process knowledge who supports the dialogue. One of the aims of the dialogue is to realize cognitive and emotional restructuring of subjective realities (Gustavsen, 1992). Kuipers and Van Eybergen (1997) conclude that the focus on organizational redesign disappeared in the approach of democratic dialogue. The emphasis is on human communication to direct the changes and to find solutions for specific local

problems. In each individual organization a local theory has to be developed. Kuipers and Van Eybergen raise the question how the approach of democratic dialogue can lead to structural changes and new power arrangements when this dialogue takes place in an essentially undemocratic structure. The evaluation of this approach does not clarify to what extent fundamental changes have been realized in the individual organizations (Nashold, Cole, Gustavsen, & Van Beinum, 1993). Nevertheless, the method of democratic dialogue within networks of organizations can be helpful in the diffusion of knowledge about organizational change and can support the development of organizations.

In this issue some contributions relate to the view of power as dialogue, development, and communication. Bradshaw argues that both “deep” perspectives on power imply that we must change our language and start questioning oppression and inequity. She also points out that these issues are not often encountered in dialogues about organizational change. In their case study, Emans and Van Tuuren show the poor role of consultation in the merger and the difficulty to realize open communication and dialogue. In the research of Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra consultation is one of the influence tactics most frequently used to realize organizational change. Participation of organizational members in the change process has positive effects on the commitment to changes and generates support for the implementation of changes in the organization. The case study described by Landau shows less optimistic results. Although the change strategy was based on consultation, self-design, and democratic participation, a sustainable improvement was not realized. She concludes that long-lasting change depends both on using effective change strategies, such as consultation and self-design, and on the way employees of the organization feel in the new working context. To realize changes in social systems it seems necessary that change agents be experts in analysing problems, design principles, and developing solutions, and experienced facilitators when it concerns the development of new attitudes, values, norms, and relationships.

A COMPARISON OF PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES FOR RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Before presenting a more detailed introduction of the contributions to this issue we would like to compare the perspectives that we discussed in this opening article. In this comparison the various elements return that were used to structure our introductory comments on power dynamics and organizational change. Table 1 contains the simple depiction of the comparison. The comparison forms the basis for our discussion of the challenges for researchers and practitioners studying, supervising, or guiding change processes. We feel that the issue of power dynamics in organizational change needs more attention, both of academics and of professionals who are working as consultants or change managers, or anyone that is actively involved in change processes.

TABLE 1
A comparison of perspectives on power dynamics and organizational change

	Perspectives				
	Formal	Personal	Structural	Cultural	Learning
Power use	Legitimate and position power	Expert knowledge and persuasion	Coalition power and political capability	Charisma, inspiration and consultation	Communication and democratic dialogue
Prominent agent	Managers with strong legitimate and position power	Professionals with behavioural or technological expertise	Parties with strong power bases involved in decision making	Management with leadership qualities	All parties involved in problem diagnosis and solving
Change model	Power model	Expert model	Negotiation model	Sales model	Learning model
Prominent Change strategy	Power-coercive strategy	Empirical-rational strategy	Negotiation strategy	Normative-reeducative strategy	Democratic dialogue
Contingencies	Crisis Downsizing	Predictable situations Known problems	Complex problems Politically sensitive changes	Development of the quality of the organization and working life	Constructive development and learning
Behavioural outcomes	Resistance and compliance	Compliance and resistance	Conflicts and agreement	Commitment and compliance	Commitment and support
Level of analysis	Interactions between individuals	Interactions between individuals	Interactions between groups	Interactions within whole system	Interactions within and between whole systems

We believe that a further analysis and appreciation of the five perspectives could be a good starting point for an empirical study of power dynamics and organizational change. The following questions are interesting to pursue.

