THE DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

An analysis of Power, Professions and New Managerialism in the case of CoastElectric

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Thesis Summary

It is widely accepted that the Thatcher years and their immediate aftermath were associated with substantive social and organizational change. The privatization programme, 'the rolling back of the State', prosecuted by the successive Conservative Governments from 1979-1997 was a central pillar of Governmental policy. This thesis seeks to engage with privatization through the of CoastElectric, a newly privatised Regional Electricity Company. This thesis contributes to the extant understanding of the dynamics of organizational change in four major ways.

Firstly, the study into CoastElectric addresses the senior management decision making within the organization: in particular, it will attempt to make sense of 'why' particular decisions were made. The theoretical backdrop to this concern will draw on the concepts of normalization, cultural capital and corporate fashion. The argument presented in this thesis is that the decision-making broadly corresponded with that which could be considered to be at the vanguard of managerialist thought. However, a detailed analysis suggested that at different junctures in CoastElectric's history there were differences in the approach to decision making that warranted further analysis. The most notable finding was that the relative levels of new managerialist cultural capital possessed by the decision-making elite had an important bearing upon whether the decision was formulated either endogenously or exogenously, with the assistance of cultural intermediaries such as management consultants. The thesis demonstrates the importance of the broader discourse of new managerialism in terms of shaping what is considered to be a 'commonsensical, rational' strategy.

The second concern of this thesis is that of the process of organizational change. The study of CoastElectric attempts to provide a rich account of the dynamics of organizational change. This is realized through, first, examining the pre-existing context of the organization; second, through analyzing the power politics of change interventions. The master concepts utilised in this endeavour are that of: dividing practices; the establishment of violent hierarchies between competing discourses; symbolic violence; critical turning points; recursiveness; creative destruction; legitimation strategies and the reconstitution of subjects in the workplace.

The third element of the analysis in this thesis is to explore to what extent, if any, the expectations ascribed to particular initiatives – such as TQM – were fulfilled. The immanent critique feeds into extant work that highlights the problematic nature of programmed change initiatives. In particular, this analysis explores the unintended consequences of the initiatives implemented in the organization. The fourth dimension of this thesis is to unpack the changes to the labour process experienced within CoastElectric. In particular, this addresses the fate of professional engineers – whom were ablated from the organization. It also opens up a consideration of the rise of managerialists in the organization. Two mutually antagonistic categories of new managerialist are identified: the DIY and the techno-managerialist respectively. The final concern of this thesis is to contrast CoastElectric in 1990 with it in 1997. The argument postulated is that each period constituted a regime of knowledge whereby the modus operandi – the power of meaning – made sense and was reinforced through the power of the system.

Key words: Power, Organizational Change, New Managerialism, Professions

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Carolyn – my girlfriend and then my wife – for the love and support given by her to me: without which this thesis would have been an impossibility.

Debts of Honour

I should like to thank my teachers – Professor David Wilson, Professor Margaret Grieco and Professor Peter Clark – each of whom has been an inspiration.

The preparation and the development of ideas contained within this thesis benefited greatly from comments made by journal reviewers and colleagues at conferences. In a chronological order, ideas from this thesis have been presented at the following conferences.

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Labour Process Conference 1997, Edinburgh University, March.
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British Accounting Association 1998, UMIST, April.
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British Academy of Management 1998, Nottingham University, September.
Managing Accounting Research Group 1998, Aston University, September.
Organizational Knowledge Workshop 1999, University of North London, January.
Critical Perspectives on Accounting 1999, Baruch College, City University of New York, April.
Odyssey Workshop 1999, Cornell University, New York State, August.
Re-Organizing Knowledge Conference, 1999, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, September.
Management Accounting Research Group 1999, Aston University, September.
Cyber Ontology Workshop, 1999, University of North London, October.
Jacques Considered: Manufacturing the Employee Workshop, 1999, University of Birmingham, October.
Business Process Resource Centre Workshop, 2000, University of Warwick, January.
ESRC IKON Workshop, 2000, University of Birmingham, February.
Labour Process Conference, 2000, University of Strathclyde, April.
Working Together? Knowledge and Management in the Information Society Conference, 2000, Keele University, June.
British Academy of Management 2000, University of Edinburgh, September.
Managing Accounting Research Group 2000, Aston University, September.

In addition to the conference presentations listed above, ideas from this thesis have appeared, or are accepted to appear, a variety of printed media. They include:

Aston Business School Working Paper Series; Critical Perspectives on Accounting Journal; Dictionary of Cultural Theorists; Financial Accountability and Management Journal; Journal of Managerial Psychology; Journal of Organizational Change Management; Management Decision; Prometheus Journal; University of North London Working Paper Series; Value Based Management edited book;

Work from this thesis has been cited in Organisation Studies journal and in recent books by Peter Clark; David Knights and Hugh Willmott.

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Contents

Tables

Figures

Chapter 1:   Theoretical Perspectives on Organizational Change

1.1   Introduction

A striking feature of the contemporary epoch is the extent to which change is seen as being ubiquitous. The whole rhetoric of change is endemic in the media and society at large. It is a watch-word for (post) modern times. Indeed when the history of the late twentieth century comes to be written, one of the characteristics of the epoch that very well may be remarked upon is the ubiquity of the rhetoric of change in organizations and society alike. It is changes to organization that will form the focus of this thesis, more specifically it will examine changes to a Regional Electricity company during the 1990s. The talk therefore of living in an age of change, and the sense of experiencing a major societal transformation, is a common theme. Some authors herald the coming (or arrival!) of post-modernity (Bauman 1987; Clegg 1990), while for others we have entered a period of disorganised capitalism (Lash and Urry, 1987) or perhaps one of reflexive modernisation (Beck, 1992).

Historians have noted the fin de siecle mood that seems to repeat itself each century, characterised by a feeling of portentous change; however, as Clegg (1999) notes the profound changes that are taking place within the world are not the stuff of philosophical whim, rather they represent a concrete and empirical difference to the way in which life is being organized . Clearly the reasons for societal change are complex and variegated but following the thesis advanced by Lash and Urry (1987) they can be broadly explained by the usual suspects of the liberalisation of global capital, the information technology revolution and the decline in the nation state. Lash and Urry (1987) characterise the changes as heralding the emergence of a new form of capitalism, that of disorganised capitalism, while other writers consider the contemporary period to amount to a rupture with modernity itself.

This is the backdrop against which this thesis, an investigation into the dynamics of organizational change, will take place. While the effects of societal change are visible for all to see, my focus is on investigating the unfolding of change in one organization, CoastElectric. Within Business Schools a tradition of change research has been developed and fashioned over the last thirty years, this thesis aims to contribute to that discussion. The demand for investigations into change has been triggered by the triumverate of academics, consultants and practitioners, this has resulted in an explosion of accounts on organizational change, these range from the hands on 'how to do it' style accounts to more esoteric analytical accounts. I wish to investigate this literature as the starting point of this thesis, this will serve to provide a sense of the existing state of knowledge in the field, it will also allow me to locate myself within the field. In order to commence with this review of the extant

views on organizational change, following Wilson (1992), I first propose to delineate the field into two broad categories applicable and analytical approaches to the study of organizational change

1.2   Applicable Approaches to Organizational Change: Changeling Fantasies ?

Applicable change theories are characterised by their practical, hands on, 'how to go about it', approach Characteristically they draw on experiences of organizations that have undergone change in the (recent) past, from these experiences 'rules' or 'norms' are extrapolated and represented as 'best practice', to be followed by other organisations Readers of such texts are treated to a scenario whereby organizations - and people within them - must 'learn to love change' or lose out in the competitive global market place This is generally followed by an account about how to go about 'doing change', within such books there are generally nostrums on how to overcome resistance to change, how to envision change, empower people and such like Burrell (1997) has referred to these books as belonging to the Heathrow School of management, in the sense that they are 'airport lounge' texts heavily normative and easily readable

The origins of the applicable change school lie with Lewin (1947) who developed an unfreezing, changing, refreezing model of change Whilst Lewin did not view his model as being applicable, in a visible demonstration of the 'Death of the Author'[1] it has been interpreted since in this way (see Buchanan and Huczinski, 1988) The model has been used on countless occasions to argue that to enact organisational change, the process must begin by unfreezing the existing organisation, to be followed by the implementation of the change programme, and finally the organisation must refreeze itself by embarking on a period of consolidation Lewin's (1947) perspective on organisational change is that it is a linear, sequential process Lewin's (1947) view of organisational change being a series of sequential states or steps is a dominant theme within the body of applicable change literature, for instance, Hickman and Silva (1985) argue that 'By focusing on one step of implementation at a time, you can bring about   permanent change' (1985 199) Therefore, organizational change is viewed as a rational process, which consists of a number of different linear stages These steps are often incorporated into 'checklists' for management to follow

Applicable change literature is highly prescriptive, for instance, Hickman and Silva (1985) claim their book is a

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[1] The Death of the Author is a post-structural concept that suggests that the literary preoccupation of trying to discipher what it is an author is really trying to communicate has been superseded The new sensibility places emphasis on what it is that the reader understands and interprets from the message

'step by step blueprint for organisational excellence shows the New Age
executive exactly how to .... (Among other things) Respond positively to
change from within and without, and turn crisis into opportunity' (book jacket)'.

The applicable change books are crammed full of strategies for 'Making it Happen and Making it
Stick' [Kanter et al (1992:p508)], this usually entails detailed sections on overcoming resistance to
change, and building commitment to the change process. For instance the table 1.1 below lists
Kanter, Stein and Jick's (1992) 'Ten Commandments of change'. What is remarkable about Kanter
et al's list is how much it resembles a recipe that one might find in a cookbook. Managing Change it
seems is reducible to following a recipe from, for instance, the River Island CookBook. The
external environment is considered to the extent that it triggers organizational change such as
through the changing nature of the market, increased competition etc. The constraints that the
environment may place on strategic choice and the implementation of change are downplayed.
Instead, the applicable change literature concentrates on processes within an organisation and the
particular importance of leadership to securing the successful process of change. Although the bulk
of this discussion deals with programmed change, ignoring non-programmed and emergent change.

Table 1:1 The Ten Commandments of Change

1) Analyse the organisation and its need for change.

2) Create a shared vision and common direction.

3) Separate from the past.

4) Create a sense of urgency.

5) Support a strong leader role.

6) Line up Political sponsorship.

7) Craft an Implementation plan.

8) Develop enabling structures.

9) Communicate, involve people, and be honest.

10) Reinforce and institutionalise change.
(Taken from Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992) p383).

The downplaying of the limits of strategic choice serves to elevate the role of the 'leader' as an agent of organizational change. Moreover, it imbues the reader of such texts with the notion that through effective and inspirational leadership any problem is surmountable: managers are leaders whom should be able to master the organizational situation. The importance of leadership is emphasised, for instance by Kotter (1986) who, on cultural change, posits that:

> 'The single most visible factor that distinguishes major cultural changes from those that succeed from those that fail is competent leadership at the top ... each new leader created a team that established a new vision and a set of strategies for achieving that vision' (1986:P84 Kotter).

Kanter (1983) speaks of managers in terms of being 'Change Masters',

> 'who are the ones with the ideas that can move beyond the organisation's established practice, ideas they can form into visions' (1983:p306).

The cult of the leader is firmly embedded in the applicable change literature with the exploits of successful corporate leaders sometimes being glorified to the point of hyperbole. This it could be argued is part of the wider 'fetish' for leadership that has bedevilled organizational theorizing. Many influential books on organisational change are written by former chief executives who were successful in changing their organisations. Clegg and Palmer (1996) highlight the genesis of this genre to be in the writings of Chester Barnard over sixty years ago. The books are typically in a semi-autobiographical style delivering their nostrums on 'how to change organisations', or for Clegg & Palmer (1996), they can be considered to be 'karaoke texts' remarkable for their Frank Sinatra 'I did it my way quality'. Notable examples include Sir John Harvey-Jones who is perhaps the best UK example of this phenomenon with his analysis even being turned into a popular television series on managing change: which saw him apply his prescriptions to a wide variety of different organisations. In terms of understanding their warrant, or their credentials, their exploits in the corporate world provide them with a legitimacy to talk about 'how to manage change'.

As briefly mentioned above the literature also places great importance on reducing or overcoming resistance to change. This, too, is discussed in a rational and planned perspective. According to this literature, the reduction of resistance to change is achieved by a combination of visionary leadership (see above) combined with strategies to overcome resistance. Under the heading of 'Making it happen' Plant (1987) recommends change managers to look for:

> 'the leverage points in the organisation, blockages and resistances what are they and how are they managed?' (1987:p22),

He continues that,

> 'Finding opinion shapers is an important activity ... as they will need to be the prime focus of management energy' (1987:p24).

Plant (1987) puts forward a model which he terms 'Key Relationship Mapping' which offers a framework to anticipate any potential resistance and more generally to plan the implementation of change. In most of the accounts of overcoming resistance to change, there is no indication that resistance may be a 'rational' response to managerial prerogative, with their being in existence competing views in the workplace.

Many of the applicable texts (Plant (1987), Carnall (1991), Hickman and Silva (1985)) include questionnaires for managers, which purport to increase the manager's own self-awareness. For instance, Hickman and Silva (1985) argue that to be successful in implementing change a manager must be focused, in their text they report,

> 'We've assembled the attributes of focused executives into a composite picture against which you can test yourself. A score of 30 or less indicates need for improvement' (1985:p211).

A characteristic of this literature is that it employs many practical examples from different organisations to illustrate and support the arguments; examples are used in a highly selective way to illustrate a particular point, without adequate reference to an organisation's experience over a longer period of time. For instance, Plant (1987) cites the Burton group 'as a company moving very rapidly and successfully in this direction'. (The direction being towards what Plant defines as participative, supportive management - which in his organisational lexicon refers to a company being adept at managing change). The books can therefore reduce into being little more than a reproduction of what Grieco (1998) has referred to as corporate fables.

The applicable change school, so far as it constitutes a coherent body of thought, suffers from overly simplistic analyses and dubious blueprints for corporate success. A noticeable feature of the genre is the tendency for the content of any change process to reflect the managerialist wisdom of the day (see chapters three, four and five). However, the practice based nature of such works combined with their 'call to action' style messages continue to be popular. This popularity at once gives some indication of the degree to which change is something confronted by managers and employees within organizations. Moreover, following Weick (1969) and Whittington (1992), it is arguable that having a map or some guidance is better than none – even if the map is wrong. In summary, though I would argue that there is little to commend in the applicable change literature, the oversimplifications and the importance afforded to the actions of individual managers. Furthermore, I should like to add that much of the so-called theorizing by applicable change writers

amounts to the constructions of changeling fantasies, which are notable for their dubious analyses and blueprints for change, these ideas treat organizations as malleable entities which can be transformed through a ten-point plan. That said, it is too easy to be unreflexively dismissive of practice based books, given that they do not correspond to the canonical expectations of academia; Merely criticising them, or, holding them up as 'straw men' is equally problematic: what is the corollary of putting a mirror up to banality? Moreover such critiques imply that managers' read and take in all of the nostrums of the *change gurus*, this is a highly questionable presumption. Given that I have taken the applicable corpus of writings as problematic, necessitates coverage of more analytical work, in particular asking what it is that more academic approaches have to tell us about organizational change.

1.3   Analytical Change: The Midlands Contextualists

As I have shown in the section above, there are serious problems with much of the mainstream change texts. I have suggested that there is a more analytical body which is worthy of attention, yet it is worth, at this point, reflecting on a report prepared in the late 1970s, by the British Economic and Social Research Council, which lamented that much of theorizing about organizations was atheoretical, acontextual and lacking an empirical base. A notable number of theorists have sought to address these deficiencies, and moreover in my view they have made significant contributions to the extant knowledge on organizational change. For the purposes of this thesis I will characterise such approaches as being 'analytical' approaches to change (see Wilson and Rosenfeld, 1990). Broadly speaking the analytical school of change considers organisational change as an inherently complex process. It seeks to unravel the multiple analytical levels of organisational change, trying to make sense of change experiences. This perspective does not seek to prescribe change recipes so characteristic of the applicable approach. It considers organisational change processes as being far too complex to allow generalised, universal science-like prescriptions accompanied by an emphasis on the appreciation of context sensitivity. The organisational change process is viewed as being inextricably linked to the organisation's contextual environment.

Perhaps of necessity, the prevailing empirical feature of the analytical school is to study a single or small number of organisations in depth, over time; allowing the construction of a rich, historically contextualised picture of the organisational change process. There have been a number of important contextual contributions in the last twenty years, a good deal of which has emanated from the British midlands (see Clark, 1999; Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew et al, 1992; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Whipp and Clark, 1986; Wilson, 1992; Wilson and Leavy, 1994). It is my intention in the section below to take and analyse the work of three key theorists - Clark, Pettigrew and Wilson - in terms of their standing and contribution to the study of organizational change. The analysis of their

respective oeuvres will work in order to examine the central claims of their work in terms of understanding organizational change While there is clearly more to the world of organizational change than the authors mentioned, nonetheless, the concerns they raise, I will argue, pose important questions for organizational theory

1.4   Andrew Pettigrew: The Context, Content and Process of Organizational Change

Pettigrew's early work, namely his highly regarded study of decision making (see Pettigrew, 1973), highlighted the non-rational nature of organization, moreover, it clearly demonstrated the highly politicised nature of organizational life Such ideas now form the assumptions that underscore contemporary organizational theory, however, this was not always the case Pettigrew's early study has been lionised and immortalised in best selling textbooks Pettigrew (1973) described brilliantly the decision making process in an organization, he demonstrated the way in which a gatekeeper – Kenny – was able to exert large amounts of control oeuvre the organization through controlling information about alternatives and, by extension, introduce his own favoured alternatives Kenny's sphere of influence extended over the purchase decisions of information technology systems Over a quarter of a century later, Pettigrew's findings seem less than remarkable Yet this is a sign of how central his insights of the non-rational, dysfunctional possibilities of technocracy have moved to the centre stage of organizational theorizing

The findings from Pettigrew's work on decision making were to resurface once again in his extensive study of the organizational change process in ICI, this voluminous book has been much cited and is arguably highly influential in terms of theorizing about organizational change It was from studying the actions, both in the here and now as well as looking to the organization's history, that Pettigrew was able to argue for the importance of context, content and process in terms of understanding organizational change

The model proposed by Pettigrew (1985) is an analytical device for thinking about organizational change, it stresses the iterative nature of organizational change, and something that is broadly absent from accounts by applicable theorists From Pettigrew's model, the context of change is the 'why' of change, i e what are the pressures that trigger change In broad brush terms Pettigrew (1985) highlights that generic change triggers from within the realm of the external environment may come from, (i) Economic/business, (ii) Political, or (iii) Social factors As Pettigrew's work on Sir John Harvey-Jones notes, pressures for change may also come from within the organisation, from organizational factions dissatisfied with the status quo and wanting to 'think the unthinkable' Pettigrew's interest in 'change triggers' is sustained in his later work (see Pettigrew & Whipp,

1991), he gives a number of practical examples of pressures for organizational change emerging from the external environment, they are shown in table 1:2.

Table 1: 2. Organizational Change Triggers.

Sector	Change Trigger from the external environment.
British car industry i.e. Rover, Jaguar	Fluctuations in exchange rates. Reductions in tariffs for car imports.
Publishing industry	Developments in new technology offered opportunities for considerable cost savings and quality improvements for publishers.
Financial services industry	Deregulation of the financial services market by Government deregulation

The above examples, taken from the Pettigrew and Whipp book at the start of the1990s are worth reflecting upon, for quite evidently all of these sectors have been transformed by impacts from the external environment with their effects can be seen inscribed into the corporate landscape.

The content of change is the 'what' of change; quite literally what is it the organisation is attempting to change? The organisation might want to change its 'culture', or its 'structure', or embark on a programmed change such as Total Quality Management. In any of the cases, the content is essentially a labelling exercise - to give the change initiative a name. Integral to exploring the content of change is questioning the objectives behind the change, and the assumptions behind the change. It is also important to determine what targets have been set, by whom, or how the change will be evaluated and by whom?

The process of change examines 'how' the change is introduced, studying the implementation of the changes and the process of change through time. The actions and reactions of managers, workers and other stakeholders are central to this analysis. Key to the understanding of the implementation of organisational change is an appreciation of the power relations at play within the organisation (and outside the organisation, in the wider social system). It is for his identification with process that Pettigrew is best known, for some, he is the doyen of process. His conception of process is informed by an understanding of the micro-political: the chicanery within the nomenclature of an organization. As such Pettigrew's notion of process is linked to events. Arguably it is the analysis of such events that take primary consideration over other context and content. More recently, Pettigrew has extended this area of interest into examining the dynamics of boardrooms, with a particular focus on the impact of non-executive directors on the politics of decision making. The charting of the dramas in and around the boardroom is clearly a fruitful line of analysis in terms of engaging with the rationales – the constructions – of particular initiatives. Yet by concentrating on this, Pettigrew could be accused of persistently ignoring the issue of the pre-configured context of the organization i.e. to what extent is change possible? The sense of organizing within his account of process is absent, which is problematic for without a sense of organizing it is difficult to know whether organizational change has actually occurred – that is change beyond the surface fripperies of mission statements and corporate egos. This lack of a sense of the pre-existing has been a criticism levelled at Pettigrew by Clark (1996; 1999) and by Rowlinson (1999). The former argues that a characteristic of Pettigrew's work is to recount the founding conditions of an enterprise, and then to helicopter to the present to discuss organizational changes. Similarly, Grieco (1996) has referred to this as birthmarking. Rowlinson's critique is that the Pettigrewesque processual analyses lay claim to being historical but in fact demonstrate a poor understanding of historical narrative, they are, therefore, 'bad history' (Rowlinson, 2000).

The timeline analyses pursued by Pettigrew reach their apogee in his collaboration with Whipp (1991) which saw them try to determine whether the way in which organisational change was managed actually made a difference to organisational success. They found it did, although it was far from a simple, causal relationship. Rather it was a complex combination of the following factors: (i) Coherence, (ii) Leading Change, (iii) Human Resources as assets and Liabilities, (iv) Environmental Assessment and (v) the link between strategic and operational change. The interconnectedness of the different variables is emphasised, likening it to a hologram and invoking analogies with Chinese medicine. The prerequisite factors for 'successful change' identified by Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) do not offer easy to follow prescriptive steps, they are nonetheless heavily normative. Pettigrew and Whipp have been criticised by Rasenen (1993), for whom, their book attempts to do too much and on the basis of their empirical material, their theoretical claims are not sustainable. This reflects Wilson's position (1994), when he suggests that through their model they are trying to explain the world, an ambition that ultimately results in a model of limited capacity. Pettigrew's work however

raises many questions, and with it reveals problems to his approach. Yet whatever these difficulties, his importance in terms of highlighting the need for analysing the politics of organization change needs to be acknowledged.

1.5   David Wilson: A Strategy of Change

Wilson's most significant contribution to the study of organizational change came in his 1992 book 'strategy of change'. In this book, he sets himself up in opposition to many of the applicable approaches outlined above. In the context of 1992, where managers and employees alike were cajoled into learning to love change, essentially he was problematizing many of the normative exhortations of the so-called gurus. Chapter by chapter, he highlights deficiencies in many of the assumptions underpinning the management of change. He argues that there is more to change than the simple belief that an organizational blueprint, effective communication and good leadership will bring about the desired results.