First, we believe more research is needed to clarify the relationships between the perspectives on power dynamics and change and the simultaneous occurrence of these perspectives. Looking at the formal and personal perspectives, we see that the level of analysis is the interaction between individuals. Researchers and consultants who view power as equal to legitimate authority or expertise mainly focus on individual managers and change agents. In the structural perspective the interactions between groups is the main level of analysis. Interest groups are seen as the primary players in negotiation processes and conflicts that always occur and are needed to effect organizational change. Both the cultural and learning perspectives take the whole organization embedded in their socioeconomic environments as the level of analysis. In the cultural perspective, management still has a leading role in the creation of shared meanings. In the learning perspective we see that every member of the organization participates in a collaborative learning process. In general, we can not say that any of the perspectives or the levels of analysis is preferable above another. Still, in our opinion being acquainted with all perspectives broadens one's horizons and contributes to one's sensitiveness to the power issues related to organizational change. However, the question remains to what extend the perspectives occur simultaneously or consecutively in actual change processes.

Second, we suggest that researchers and consultants pay more attention to the institutional distribution of power, the effects of these power constellations on processes of change, the way agents use influence tactics in different institutional contexts, and the implications of the distribution and the use of power for organizational change and development. We believe that organizational change which does not challenge the existing power structures, will maintain the existing distribution of power and the existing logic of organizing, and therefore only results in first-order change. Institutionalized power relationships are continued and can even hinder fundamental change where these relationships are not brought up for discussion.

A third line of research that could be pursued is related to the way power dynamics hinder organizational change or push it forward. Under certain conditions powerful people can very much speed up a change process, whereas other conditions require collaboration, dialogue, and an appreciation of the interests of all involved parties. Learning more about the possibilities and limitations of power is valuable both for academics and consultants. A connected question is how power dynamics are related to the management of change and barriers of change. We do not believe in a standard approach for change processes. Therefore, a critical reflection on change processes with respect to the change objectives, the power dynamics, the exercise of interventions, and the

way changes develop, can be helpful to achieve more understanding in effective change.

Fourth, more insight is needed in the contextual factors that enable and lead people who are involved in change processes to use power, and to discuss organizational problems and solutions. Not all consultants and researchers are capable and willing to discuss power issues with clients and other parties involved in the change process. On the contrary, our experience is that although most professionals are aware of the importance of power in change processes, they find it difficult to make visible what is going on. Power manifests itself in various forms and in various situations. Besides understanding power relations between individuals, groups, and in whole systems, professionals also have to deal with his or her own power. This means that it is important to know how to use power effectively and when to discuss one's own power.

Fifth, more research is wanted on dialogue in change processes, conflicts that emerge during the dialogue, and the enactment of parties involved in the dialogue. Mutual action strategies among parties involved inevitably result in conflicts on the individual and organizational level. These conflicts can function as positive impulses to discuss constructs about organizing and examine the underlying basic assumptions, values, and norms. The enactment, based on dialogue of all parties involved, implies a reconstruction of the influence relationships, a renegotiation of the existing power relationships, and the development of new relational contracts. Fundamental organizational change requires a change of the dominant action logic and therefore requires in depth learning. Little is known about the learning process of framing and reframing the constructs of organizing out of democratic dialogue and the power of communication in these processes.

To find answers on these questions, we can follow different types of research (e.g. Van Beinum, Faucheux, & Van der Vlist, 1996). All types can contribute to our knowledge of power dynamics and organizational change, but they differ in the way this knowledge is produced and used.

In traditional academic research, the role of the researcher is to obtain knowledge through the collection and interpretation of data, and to transform this knowledge into a scientific theory. This theory can be used by others to effect organizational change. In general, the theory and insights are used by management and management consultants and are not easily accessible for other members of the organization.

In a consultant relationship, the social scientist fulfils a service role, using theories about social action. His or her capabilities will be called upon only for the purpose of the client he or she serves. The product of this relationship is a change process. Most of the time theory is left unchanged. However, case studies can be helpful to illustrate existing theories, raise new questions, and sometimes even challenge the theory in use.