As has been argued above, much of the influential thinking on organizational change has been bedevilled by such normatism. Wilson's point was to question such an agenda and therefore problematise it. Wilson rightly demonstrates the way in which, rather than resembling anything new, in fact, much of the theorizing on organizational change is underscored by a heavy dose of Taylorism: the one best way being reanimated from the mausoleum of organizational theory to act as the leitmotif of contemporary approaches to the management of change. With the benefit of hindsight, the prescience of Wilson's theorizing can be seen clearly. In the first instance, the consulting industry and programmed change initiatives are now taken for granted as an axiomatic part of the corporate landscape. At the time of writing, this was however far from clear. In this sense he identified, one, that consultants are important players in the actor-network of disseminating and supplying management ideas – programmes change initiatives - and, two, that this is a recent phenomenon.

Wilson's particular targets were the most exalted ideas of the day – namely, those of corporate culture and TQM. In more substantive terms, Wilson's critique is carefully reconstructed in chapter three below. Wilson identified what he was to term the programmed change initiative i.e. a package of change, an ideology replete with tools, techniques and practices. In broader terms, and of greater relevance to this chapter, is Wilson's approach. His tool of analysis is that of immanent critique. He seeks to analyse initiatives on their own terms: empirically and theoretically do the ideas stand up? Do they match their own criterion for success? This pragmatic approach yielded considerable fruit, for he was able to demolish the extant shibboleth that 'quality' is critical and 'having the right

culture' is a cornerstone to a corporate nirvana. Moreover, he demonstrated powerfully the way in which a particular worldview – with all of its assumptions and prejudices (white, male, middle class and Anglo-Saxon) – get passed off as commonsensical, transcendental fact. This is nowhere more vivid than in his analysis of Sir John Harvey-Jones' consultant-corporate doctor, 'Trouble-shooter' television series, which saw the esteemed former chairman of ICI (and once famously chronicled by Pettigrew, 1985) provide advice to organizations at critical junctures in their corporate histories. While the advice's were rhetoric intensive, coming as they did from the man who allegedly awoke ICI, Wilson strips away their veneer, exposing them as the rigid application of a particular homespun logic that ignores the specificity of particular organizational contexts.

Wilson (1992) is therefore notable for his critiques. Hosking (1994), adopting a radical social constructionist perspective, welcomes the notion of a critical book and *praises it for as far as it goes*. However, Hosking's interests extend beyond immanent critique, instead she sets an agenda that seeks to implode the entitative assumptions that have such currency in organization studies. A critique from a different perspective is that of Buchanan (1994). For him Wilson's take on programmed change constitutes something of a problem. Buchanan's position is that all Wilson does is criticise, without proceeding to construct his own blueprint for change. Wilson's difficulty therefore is that, following Buchanan's line, he retreats into academia, leaving a message that, paraphrasing could be characterised as: 'yes change is difficult and none of these programmes are of much use'. To Buchanan this is somewhat unhelpful. So is Buchanan justified? To my mind, Buchanan's objections appear to be in danger of missing what I take to be the key philosophical theme of Wilson's work, that of opening up doubt rather than simply accepting the illusory certainty immanent to many programmed change initiative. The reader is therefore encouraged, or compelled, to become a reflexive practitioner: questioning truisms, accepting nothing. That said, it is worth reflecting on what a chapter eight might have looked like had it been written. Reflexivity, immanent critique and a suspicion of consultants and programme change initiatives would be likely to figure highly. Furthermore, a Wilson view of change would emphasise a deep sense of context. Finally, part of Buchanan's analysis is to suggest that there is an irresponsibility to Wilson's theorizing, by situating himself within a deep sense of context, Wilson understands that there exists a constant tension between the individual agency of a manager and structural constraints within the context. Moreover, he has a sense of how pervasive, and how potentially inappropriate, the dominant managerial ideas of a particular zeitgeist can be to an organization.

1 6   Peter Clark: Prising Open Process

The third Midland's contextualist whom I want to consider is Clark The parallels between some of Clark's early theorizing and the work of Wilson on programmed change initiatives are striking Clark, in 1972, conjectured that there was the potential for programmed approaches, although he was unsure as to how they would come about Wilson, writing in 1992, provides an excellent commentary on how pervasive programmed change approaches had become, and, importantly he identified the infrastructure that was supporting the programmed change movement

Clark in his analysis of organizational change starts at first principles by arguing that one has to take a view as to what actually constitutes organizational change

> 'Clarifying the concept of change is an essential requirement as it has been used very loosely' (Clark and Starkey, 1988 p50),

Which he takes to be

> 'events occurring in organizations which might be theorised as organizational change' (1996 p3)

In his opinion there are two broad types of organizational change one, dislocation, and, two, the development of robust viable organizational forms This distinction is worth exploring, he is suggesting that many change initiatives actually constitute attempts at, borrowing Schumpeter's term, creative destruction (Clark and Starkey, 1988 p63) i e removing practices from the organization An implication of this insight would be to look at a programmed change initiative in order to question whether it constituted creative destruction or an attempt to build new organizational capabilities Allied to this point, is Clark's assertion that building new practices may require exnovation – the removal of existing practices – a point distinct from creative destruction

The defining signature, in my view, of Clark's work, is to study organizational change from a perspective that takes a sophisticated angle on organizations as entities It is a task-based approach to the study of change The implication of his work is that much of the theorizing on organizational change is flawed because of the problematic nature of the depthless ontological position taken on organizations The inadequate coverage of organization is in part due to the 'characteristic of organizational theory has been to concentrate on durable features such as organizational structure rather than oscillations and process' (Clark, 1996 p5) The corollary of the 'obsession' (Clark and Mueller, 1997, see also Starbuck, 1992) with structure is a suppression of process, this results in confusion of what ought to become with the assumption that 'the becoming' was not too problematic This of course is in stark contrast to the exhortations of Rosabeth Moss Kanter and her fellow travellers It is Clark's contention, one that is resonant with both Wilson (1992) and

Pettigrew (1985) that greater attention needs to be paid to process in order to gain a richer understanding of attempts to enact organizational change. I will now turn my attention to the analytical devices with which Clark seeks to 'prise open process'.

The first concern of Clark is to look at the pre-existing organization which is attempting to undergo organizational change; it is his contention that the pre-existing habitus (see Bourdieu, 1978) is vital in terms of analysing organizational change. In a rebuttal of much of the work by applicable change Clark posits that there is no tabula rasa: rather the antecedents of the organization are of vital importance to attempts at organizational change. This is of course a concern of all contextualist theorizing, I will now outline the three features that Clark argues are important for grasping the antecedents an organization is encumbered or constituted by, the features are: (i) the configuration of the forces in the organization; (ii) organizational recursiveness; and (iii) organizational repertoires.

The first feature, the configuration of forces in the firm, broadly reflects the views held by both Wilson and Pettigrew, the idea being that it is important to have a sense of the 'configuration of forces and relations between pre-existing social and individual groups' (Clark, 1996). Pertinent questions become, therefore, which groups are relatively powerful and why? Are there conservatives vs. modernisers involved in the change process? In Clark's early work (1972), he discusses problem ownership, and it is 'crucial to have a sense of the organizational power balances and politics within an organization in order to make sense of an organizational strategy'. Clark has demonstrated the changing power dynamics in supply chains, especially the case of Marks & Spencer, which saw Cora become relatively powerless as it was locked into a relationship as a junior to Marks. The intrigue and strategizing that is immanent to a Pettigrewesque style account is absent from Clark's theorizing.

The second constituent part of the metaphorical shadow that antecedents cast over attempts at organizational change is in terms of recursiveness. Clark suggests that without recursiveness social life would not exist, the idea being that the ingrained forces in the firm, the way things are, have a tendency they have to be "recursive" (Clark, 1975). That is, an organization - it patterns of activities and ways of thinking - reproduces itself over time. This is an important insight; it has resonance with Giddens' (1984) structuration theory that also has an appreciation of the importance of pre-existing structures. In terms of taking the discussion on recursiveness from the realm of the abstract to the practical, it is sustained through factors which, inter alia, include: 'Standards of procedures' Sagas, myths and ideologies; political coalitions; single loop learning; founding coalitions. Recursiveness acts as a pivotal difference between a task approach, i.e. what is it that an organization does, and an event approach such as the kind preferred by Pettigrew. In a striking example of recursiveness, Whipp & Clark (1986), demonstrate the insurmountable difficulties that

Rover faced in attempting to transform itself from being a niche manufacturer, in the class ridden British society from the 1930s to 1970s, to a mass car producer of 250,000 units: as was attempted with the SDI project in the 1970s. Put simply; according to the analysis proposed by Whipp & Clark (1986), the problem that stymied Rover's attempts to become a leading European car manufacturer, were attributable to the absence of particular capabilities within their structural repertoire. This, given the recent experiences at Rover and the subsequent buyout by the Phoenix group, poses the question as to whether recursiveness may in terms of organizational outcomes prove to be chronic. A Clark perspective would suggest that Phoenix's attempts to transform Rover will fail because of the difficulties of developing structural poses in the repertoire. The notion of the repertoire is in need of further elaboration.

In close relation to the concept of recursiveness is the notion of the repertoire. The premise is that organizations have a "repertoire" as indicated in the paragraph above. A repertoire can be thought of as the organizational capacities for carrying out particular activities. This will consist of (i) its standard operating systems (people, technology, layout, tacit knowledge); (ii) its ability to deal with out of the ordinary events; (iii) its ability to deal with crisis situations (see Clark and Staunton, 1989). Clark draws his inspiration for the repertoire from the work of social anthropologists, Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Gearing (1958). The latter in a seminal study of the Cherokee Indians identifies four structural poses for organizing, this constitutes the framework of a repertoire, and it is shown in figure 1:1 below:

Figure 1:1: Structural Poses and Temporality (from Clark, 1975)

Aston University
Illustration removed for copyright restrictions

Much as Geanng's Cherokee Indians possessed different structural poses within their repertoire, so do organizations in the contemporary world For instance drawing from Clark's own work it can be seen how Rover did not possess an in-house design structural pose within their repertoire, and more importantly they were unable to develop such a capability The notion of structural poses within a repertoire is therefore central to a consideration of whether an organization is able to develop a particular capability (i e the ability to innovate, the ability to mass produce a standardised product) in its corporate repertoire (see Clark 1996, Clark 1999, Clark and Carter 1999) The premise is that an organization possesses a firm specific repertoire that is there are certain things that an organization can do it possesses particular structural poses (Clark and Staunton, 1989, Geanng, 1958) For instance, a MacDonald's restaurant is able to provide standardised meals with very little waiting time for customers As Ritzer (1993) chronicles there is predictability and calculability In contrast, Gordon Ramsey's celebrated "The Ivy" restaurant in London, which specialises in exclusive, haute cuisine for limited numbers of people during a sitting The point is that both organizations can be considered to be a 'success', but both possess very different structural poses within their repertoire would Macdonalds be able to respond to a request for a lightly done burger and fries cooked in olive oil? Would "The Ivy" restaurant be able to deal with an impromptu party of thirty wanting to have eaten their meal within half an hour? In one sense, a parallel can be drawn between the work of Clark and that of the work on routines by Nelson and Winter (1982), although arguably Clark has a richer sense of organization What are we to make of the notion of the chronic recursiveness of an organization's repertoire? A danger is that it is overbearingly deterministic, for it predicts the failure of attempts at transformation, moreover, it is difficult to see where successful transformation can come from This has led Scarbrough (1999) to comment about the 'conservative' nature of Clark's conception of change This is an important question, yet I think the acuity of Clark's analysis is to suggest the very difficulties that make transformation unlikely, but that there are turning points, that is critical moments (c f Ladune, 1978) in the history of an organization and its sector In this sense, there are parallels with Abernathy's dematurity thesis, where he argues that at the level of the sector there are, on occasion, transformations that pose fundamental challenges to an organization Clark & Probert (1988) illustrate this with reference to the British carpet industry, whereby the introduction of tufted carpets from the United States, posed a threat to the woven sector The study recounts two very different approaches from leading UK carpet manufacturers i e entrenchment and diversification

Returning to Geanng's (1958) schematic, a further significance is that it highlights the importance of temporality to the notion of an organizational repertoire, moreover, it highlights that temporality is not homogeneous and linear but rather that heterogeneous temporalities exist Within the realm of sociology (see Adam, 1991) and organizational theorizing, as Reed (1988) has noted, traditional assumptions behind temporality have been questioned (see Wilson and Leavy, 1994, Clark 1982,

Whipp and Clark, 1986) For Clark, organizational studies generally can be considered to be time free analyses, ignoring the 'formidable problems of time and structure' (Whipp & Clark, 1986 p55) Clark argues that in order to conduct an adequate treatment of temporality in the process of organizational change, the analysis must commence with the treatment of recursiveness and structural pose repertoires Moreover, it needs to escape the tyranny and linearity of clock-time Clark (1975) develops the work of Gurvitch (1963), and demonstrates that there are other forms of time i e such as event time For instance, Clark & Starkey (1988 p55) argue

> 'Events occur serially and that the event define time It is often the enactment of future events by key decision makers - the strategic time keepers - and their capabilities in politicking for the activation of the repertoire which shapes the tasks that the organization management undertake'

This is unmistakably in a similar vein to Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Gearing (1958), whereby events can be held to trigger structural poses Similarly, Grieco (1995) takes issue with linear time, instead highlighting the possibilities of asynchronous time mediated through technology Lash & Urry (1994) also pursue this line, developing the notion of time-space distanciation

The insights provided by the concept of the repertoire are highly significant for considering organizational change, and given that an organizational repertoire can only be firm specific, it adds to the cogency of the case for a contextual perspective Taking the earlier insights on recursiveness, the essence of Clark's position is that an organization's repertoire is likely to be robust for the future As Clark (1996 p9) asks 'The question then becomes can an organization with mechanistic management readily add more organic ideas?' The allusion to Burns and Stalker (1961) is significant, as it describes two archetypes, namely the organic firm and mechanistic firm This distinction captured the imagination of the organization studies community, it has been constantly referred to since it was first promulgated close of forty years ago The concentration upon these two durable organizational archetypes has been at the expense of the second part of the Burns and Stalker book, which emphasizes the inherent difficulties in moving from, for instance, a mechanistic to an organic archetype Immanent in this (mis) reading of Burns and Stalker is a suppression of process Addressing this point, Clark (1996) argues that a change programme may well result in one, the 'existing configurations being carried forward in the same way', or, two, in a 'slightly different format', or three, that the configurations will be radically changed The repertoire is therefore central to understanding an organization's capacity to change, the question becomes does an organization's repertoire possess the capacity to change, and if not how can this be developed It also raises questions as to what extent an organization is aware of its own repertoire, and how indeed this repertoire is created and developed, i e what were the key learning points for the organization? Are they, as has been suggested by Dill (1962), ineluctably linked with the founding

conditions of the enterprise? To quote Clark & Starkey, (1988:p58): 'After founding the repertoire will probably remain in position until external circumstances in the life course; of the sector introduce new conditions'.

The difficulties that Clark has identified in terms of the capacity for learning is something that emphasizes the constraints that the past places on the present. This is a concern shared in the work of Archer (1995), who taking a realist perspective demonstrates the possibilities for morphostasis/morphogenesis. In Clark's later work (1999), he identifies partially with Archer, at least in her identification of the importance of the pre-existing context and the likelihood that this will be reproduced over time. The corollary of the limits placed on an organization by its pre-configured repertoire that is recursive, is that the 'zone of manoeuvre' open to an organization is limited. The easy part, according to Clark, is to develop a strategy; the difficulty comes in trying to enact it. Therefore the strategic choice is open, as suggested by Child (1972), but limited by the organizational repertoire, but also by the interdependencies that an organization faces. For instance, electricity companies, which are the subject of this thesis, prior to privatisation were deemed to be 'paralytic' organizations (see Butler and Wilson, 1982), this was on account to the extent that they were constrained by government in terms of making decisions. There is 'choice', although it is less open than might have previously have been anticipated. In terms of realising a set of changes, Clark (1996) alert us to the possibilities of unintended consequences of the actions embarked upon (see also Giddens, 1984).

In simplistic terms, the zone of manoeuvre can be understood as what is the realm of the possible given the capacities held within the firm's repertoire and in terms of their relationship with the external environment. For instance, with the exception of the Open University given its unique position in the British Higher Education Structure, Clark and myself have argued that some of the expansion plans may well be fanciful:

> 'Universities have learned the aesthetics of romancing the market. Also, there have been local experiments. For example, the small Aston University has made its post-graduate programmes largely video recorded as part of distance learning and an opportunity for local students to revivify their experience of the classroom through the videos. However, it is important to carefully scrutinise claims that major epochal change has taken place to the universities in terms of the way in which they organise. Beyond the lucrative executive training courses, the on-campus pseudo-hotels and the swish post-graduate teaching rooms it is likely that little has changed within the organizational repertoire' Clark & Carter (1999:p9).

Central to this discourse has been - until very recently - an absence of discussion of whether British Universities are competitive in the international context:

(1) actually possess the capability within their respective repertoires to successfully enact such a strategy;

(2) What are the implications of a globalised, distance learning in terms of its impact on British Universities.

In dealing with the first point, it is <u>not clear</u> that British Universities have the capability to deliver such courses. There is a notable silence on the question of "what has to be learned". For instance, the following extract is typical of the current discussion, which places emphasis on speed and assumes an open strategic choice.

Similarly, if we look to the case of Marks and Spencers. Prior to their current travails, and coinciding with the apogee of Sir Richard Greenbury's stewardship of the organization, the company announced that in order to expand, they were to pursue a global strategy of establishing shops throughout the world. There was no consideration that there might be any difficulties in terms of pursuing such a strategy i.e. did the organization have the structural poses to actually realise such as strategy? The reason that Marks and Spencer is a good example is because they already had a chain of stores in Canada, that had experienced, despite apparent similarities in the context, chronic problems in terms of profitability/popularity etc. The point from this is that M&S's repertoire may have been highly successful to one context i.e. the UK, but, that put simply, and following the insights of Porter (1990), did not travel well. More recently, the severe difficulties that have been faced by M&S demonstrate that even in their homebase, through the threat posed by new entrants, combined with changing tastes

In terms of theorizing organizational change, Clark asks three further questions: first, what is the time frame that will be required to enact an organizational change? This is important, for instance, what is the time frame necessary to successfully enact a programme change initiative? How much time does the organization have?; second, how can one tell if a transformation has actually taken place ? How is it possible to judge as to whether an organization has actually changed, or to use Miller and Frieson's (1984) phrase, is there a sustainable difference in the organization in terms to pre-change (t1) and post change (t2)? The senior management of organizations are often rhetoric intensive on the subject of organizational change, emphasizing how much the organization has changed. This might be justified by concentrating our attention on a relatively superficial alteration of the repertoire. The question becomes therefore, how do we know that an organisation is doing something differently now from in the past? Finally, Clark asks the question as to if a change is made, will this be sustained over time, or, will the old organizational repertoire reassert itself? This is something that may be influenced by national specificities (see Clark and Mueller, 1997). For instance, Clark (1987) goes to elaborate lengths to introduce the notion of difference between institutional contexts. He has productively demonstrated the way in which the Anglo-American contexts are different despite alleged similarities. In his most recent book (1999), he argues that had Henry Ford set up his first factory in the Birmingham/Coventry corridor in the UK then he would

have almost certainly failed. His reasoning being that the institutional context in the English West Midlands was not able to support mass production capabilities, in the way that Detroit was. This has led him to speak of 'American Exceptionalism', that is the dispositional practices of the American Service Class were such that they lent themselves to a capability in mass production through their time-space mastery. In terms of exploring this position, for Clark (1987; 1999), the game of American football is a useful projection of the dispositional practice, in that it is pre-planned, actors have highly stylised, specific tasks and that it relies on a great deal of explicit knowledge. As a means of contrast, he compares this with the tacit, fluidity of rugby union in the UK. Clark's use of American football is remarkable for its debt to Elias, the sociologist who seminally described the carefully stylised rituals of the French court society, especially in its treatment of dispositional practice. Clark (1996; 1999), drawing on Weber and following Giddens (1984), alerts us to the contingent nature of the corporate world by highlighting that unintended consequences abound in any attempt at corporate transformation.

1.7   Discussion and Conclusion

In drawing this chapter to a close, I should first of all like to revisit the applicable school in order to express my objections to their theorizing. By presuming that change is something that can be managed through a series of steps, that managers can be trained to manage, and that organizations must be able to change are just a few of the propositions made by proponents of applicable school theorists. Following a critique of the so-called 'applicable' approach to change has highlighted three distinctive approaches to organizational change, each of which has a major purchase on conceptualising the field. It is not, of course, claimed that this is an exhaustive account of the field. That however was never the intention, instead this chapter has been scoped in order to introduce some of the dilemmas of organizational change. Broadly speaking, I concur with Clark's conception of organization, the task based approach, but at the same time consider his treatment of power to be implicit and as a corollary somewhat understated. In contrast, Pettigrew's account of change, perhaps through its concentration of events, is far too focused on the 'here and now' and has serious limitations in its treatment of organization. Yet the contribution that Pettigrew has made to theorizing the micro-dynamics of organizational change should not be underestimated. His, in this sense, is an important contribution. In terms of taking this thesis forward, I want to take a more detailed consideration of power in order to: (i) address some of what I take to be gaps in Clark's work; (ii) to engage further with the micro-politics of Pettigrew; (iii) to investigate further the means through which, as Wilson (1992) notes, ideas become treated to be commonsensical or seductive. These are the areas of investigation to be pursued within this thesis. To conduct such a

study, these interests will firstly require a detailed consideration of power and politics in the organization. This is the subject of chapter two.

Chapter 2:   Making Sense of Power in Organizations

2:1   Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the centrality of power to an analysis of organizational change (see Pettigrew 1972; Clegg, 1989; Wilson 1992). Rowlinson (1996) has argued that power is central to understanding *organization*, similarly Burrell (1997) warns us that corporations are dripping with power. As such it is necessary, for the purposes of this thesis, to engage in a detailed consideration of 'power' as a theoretical discussion. In this chapter, I intend to explore the various conceptions of power, the rationale for this exercise being to shed light on the implications of power for the study of organizational change. This will necessitate me to locate this thesis and myself in terms of an analytical tradition with which to make sense of the complexities of power, as related to organization studies.

Everybody has a notion of power, we are all implicit power theorists: he lost power, she gained power etc. The term is commonplace within organizations, it is also a concept that would appear to transcend time and space:

> 'Every social act is an exercise of power, every social relationship is a power equation, and every social group or system is an organization of power' (Hawley, 1963, p. 422).

The ineluctable nature of power to organizational life makes it all the more important that it should be theorised, that it should be argued over: this criteria has certainly been met, with *'power studies'* being *'essentially contested terrain'* (Lukes, 1974: p9). There is therefore little agreement as to what is power is, how it is used and how it may be understood: as such, 'some dare call it power', as Clegg and Hardy (1996) noted in the handbook of Organization Studies. Such a contentious concept renders it necessary to review the major strands of thought within discussions centred on power. I will begin by outlining what Lukes has termed the three dimensions of power: this will be followed by an overview of post-structural accounts of power, which will be discussed primarily through the work of Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman, Pierre Bourdieu and Edward Said. This chapter is by no means a complete review of the theoretical perspectives on power. It will serve, however, to demonstrate the extant tensions between the different conceptualisations of organizational power. More importantly, perhaps, it will seek to explore the efficacy of perspectives on power in order to help to understand projects of organizational change.