In action research, the research “subject” is in a position of active participation and the researcher is actively involved. The relationship between researcher and researched is explicit and characterized by joint involvement and shared responsibility. Both of them construct and interpret the meaning of their activities and come to new ideas, insights, and theories. This approach offers an alternative to the traditional management approach and offers ways to the development of new theories of social action.

We would like to invite academic researchers, consultants, practitioners, or anyone who is interested in organization development and change, to contribute to a better understanding of power dynamics, organizational change, and the role of researchers, change agents, and other participants in change processes. We hope that this special issue of the *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* is helpful in changing organizations effectively and stimulates research into power dynamics and organizational change.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS ISSUE

Bradshaw proposes a conceptual model of organizational power, based on the exploration of the dynamic dimensions: Manifest versus latent power and personal versus collective power. The recognition of these dynamic dimensions can be helpful to understand processes of restructuring, personal action, resistance, and deconstruction. She proposes four paths to change and suggests to use these paths simultaneously to achieve transformational changes on individual and organizational levels. In a illustrative case study it is made plausible that the combination of the paths supports transformational changes.

Emans and Van Tuuren describe a case study of a merger in welfare organizations. Their study illustrates how the dimensions presented by Bradshaw are working together and influence a process of organizational change. The hindrances related to the use of coercive and rational strategies by the local government in the decision-making process and the implementation of new forms of institutional co-operation. The use of personal and manifest forms of power by governmental agents had some positive effects on the merger process. Collective forms of power and normative-reeducative strategies, such as open consultation, exploring different views, and creating common ground by communication, played only a poor role in the merger process. Emans and Van Tuuren conclude that large-scale changes are facilitated when decision makers reduce their need of power, stimulate open discussion, and delegate the problem solving to the participants.

Munduate and Dorado focus on power bases and behaviour of supervisors in the context of organizational change. In a field study they found a relationship between a positive orientation towards the development of a manager's potential and the success of organizational change. Position power and traditional managerial styles are not in line with the new demands on organizations from

environment and employees. To effect organizational change, the use of personal power seems more effective because it contributes to commitment of organizational members and stimulates co-operation in the change efforts.

Boonstra and Bennebroek Gravenhorst report a field study of influence tactics used by agents of several parties involved in constructive change processes. It was found that rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, and consultation were used most frequently. This is an encouraging result because these three tactics are most effective for gaining commitment and support to organizational change. In addition, it was found that line managers, staff specialists, management consultants, and members of works councils used several influence tactics differently in the change process. The findings support the idea that normative-reeducative and empirical-rational strategies are applied more often than coercive strategies and that the cultural and learning perspectives of change are dominant in constructive organizational change.

Pettigrew and McNulty present an empirical study of the power of boards and directors and the relative power and influence of part-time board members compared to full-time board members. They discuss the usefulness of traditional approaches in studying power and offer a new conceptual framework to investigate sources and uses of power in the boardroom. They examine the interactive effects of context, structure, power sources, and the will and skill to use power. The conceptual framework is illustrated by two case examples of the mobilization of power to dismiss board members with the greatest positional power. In the description of the case studies the temporal and dynamic character of power relationships in organizations become very visible.

Pichault describes power dynamics in network organizations that build on the use of network technologies and the combination of different kinds of coordination mechanisms. In exploring the change process in a call centre, he shows that power dynamics in organizational change should not only be seen as a factor of dilution, but also as a force that can contribute to the renewal of old structural arrangements. He concludes that the results of a change process depend on the way in which it is managed. Based on the case study and theoretical considerations, he proposes a model of change that simultaneously mobilizes contingent and political approaches.

Landau discusses a case of change management in the public sector and focuses on institutional and cultural barriers to organizational change in this sector. She concludes that long-lasting changes depend both on the use of effective tools by change managers, and on the way the individuals who work in the organization feel in their new working context. She proposes that consultants should adopt a role of empathic listeners to all people involved in a change process. Furthermore, everyone should be given the opportunity to explore the facets of individual recognition and to share mutual recognition. This proposal connects to the learning perspective as described previously in this introductory article.

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