2:2   The first Dimension of power: Pluralism in a liberal democracy

One of the most influential perspectives on power, particularly within the realm of the orthodoxy within organizational studies has centred upon the work of pluralists such as Dahl (1961) and Polsby (1963) The essence of Dahl's approach is to view power as something that is a possession, in the sense that it can be viewed as a commodity Thus in Dahl's major work on political decision making in New Haven over a two hundred year period, he locates his analysis on concentrating upon 'observable' exercises of power For instance, the extract below demonstrates what Dahl would view as a successful power play, denoting the relative power of A over B

> 'In eight different sets of decisions between 1953 and 1959, there were twenty-seven instances in which the initiation or veto of a policy alternative could be attributed to a particular individual, group or agency' (Dahl, 1961 p151)

Power theorists such as Dahl (1961) define power as 'Involving a successful attempt by A to get B to do something that he/she would not otherwise do', this definition has become the classic definition of power it has widespread use within the organization studies textbooks The impressive empirical data set marshalled by Dahl clearly demonstrates the arrival and ascendancy of different ethnic groups in America over time, it also charts the transformation of New Haven, Connecticut from an oligarchy to a pluralist society His book serves as a chronicle of the gradual decline of the groups (such as patricians), allied to the arrival and increased influence of other groups

> 'When an ethnic group is in its first stage, some of its members become janitors Later, as the ethnic group moves into its second stage, school teaching is a wedge that permits the group to expand its white-collar segment Then, in the third stage, members of the ethnic group begin to receive appointments as school administrators' (Dahl, 1961 p153)

Implicit in this view of power is the assumption that it is possible to tell if power has been successfully employed The pluralist approach studies concrete, observable behaviour looking for conflict that it argues is inherent in any exercise of power

> 'I do not see how anyone can suppose that he has established the dominance of a specific group in a community or a nation without basing his analysis on the careful examination of a series of concrete decisions And these decisions must either constitute the universe or a fair sample of the universe of key political decisions taken in the political system' (Dahl, 1958 p286)

This is a point that is also made by Dawson, for whom

> 'Power is only relevant to our understanding of behaviour and organization, when there is conflict' (Dawson, 1986)

The focus on observable behaviour in identifying power involves the pluralists in studying decision making as their central task As Thompson and McHugh (1989 p145) note

> 'On this basis rests the behavioural assumption that power can always be observed and measured'

Lukes, who is critical of this perspective on power and goes as far to describe it as the 1st dimension of power He argues that pluralism

> 'Involves a focus on behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences, revealed by political participation' (Lukes, 1974 p15)

The concern with observing power is grounded in the view that power is manifested through its effects Daudi (1986) in his overview of the power literature is critical of the pluralist school He contends that it is a primitive discourse on power Bachrach and Baratz share a similar view, they state

> 'Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues that are comparatively innocuous to A' (1974 p7)

Similarly, Lukes (1974) argues that

> 'The pluralist view of power can not reveal the less visible ways in which a pluralist system may be biased in favour of certain groups and against others'

Moreover, Lukes (1974), in his critique of pluralism, suggests that the work of both Dahl and Polsby deploys a definition of power that extends beyond the analysis of decisions Moreover, he views their respective works on power as being more sophisticated than their methodological schema actually allows for In riposte to these criticisms, Dahl argues that society is penetrable by any dissatisfied group In terms of situating this work it is important to note that Dahl (1961), writing in the context of exploring American democracy, was arguing against a popular notion at the time that America was dominated by a small band of modern day oligarchs his finding was therefore that although the distribution of power was certainly not equal, it was distributed between different interests none the less

> '[America] is a republic of unequal citizens - but for all that a republic' Dahl (1961 p86)

In summary, the pluralist perspective, it is clear that while power may be observable, measurable even, it is ultimately an overly narrow and simplistic conception of power that while empirically

convenient is overly restrictive. It is a view of a particular political system that does not look too deeply into the system itself. As Lukes (1974:p37) posits, the pluralist view of power fails as an analytical device as it is incapable of highlighting the way in which power operates *'beneath the surface'*. It fails therefore to illuminate the way in which a system can act in favour of some groups, while disadvantaging others. As such, to concur with Bachrach & Baratz (1970) or with Lukes (1974) is to view the pluralist perspective as partial and limited, and thus wanting in its efficacy as a theory of power.

In spite of the reservations about the pluralist theory of power it remains popular within the realm of organizational theory. Its very weaknesses are also its strengths, for as Dahl has shown it can be operationalised as a theoretical perspective; moreover, it can indicate the outcomes of power plays in organizations. In this sense it can provide insights into the tactics of power, which is a point articulated at the level of an individual by French and Raven (1959). Taking a broadly pluralist perspective, viewing power as being observable when exercised by one party over another, their findings were that individuals may possess power which can be derived from one of the following power bases; reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert power. These power bases have proved to be remarkably durable within the discourse of organizational studies over the last forty years: more instrumental texts have used them in order to advise 'how power may be gained' (see Kotter, 1979).

The pluralist view of power regards power as a possession i.e. a department has power or a department has lost power. In this sense, as Clegg (1989) and Hindess (1996) note, the work of the pluralists exhibit an intellectual heritage that can be traced back to the seminal work on the Leviathan. In terms of ontology, power is a commodity at both the level of the individual and at the collective. This is a sentiment that is shared in the strategic contingencies of power literature, which argues that the relative power of a department, in an organization, can be calculated through an equation. The strategic contingency perspective links in directly with the issue of organizational resources. For instance, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue for a resource dependency theory of the firm, they view organizational sub-units as drawing on a number of resources of power: the resources being non-substitutability; centrality of a function to the firm; ability to cope with uncertainty; dependency; and financial dependency. As an analytical framework the strategic contingencies view of power is readily usable in order to explain why, for instance, the engineering department in CoastElectric, the organization examined later in the thesis, was more powerful than the personnel department.

The work by Pfeffer and others documents a good deal on the practicalities of power. This extends across a broad range of issues, down to detailing the tactics that may be used in meetings. It also provides an overview of symbolic manifestations of power within organizations i.e. Pfeffer (1978)

argues that the use of space within an organization might denote relative power (i e office sizes, office views) He also points us towards issues of executive succession i e if a new C E O came from a marketing background, thus replacing an accountant, then this might denote an increase in the power of the marketing department In my view while the pluralist conception of power may be somewhat restrictive in its analysis, it nonetheless provides useful insights into the exercise of power in organizations Moreover, theorists working within this frame, from the disciplines of political science and organization studies, have provided rich empirical detail with which to make sense of the operation of power

'They are extremely valuable in giving insights which lead to theoretical propositions to be tested in more methodologically rigorous work' (Donaldson 1985, p 80)

Perhaps the corollary of this concern for empiricism has been to produce an account of power which is for some unsophisticated That may be so but I think it is important to acknowledge that the pluralist perspective provides a means of observing power in action in corporations, although the power that is observed is based on a narrower conceptualisation than many may regard as being tenable

2:3   The Mobilisation of Bias: Non Decisions and Reformism.

The pluralist view of power is criticised as being simplistic, or inadequate in that it ignores other potent exercises of power Dahl's (1961) response to the question 'Who Governs?' was to argue that the people do The pluralist perspective was competing for attention with the reformist school, which consisted of a number of writers (see Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, Mills, 1959, Hunter, 1953) who were conjecturing that post-war America was 'dominated by a small power elite' (Hindess 1996 p4)

'[The power elite possess] a power unequalled in human history, they have succeeded within the system of organised irresponsibility' (Mills 1959, p 361)

The reformist writers were arguing in effect that the pluralist view of power was illusory, for instance, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) criticise the pluralists sole emphasis on behaviour, arguing that it takes

'No account of the fact that power may be, and often is, exercised by confining the scope of decision making to relatively safe issues'

Therefore the critique of the pluralist position is that the exercise of power by an elite takes place in such a way that was unaccountable to the rest of the community Instead the reformist writers regard power as a dual edged phenomenon, whereby power is exercised in both public and private fora.

The public exercise of power is as the pluralists noted observable and very often linked in with decision making i e A getting B to do something that they would not normally do The private exercise of power is necessarily covert in nature, it is the extent to which the powerful elite defend the status quo or as Schnattschneider (1973) argues

> 'Some issues are organised into politics, while others are organised out' (cited in Lukes 1974)

Schattsneider argues that in effect there is a 'mobilisation of bias' in which the status quo is defended by the power elite Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that this covert form of power can take place through non-decisions

> 'A non-decision results in the suppression or thwarting of a manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision maker non-decision making is a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits/privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are even voiced, or kept covert, or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision making arena, or, failing all these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementing stage of the policy process ' Bachrach and Baratz (1970 p44)

Non-decisions may, for instance, occur through a stakeholder controlling the agenda of what is considered for decision, Pfeffer (1981) considers ways in which the decision process within an organisation may be subject to 'non-decision' making, these include, controlling the considered alternatives, and control of information about alternatives The extent to which a group or an individual is able to engage in non-decision making is the extent to which they have power From an analytical perspective, the reformist, when studying power, would be looking for potential issues that are prevented from becoming actual issues For instance, Mangham (1978) in his dramaturgical take on power and performance in organizations demonstrates the way in which issues are silenced, and absent from organizational discourses

This dual edged notion of power, which has been termed the two dimensional view of power by Lukes (1974), offered a serious alternative to the pluralist notion of power Importantly, it redefined what counted as a political issue Furthermore, just as the pluralist conception of power supported a sense of America being governed by the people, so the reformist view of power lent credence to their assertion that America was in fact ruled by a wealthy business and political elite The reformist view of power has found a great deal of support for its framework, notably, Giddens (1984) employs it within his structuration theory It has also been the subject of considerable critique Lukes (1974), who views it as a qualitatively superior understanding of power to that of the pluralists, a project he contends is 'seriously incomplete' (see Hindess, 1996 p5) He criticises the two dimensional view of power for (i) placing too much emphasis on behaviour, and as such

viewing decisions as being consciously made by individuals between alternatives, and, (ii) the linkage it makes between power and observable behaviour conflict.

It is the assumption of conflict as being indicative of an exercise of power that is common to both the pluralist and the reformist conception of power. Moreover, there is the assumption that individual and group interests are observable and capable of being consciously articulated. Lukes (1974) considers both the pluralistic and the reformist view of power as being inadequate. He argues that the pluralist view of power is incapable of demonstrating the less transparent ways in which power is exercised to favour certain groups. He contends that the preoccupation the reformists have with demonstrating how certain issues which are 'currently observable' are kept off the political agenda is leads them to an overly narrow frame of analysis. A set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures (the 'rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970, pp. 43-44). Bachrach and Baratz (1970) claim to extend the study in power to include not only the power exercised in the taking of decisions but also the power exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to safer issues: that is decision-making and non decision-making.

2:4   Power: a Radical View ?

The title of this section is drawn from Lukes highly regarded text on power, where he critiques what he terms the first and second dimensions of power. He then goes on to outline his own radical - the third dimension- of power. Lukes argues that the first two dimensions of power, with their emphasis on behaviourism and the search for observable conflict ignore issues of manipulation, authority, influence and the shaping of ideas. He argues that the 'crucial point is that the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict in the first place'. He distances himself from behaviourism and takes a broadly structuralist position, whereby he locates power in the economic and social structure of a particular societal system. Lukes argues that:

> 'A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do,
> but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his
> very wants' (Lukes, 1974).

He contends that controlling both thought and desire is the ultimate exercise of power. He regards this dystopia as being possible through a combination of; (i) the control of information, (ii) the mass media, and (iii) processes of socialisation. These are themes that have been famously explored in George Orwell's '1984' and Aldoux Huxley's 'Brave New World'. They are also explored by Marxian theorists such as Althusser (1976), for whom power is exercised through ideological state

apparatuses. Similarly, Gramsci (1975) discusses the way in which hegemony is reinforced within a capitalist society. Lukes' third dimension view of power examines ways in which:

> 'The system can be mobilised, recreated and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously chosen nor the result of particular individual's choices' (1974:p70).

This view of power allows for consideration the many ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, Lukes claims that it:

> 'Offers the prospect of serious sociological and not merely personalised explanation of how political systems prevent demands from becoming political issues or ever from being made' (1974:p38)

For pluralists this is seriously problematic, for they question, from a practical standpoint, how can one have the ability to study events that do not actually happen! Lukes defends his position by arguing:

> 'It does not follow that, just because it is difficult or even impossible to show that power has been exercised in a given situation, we can conclude that that it has not. But more importantly, I do not believe that it is impossible to identify an exercise of power of this type' (Lukes, 1974:p39)

Lukes' Third Dimensional view of power signifies a shift away from analyses that concentrate solely or mainly on individuals' behaviour. It establishes that the most effective use of power as being characterised by an absence of conflict, where seemingly there are no grievances. The Pluralistic and the Second Dimensional view of power both consider individuals' interests as being 'consciously articulated and observable', Lukes rejects this taking what he terms as a 'radical' view arguing that people often are not aware of their 'real' interests. The question of 'real' interests is an interesting one, what is in someone's real interests? This presumes that there is a transcendental set of interests that are obscured from the oppressed through the dominant established order. Knights and Willmott (1989:p539) argue that the identification of real needs and interests is inherently problematic, and argue that this is their major objection to Lukes' radical view. They argue that power is an ineluctable part of existence, therefore, to speak of real interests outside of social existence is a contradiction. Moreover, they argue that it is implausible to 'image human beings whose subjectivity is not shaped by power' (1989:p539).

Hardy (1997) has recently revisited the work of Steven Lukes. She describes it as the power of meaning i.e. through its ability to 'prevent conflict in the first place' (1974: p. 23) through shaping the views of other groups. This evidently possesses Gramscian overtones. Moving to the substantive the third dimension of power can be regarded as providing the unifying objective within an organization or a society - a raison d'être - for instance, Jacques gives the American Dream as an

example of a unifying myth (from Ellis Island to Yale in three generations). Likewise in the British public sector there is the alleged public sector 'ethos' of serving the community that bound (and continues to bind) the sector together. This sense of meaning - what it is that an organization is about - is something around which the rest of the organization revolves, in a similar fashion to the way in which for Ptomolaic astronomers the sun revolved around the earth (see Crowther & Carter, 1999). Cooper et al (1988) talk about this in terms of an organizational archetype - a dominant mode of organizing - that is a useful illustration of the power of meaning and the way in which it pervades the organization. Therefore according to Blackler (1993) in a given context there will be conditions for knowing, that is the ways in which things are done in a certain context will make sense to those within it (see Malinowski's – 1959 - seminal account of the Trobriand Islanders). Without wanting to revisit the discussions on corporate culture it is of course important to acknowledge that very few organizations are likely to be pure space, hermetically sealed and dominated by one overriding system of meaning. Instead organizations should be viewed as sites of contestation between different subcultures with each being part of and being produced by a particular regime of knowledge. Moreover, organizations are ineluctably part of their sectoral and national environments. Immanent to a sense of meaning is that there is a code that determines, what is considered to be sacred and what is looked upon as profane (c.f. Clegg, 1989).

2:5   The Post-Structural turn: Conceptualising Power in the organizational world.

For much of the last forty years discussion, particularly within the realm of organization studies, has been driven by one of the three perspectives of power -pluralist, reformist, radical – outlined in the sections above. The last decade, however, has been marked by a heightened interest in post-structural perspectives, which have become increasingly influential in the domain of organization studies. In this section I will outline the central ideas of Michel Foucault, who is arguably the most influential post-structuralist theorist in terms of discussions on power, especially within UK organization studies (see Burrell, 1988; Clegg, 1989). This will be followed by a brief consideration of fellow post-structural theorists such as Edward Said and Zygmunt Bauman.

2:51   A Foucauldian Perspective on Power

In 1988, Burrell stated that Foucault's work has a 'direct though poorly recognized relevance for the study of organizations' (Burrell, 1988:p221), a decade later his importance to organization studies is not in doubt. In fact, since Burrell's article, one could be mistaken for thinking that a Foucault industry had taken plant within British Business Schools: from periphery to centre stage in ten years for the late professor in the history of ideas. As I will argue this attention is well deserved in view of the insights from Foucault's oeuvre and their capacity to speak to some of the aspects of the present.

My intention is not to provide a comprehensive account of Foucauldian thought, in any case this has been done admirably elsewhere (see McNay, 1996) Rather it is to explore some of the insights that Foucault brings to the discussion of power An engagement with Foucauldian thought is a stimulating but at times frustrating experience, his 'corpus of writings' are as Jay notes 'often highly ambiguous' (Jay, 1986 p178), they also cover an 'astonishing array of subjects' (Hoy, 1986 p2)

Foucault, as part of the 1968 academic generation, reacted against the Marxism /Communism of his youth[1] is generally held to have attempted to rethink power (see Hoy, 1986 p123)

> 'People of my generation were brought up on these two forms of analysis - one in terms of the constituent subject the other in terms of superstructures/infrastructures' (Foucault in Rabinow 1986 p58)

It was Foucault's intention to move beyond these positions, although beguilingly he states, 'I in no way construct a theory of power' (Foucault 1990 p39) That may be so, however, but in his writing he succeeded in challenging many of the assumptions that since the enlightenment have been taken for granted in the study of power The first shibboleth of power studies that Foucault was to eschew was the notion that power is a commodity i e the Human Resource department has power or the IT department gained power (a view that pervades the pluralist, reformist and radical perspectives alike) For Foucault such a suggestion is the product of flawed thought. Instead he argues that rather than power being a possession or a commodity it is something that operates through a network or a mesh

> 'it circulates through a chain' (Smart, 1985 p76)

> 'it is in a network of relationships which are systematically interconnected' (Burrell, 1988 p227)

Power 'is the name one attributes to a complex strategical relationship in a particular society' (Foucault, 1980a, p 93) The strategical relationship is always in the process of being achieved because of the resistance of those subjected to it Thus power relations are never fixed, nor are they immutable Power masquerades as a supposedly rationalist construction of modern institutions, a regime of truth that induces and extends the effects of power (Foucault, 1980b) No-one, strictly speaking, has an official right to power, and yet it is always being exerted in a particular direction, with some people on one side and some on the other It is often difficult to say who holds power in a precise sense, but it is easy to see who lacks power (Foucault, 1977b, p 213)

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[1] Many theorists have spoken of the journey from Communist Party membership among the French intelligentsia

Foucault's view is shared by relational theorists (see Clegg, 1989; Grieco, 1996; Hardy and Phillips, 1998; Jacques, 1996) who argue that power is the property of a relationship rather than the commodity of an individual. Within this understanding of power it is possible to argue that, for instance, the British Medical Association is a relatively powerful group within the UK National Health Service. This, however, is in the context of a web of relations in the UK medical sector, or as Hoy has argued:

'Power is not simply what the dominant class has and the oppressed lack' (Hoy, 1986:p134)

or as Hacking contends,

'No-one knows this knowledge; no one yields this power' (Hacking, 1986: p28).

Clegg (1989) has gone to great lengths to argue for power as a relationship, not a possession. Yet he still is able to produce for the Sunday Times newspaper an annual power list of 'powerful' people. This demonstrates the pervasiveness of the 'possessional' nature of the linguistics of power. S.Mills (1998) in her account of discourse cites the example of a young, junior man talking to a senior colleague. In terms of positional power, 'a possessional perspective', the senior colleague would be more powerful. However, she notes that in a relationship, power can shift: for instance as conversation moves to subjects in which the supposedly powerful person is relatively powerless.

Similarly, Grieco's (1996) account of the operation of power in working class communities in the East End of London demonstrates the relational nature of power. Her work contributes the notion of 'moments' of power (Grieco, 1999). Relational perspectives help to avoid what Bourdieu (2000) has described as the manchean view of power, that polarises between power(ful) and power(less). The corollary of Foucault's denial of power as a commodity was to ask different questions of power. Rather than puzzling over what is power and who has power, he turned to try and understand instead how power is exercised and by what means: '[I] want to describe how power is exercised rather than possessed' (Foucault, 1977:p26). He regarded his approach as unique in the sense that:

'The way power was exercised - concretely and in detail - with its specificity, techniques and tactics was something no one wanted to ascertain' (Foucault, 1986:p57).

This commitment to trying to understand how power was exercised led him to develop an interest in physical sites, such as the hospitals, the jail and the school, within a network where:

'power is administered and physically endured or resisted' (Walzer, 1986:p58).

It was this insight that leads one to the second orthodox assumption that Foucault calls into question: that of the sovereign nature of power. In the opening pages of Discipline and Punish (1977), arguably Foucault's most widely read book (at least in the UK context), Foucault reproduces a historical description of the execution of Damiens, the infamous regicide. The passage is shocking in terms of its sheer brutality: it is used to set up an analytical distinction between the periods of modernity and pre-modernity. Rather than marking a development to a more 'humane' society, Foucault argues that the contrast between the exercise of power in the contemporary era with that of the past is that we are now living in a disciplinary society. The corollary of this is that power is not exercised through physical force, the materiality of violence, but rather it is exercised through a panoply of sites, technologies and techniques in which:

> 'Power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behaviour' (Foucault, 1986:p67).

Essentially Foucault is pointing out that in advanced industrialised societies, power operates in a different manner to the past. This is also resonant with the writings of Weber (see Clegg, 1994 for a comparison between the two writers). The success of disciplinary power in this function can be attributed to its simplicity of techniques. The 'new power operates by universal surveillance' (Foucault, 1986:p74).

> 'Power as 'visible coercion' was supplanted by detailed disciplinary practices and sustained observation and monitoring of conduct' Dandeker (1993: p. 25)

Thus far in my survey of Foucauldian thought I have highlighted how it can be considered to be contrary to the established mores on power. Foucault argues against power as a commodity; moreover, he also suggests that we are living in an age of disciplinary power. I would now like to introduce his third heterodoxical argument: that of the positive effects of power. Conventionally those on whom power is exercised are thought to have done something they would not normally do (as is shown in Dahl's definition, that is taken as axiomatic within the power literature). The assumption is that the effects of the exercise of power will be negative for those objectified by and subjected to it. Foucault traces the genesis of this assumption back to the middle ages, where there was a chasm between those exercising and those undergoing power:

> 'Power was exercised mainly as a means of deduction, a subtraction mechanism, a right to appropriate a portion of the wealth, a tax of products, goods and services, labour and blood, levied on subjects' (Foucault, 1986:p259)

Influenced by Nieztsche, Foucault argues against this negativity, instead he suggests that:

> 'Now I believe that this is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, one which has been curiously widespread. If power were never anything

but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it ? Power produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (Foucault, 1986: p61)

This perspective flies in the face of conceptions of power that hold that power is dominatory and by implication oppressive. The work of Chris Grey (1998) is useful in this regard. In his studies of the socialization of Accountants undergoing their ICAEW training, he notes that the trainees are subject to a range of disciplinary techniques. They are evaluated, ranked and expected to behave in a particular way. In addition to this they have a challenging set of examinations to complete. However, this process, while undoubtedly difficult, has positive power effects in that the trainees are produced as accountants, a subject position that is inscribed with a certain social cache and the concomitant ability to enjoy relatively large material benefits associated with such a position. This understanding of power is somewhat more nuanced than the simple zero sum game of power = oppression.

2.52   Technologies of Power: The stylization of the functioning of Power

The discussion above highlights the way in which a Foucauldian conception of power challenges many of the assumptions held by other traditions concerned with the issue of power. Foucault's position within the academy is that of 'consecrated heretic', through his challenge to many of the taken for granted epistemological positions immanent to extant conceptualisations of power. That said, I think it is now time to move the discussion from the abstract to the more practical in order to gain a more concrete sense of how Foucault's view of power may be fruitfully employed in studying organizations: what does his disciplinary sense of power look like in the reality of organizational life? The building block of a Foucauldian perspective is the notion of a discourse, which is a worldview that is sustained by structures, embodied in people and circulated through talk, speech and the dispositional practices associated with behaviour. Therefore, one could talk about, particularly in the context of this thesis, a discourse of engineering: a world view on engineering which has emerged and has been sustained through bodies such as the Institute of Electrical Engineers. The discourse produces engineers through training, the embodied engineers then practice the discourse of engineering in their working lives. Foucault's interlocutor, Edward Said (1977), for instance has demonstrated the means through which the discourse of Orientalism emerged, and is circulated through institutions, texts and the like. A discourse possesses its own regime of truth i.e. what counts as being true, what is seen as reasonable, what is seen as nonsensical, what is taken to be 'normal' and what is taken to be 'abnormal' in organisations. Clegg (1989:102) notes that:

'What is taken to be sacred and what is taken to be profane depends entirely on relations of meaning. Such relations of meaning are as resistant to total control as are the relations of production...Resistance to any attempt which seeks to freeze meaning in any specific regulation of it will always be intrinsic to the nature of language as a moral community'.

A regime of truth that is immanent to a discourse highlights the way in which both power and knowledge interrelate. Foucault, for instance, argues that it is impossible to distinguish knowledge from power. This discussion is of course very similar to the power of meaning introduced by Hardy (1997) in reference to the work of Lukes and his interlocutors. This demonstrates the sometimes tenuous fault line between structural and post-structural work. According to Foucault, therefore, knowledge is seen as being a product of power, therefore it cannot be understood without reference to power relations:

> 'Our knowledge of reality, however, is enmeshed in the power field'. Burrell (1988:p225)

This suggests that the notion of 'neutral' knowledge divorced from power does not exist. Therefore the knowledge possessed by a psychiatrist is linked to power in the sense that a psychiatrist possesses an authority to speak, an authority to cast judgment on patients. A psychiatrist draws upon the psychiatrist discourse to ascribe an interpretation to an event, something that will be framed through the categories within the discourse. At the same time the 'patient' is silenced and is the object of the exercise of power. This is absolutely fundamental to understanding power in organizations as problems will be defined, categorised, and solutions proffered through the eyes of a particular discourse; Foucault illustrates this argument by studying deviance over time, and demonstrating that definitions of madness, and sexuality have changed dramatically over time.

The suggestion is that discourses exist and they are acted out in daily life, this of course means that individuals have to be constituted through a particular discourse: i.e. to be constituted through the discourse of accounting or through the discourse of engineering. Attached to such discourses are ways of doing things: this dovetails with the discussion on organizational repertoires in chapter one. Although it is now possible to see that a particular repertoire is enmeshed within the relations of power in the organization in the sense that certain things are done because they are deemed to be important. Therefore elements of a repertoire that may be deeply embedded within the organization having lain dormant for some time will be ineluctably linked to the prevailing power/knowledge discourse. In this sense a discourse perspective is not ethereal, far from it in fact, rather it is manifest in both the practice of people and the structuring of institutions. The primary vessel through which discourse functions is language which in turn shapes practice; individual discourses will possess their own language code (see Bernstein, 1961; 1975) which may be either elaborate or laconic. Such insights correspond closely with the insights of Bourdieu (1984; 2000) for whom there is a 'reproduction of the corps', by way of the transmission of social and cultural capital. One of Reed's (1998) criticisms of Foucault is that structure is dangerously downplayed, in my view, *pace* the death of the author discussion, this is based on a misinterpretation as for discourse to exist

it must inhabit structures which are preconfigured. Therefore the structures play an important part in the theorizing of discourse and power. This is a theme I shall return to in section 2:53 below.

2:53   Panopticism: ocularism, normalisation and examination

In the section above I have argued that discourses exist and people are constituted within discourses. This is of intrinsic interest in itself but it is also important in terms of thinking about organizational change. Following the discussion in the last chapter, it was established that one of the central concerns of change programmes is to enact behavioural changes among employees. Townley (1994) provides a detailed account of how employees are, (i) constituted or created through discourse, and (ii) are objectified through the same discourse. This process takes place through techniques of power that are:

> 'able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes
> of everyday behaviour' (Foucault, 1986:p67)

In the age of disciplinary power, discourses inscribe themselves on people through a vast array of different forms. However, Foucault provides us with a metaphor: the panopticon, in order to understand the exercise of power in contemporary society. He also provides an analysis of the means through which the panopticon works i.e. through the gaze, the normalising judgement, the exam and the confessional. These metaphors should be regarded as highly stylized conceptions of the means through which power operates. In the same way that classical conceptions of power express themselves through concepts such as possession and domination, so Foucauldians carry with them a highly stylised tool kit of well defined notions of *how power works*.

Foucault through his studies of various institutions (army barracks, the school and the hospital) claimed that power is exercised through observation, for instance, in examining a temporary military camp he interprets the camp as being the:

> 'diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility' (Foucault cited in
> Rabinow 86:p189).

The implication being that to see is to be able to exercise power, it is the ability to render activity as transparent. Foucault draws attention to the importance of architecture in this exercise of power; which in addition to military establishments can be seen in 'working class housing estates, hospitals, asylums, prisons and schools' (Foucault cited in Rabinow 1986:p189). It is at this point necessary to consider Foucault's most celebrated and most controversial metaphor: that of the panopticon. Foucault resurrected Jeremy Bentham's largely forgotten prison design - the panopticon. It was designed by Bentham with the aim of improving behaviour in prisons. The panopticon was a rotunda, within the prison there was a central observation point from which all prisoners could be

observed. The ingenuity of the panopticon was however that prisoners did not know when they were being observed, yet they knew that an observation could be taking place at any time. Therefore rather than the prisoners having to be disciplined they would actually discipline themselves through the knowledge that they fell under the panoptic gaze. Perhaps a more vivid example can be found in Pat Barker's impressive Regeneration trilogy, where she presents a historical fiction on World War One. In dealing with the experience of conscientious objectors, she chronicles the way in which on a prison door there was 'an eye in the wall'. Prisoners from their bunk would gaze at the Iris, not knowing if they were being observed or not, but making the presumption that they were, would modify their behaviour accordingly. In this particular example, the prisoner would be self-disciplining themselves to remain naked, rather than don the military uniform, placed at the end of their bed (c.f. Carter & Grieco, 2000).

Numerous commentators (for instance, Ball and Wilson 1997; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1991; Taylor and MacKinlay, 1991; Zuboff, 1988) have pointed out that the surveillance techniques found in disciplinary power are relevant to the contemporary workplace. This being especially the case in the age of information technology and smart systems, techniques that afford opportunity for panopticism through informational architecture:

> 'Bentham made much of the unseen observer within the panopticon: vision was just one way. Thus the observed became the object of vision, echoing the more general subject - object relation characterising much enlightenment thought. For the philosophies, knowledge was largely constituted in this fashion. Today, this 'objective' knowledge, though increasingly doubled as a source of scientific certainty still finds a home in computer databases. Electronic surveillance carries an enlightenment motif into the twentieth century by its reduction of persons into data images. The objects of the digital gaze can no more look back into the database than the panopticon inmates could see the rotunda' (Lyon 1994:p206).

Ball and Wilson (1997) look specifically at computer based monitoring within call centres, and in particular they look at the extent to which employees' self-discipline themselves to meet the expected performance criteria, but also how in this process they are constituted as work subjects. It is the manner in which employees constitute themselves as subjects in the workplace that in my view demonstrates the broader relevance of the panopticon metaphor. It is premised on the idea of a normalising tendency of a discourse whereby 'the slightest departure from correct behaviour (is) subject to punishment' (Foucault cited in Rabinow 1986:p189). People within different institutions such as the workshop, school, army were argued to be subject to a 'whole micropenality' of 'time, activity, behaviour, speech, body and sexuality'. Therefore an assumption in a Foucauldian analysis is that there is 'a correct way of being', which is determined by the prevailing Power/Knowledge discourse. Deviation from the expectations of the discourse would result in some form of 'punishment'. Therefore, the pressure is for people to normalise to the expectations of the discourse. For instance, Hodgson (1999) demonstrates how male life assurance salesmen are expected to

normalise to particular macho norms of behaviour. Similarly, Grey et al (1998) portrays how trainee accountants are expected to work long hours in order to satisfy the 'client'. Foucault argues that this process of normalisation is one of the 'great instruments of power' (Foucault, 1986: p196). In contrast to its homogenising qualities, normalisation also serves to distinguish between individuals. Townley (1993) applies these ideas to contemporary Human Resource Management (HRM). She presents HRM as a process of Power/Knowledge, looking at the production of knowledge and its effects. Townley (1993:p536) cites the selection process as an example of differentiating between individuals. For instance:

> 'Taking the case of application form questions that request individuals to acknowledge main weaknesses/strengths/ways of coping with success/disappointment. Such questions serve to build up a catalogue of information on individuals which facilitates comparison between candidates'.

The gaze of panopticism also operates through the examination, it 'is a whole type of power' (Foucault 1986:p197) whereby individuals are both observed and differentiated. For instance, the exam objectifies people or groups, for instance, an annual profits statement by an organization is an examination of sorts. The exam also individualises in that it creates an archive, another opportunity for observation. An individual can be placed against his/her peers, with comparisons being made, therefore, Hodgson's life assurance salespeople could be judged on their commissions earned, Ball and Wilson's call centre workers could be compared on the number of calls a day that were answered. It is through the panoptic gaze, which normalises and examines that power operates in contemporary society. Thus according to Foucault, the very features of penal life have come to pervade all elements of society: society has become carceral.

Said (1986:p150) argues of Foucault's perspective that:

> 'the modern period to which he belongs is an unremitting and unstoppable expansion of power favouring the administrators, managers and technocrats of what he calls disciplinary society',

while Walzer (1986:p58) argues:

> 'that we all live to a timetable, get up to an alarm, work to a rigid routine, live in the eye of authority, are periodically subject to examination and inspection'.

The concept of a carceral society is a contentious one. Foucault is suggesting that the mechanisms of control that impact on our lives resemble those of prisoners? For Habermas this is problematic, 'the generalisation of panoptical forces to the entire process of society is false' (Habermas, 1986:p9). He argues that it is an absurdity to draw a comparison between social democratic France of the 1970s and the Soviet Gulags of the 1950s. Giddens (1984) argues that it is inappropriate to

use an extreme form of organization as an example for other organizations. In his defence Foucault argues that it is important to look to the extremes in order to make sense of the commonplace. However, while it is useful to draw insights from one type of institution it is problematic to elevate them as providing the template for society. Poster (1984) notes, 'at times discipline and punish regresses to a totalising logic in which the panopticon becomes the model for all forms of domination'. I would concur with this view, moreover, I would add Ball and Wilson's (1997) observation that the panopticon was never actually built.... or *has it been ?*[2] . Mackinlay (pers. comm.) takes issue with the treatment by many labour process theorists and accounting theorists of their appropriation of Foucault. His argument is that Foucault has been bastardized into a misplaced paranoia, whereby surveillance is omnipresent and over powering. Instead, he suggests that this is counter to the subtleties and relational characteristics of Foucault. By way of an illustration his present work is an analysis of labour history, which includes a study of the pioneering industrialist Titus Salt. A Northern English industrialist, Titus Salt is remembered for his creation of a green-field site and factory that was notable for its sanitary conditions and for some is an exemplar of enlightened nineteenth century capitalist thinking. Subsequently, features of his model village have been held to be pregnant with social control. For instance, there were no public houses in the town; drunkeness was forbidden. Equally, regular checks of employees' houses took place to check them for cleanliness. The streets looked up to the factory, and there was a large corner house that had a panoramic observation point, which was inhabited by Salt's 'security manager', a former army officer. For students of the panopticon, this Mackinlay argues would prove that employees were subject to all manner of disciplinary mechanisms. As a counterposition, that serves to problematise overly deterministic notions of discipline, Mackinlay points out that Salt never lived in the village, and one of the security manager's functions was to warn Salt of any impending trouble: the security manager rather than being cast as *big brother* was instead an early warning system for Salt 'to get out of town if there was any uprising'. Mackinlay's larger project therefore is to rescue Foucault from what regards as being a misappropriation of Foucault's ideas.

Another forum in which self-discipline can be observed is according to Foucault the confessional; he takes the practices of the practices of the Catholic Church and extends them as a metaphor for the operation of power. Therefore as Mills (1998:p81) explains:

> 'For Foucault, those who confessed and displayed themselves as compliant subjects, in the process contructed themselves as those compliant subjects. For example, psychoanalytic therapy would, for Foucault, seem to be the epitome of confessional discipline, whereby the subject internalised the problem as her own in the process of telling the therapist about her difficulties. The subject is turned into a 'case' in the process of inserting herself into the psychoanalytic confessional discourse' Mills (1998:p81)

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[2] I am indebted in Peter Innes, Royal Holloway, for drawing my attention to the Port Arthur penal

The confessional denotes the subjection of a person to a discourse i.e. a catholic subjecting themselves to the writings of the Catholic Church, being offered the opportunity to purge their sins and be granted forgiveness. In chapter 1, I introduced Wilson's (1992) account of programmed change. He highlighted the way in which many such initiatives are aimed at individual managers: i.e. the manager is invited to reconstitute herself and discuss her practices in relation to a particular discourse, such a process could be regarded as an act of confession. Townley (pers. comm) explained that the use of Foucault is in terms of focussing our attention on seemingly innocuous techniques and opening them up to critical scrutiny. For instance, Townley recounted that through her teaching at the University of Warwick, she had to teach personnel management topics such as performance management. For many critical theorists, especially those for whom their analytical concerns were at the level of the State, such techniques were not worthy of consideration. Townley was however to engage with such techniques and demonstrate that they had important consequences in terms of constructing subjectivities i.e. through a performance appraisal, an employee is constructed a 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' employee which in turn is internalised. Similarly, Townley (1994) was to demonstrate how such technologies also serve to categorise, and organize larger populations, an illustration would be in terms of selection and recruitment whereby a large field of applicants are organized into a population. This concentration on specific mechanisms deployed in organizations has proved a fruitful line of analysis, and has highlighted that techniques in the workplace, however apparently innocuous, need to be problematised. It is then this localized analysis of power that is one of the analytical strengths of a Foucauldian inspired analysis.

2.54   Doubting Foucault

Somewhat flippantly I have suggested above that from relative obscurity, in organization studies terms, Foucault is now one of the dominant conceptual positions; elsewhere I have spoken of Foucauldiana and talked about the consecration of Foucault into the Business School academy. That is not to say that there is a broad consensus relating to the efficacy and status of Foucault's work. In fact, a number of critics have lined up to question Foucault. Mike Reed (1998) in a key-note talk at Kings College argued that Foucault provides brilliant insights into the operation of power but that there are a large number of difficulties with his writings. Reed's concerns are also reflected in the writings by a number of other theorists. I will now address some of the key concerns identified by theorists whom have studied Foucault and power. The totalizing logic of the panopticon is deeply problematic. It has also caused readers of Foucault to question his notion of agency and of resistance. If we are 'docile bodies' constituted through discourse are we capable of agency or are we mere docile bodies? This is an important question, and in my view it goes to the heart of the previous critique of the efficacy of employing the metaphor of an unbuilt prison to explain contemporary society. My position is that in Discipline and Punish there is a denial or at any rate an

colony, Tasmania, which possesses many 'panoptic' features.

obscuring of agency, which incidentally is at odds with many accounts of carceral life (see the brilliant accounts of Primo Levi and Alexander Solzhenitsyn). This is perhaps the corollary of Foucault studying the plans, and not praxis, of a total institution (see Goffman, 1969). Instead I would like to suggest that people's subjectivities are constructed through a range of discourses and biographical experiences, which are not capable of being reduced to one totalizing discourse. Thus in liberal society there are limits to Foucault's position, moreover, for individuals there is a zone of manoeuvre – that is a space for agency. The corollary of this position, is that, we may well be able to generalize about how, for instance, an accountant as compared with a marketeer may approach a particular problem but it is not to deny that people can change or be constituted through different and contradictory discourses.

Similarly, there has been a great deal of controversy as to whether Foucault provides room for resistance within his conception of power. As Knights (1997) notes for those whose reading of Foucault is restricted to Discipline and Punish there is little evidence of resistance, however, in his later works there is more attention paid to the possibility of resistance. Knights and Vurdukakis (1994) note that where there is power there is also the potential for resistance. As such rather than Foucault closing down the possibility of resistance, they argue he opens up a multiplicity of sites for resistance. Said, however, argues the opposite, stating that Foucault aligns himself with power rather than with resistance, conceiving power as being 'irresistable and unopposable' (Said, 1986:p158). This is a consequence of his position coming from the 'actual realisation of power, not of opposition to it' (ibid.). Related to this point are the insights from contemporary theorists such as Bauman (2000), Clegg (1999) and Grieco (2000). Each of whom has highlighted that the panopticon has become inverted: figures of power, of institutions of power have themselves become subject to the gaze, but the gaze of the 'other' be it the patient, the client or the student. Clegg and Grieco (1999) have both referred to this as *'reverse panopticism'*, while Bauman (2000) in his discussions with Dennis Smith describes this as synopticism. An example of this would be, for instance, patients with a particular medical problem looking on the internet, hence learning about their own condition, and then going to a General Practitioner in order to have particular drugs prescribed and the like. This is a radical departure from the idea of the doctor as omnipotent, a herculean character with the power of science in *(usually)* his hands. For instance, people of my grandparents generation would routinely address a doctor as 'sir' and follow their prescriptions closely, without asking any questions; for it was not their place to do so. Now the situation is quite the reverse, a harassed General Practitioner may well be confronted by an 'empowered' patient who through accessing websites may well be far better informed than the General Practitioner (Grieco, 1998).

Foucault's sense of exploring institutions, and in particular looking at the extremes or margins of society, resulted in a silence over the role of the State. At one level, this can be read as his escaping

the intense attachment to the State, something dear to most Marxists, as a rejection of his Communist Party affiliations of both his Marxist past, not to mention his French ethnicity. The localised conception of power, problematized Marxist notions of freedom, for it emphasized that power relations are an ever-present part of social life: be they in the family, the office or at the level of the nation state. A disinterest or an analytical blindness to the role of the State seems problematic and perhaps explains why some of his interlocutors, at least within the British Business School academy, have tended to concentrate on finely grained analyses. These analyses are remarkable for their silence on the State, instead with organizational action being reducible to discourse within a particular organization or department.

It is outside of the scope of this chapter to enter into a more detailed account of reservations about Foucault and his work. The main critiques being levelled at him being the lack of agency and an aggrandisement of the disciplinary society, that at times lapses into a transcendental essentialism that he abhored. Undoubtedly his work was ethnocentric, and his approach to history transgressed the versimilitude demanded by the subject. The inherent disagreements over interpretation that seem to bedevil Foucault's work would no doubt have provided a great deal of amusement to the writer himself. It is in my view mistaken to debate endlessly what he *really* meant, as if such an exercise would produce some sort of definitive theory of power. In this sense my project in my treatment of Foucault is to take insights from his work rather than to attempt to be a Foucault purist. This will be my concern in the section on 'Regimes of Power' below.

2.55   Symbolic Violence

Foucault's account of disciplinary society describes the technologies and techniques through which populations are ordered, categorised and controlled. Equally, he illustrates the way in which a particular discourse impacts on the shaping of individual subjectivities. These are quite clearly important contributions. As I have mentioned above Disciplinary and Punish commences with a description of the execution of Damians, and the argument follows that sovereign power, as exemplified for instance by the Sun King declaring 'l'etat c'est moi', gives way to disciplinary power. The lacuna in his work is that while he brilliantly describes the symbolism of Sovereign Power and of the architecture of disciplinary power, there is a silence on the symbolism of the exercise of power in contemporary society. Populations are not managed silently, but rather there are hugely important symbolic demonstrations. Bourdieu (1986) introduces the term symbolic violence, whereby one group, through an action, is violated by another. Similarly, Castells (2000) is alert to the particular importance of symbolism in contemporary society. Thus protests be they against the World Bank, Fox Hunting or the British Government, while having limited substantive *effects* are important symbolically. Equally, the representation of a group in a particular way, i.e. one that juniorises them or silences them can be considered to be an act of symbolic violence. For

instance, during his long spell of incarceration, Nelson Mandela, and the other ANC prisoners, was compelled to wear shorts, while the jailers wore long trousers.

2.6   A Regime of Power

Following the lead of Hardy (1997), my intention is an inclusive, exploratory conception of power. Quite clearly, the individual guile of managers or workers in particular positions may well constitute acts of the skilful use of power. In that sense, I am unwilling to fully follow Foucault's lead in terms of cutting off the Kings head, and announcing the end of sovereign power. Rather I want to acknowledge that individual agency takes place within the constraints of pre-configured institutional structures and discourses. I want to suggest that Foucault's insights into the functioning of power offer great insights into how a *system of technologies* emerge in order to legitimate a particular world view. In this sense, there are interstices between meaning and system. Furthermore, Foucault in his anti-Whiggish vision brilliantly demonstrates the way in which far from being a seamless teleology, instead history is a series of ruptures and discontinuities, which as Orwell has observed are then rewritten by the winners! Accepting this and a Foucauldian notion of discourse, sustained through texts, institutions and dispositional practice that is resonant with the notion of recursiveness introduced in Chapter one. I want now to construct an argument about the way in which we can make sense of the role for people endogenous to a discourse and the notion of a competition or at any rate a contestation between discourses.

Turning to the issue of the role for people within a discourse. In the sections above the way in which people exist through a discourse through archives, performance scores etc. has been documented. In short people are subjectified and objectified by the technologies – the power of the system – of a particular discourse. Being constituted through a particular discourse will give a person access to the resources and linguistic tropes of a particular discourse. This is something recognized by Foucault in his descriptions of the hospital. By virtue of someone's position, for instance as a doctor, they have an authority to speak, an authority to delimit. Foucault's account is, however, limited and gives little idea of the relative mastery of a particular discourse. The lacuna is helpfully filled by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977;1984;2000) A fully detailed account of Bourdieu's oeuvre is outside the scope of this thesis. To illustrate the point about positions within an endogenous discourse I want to draw on that part of his work that relates to the concept of cultural capital. This is inevitably a partial interpretation given the scope of the work and occasional difficulty of his wider oeuvre. One of Bourdieu's broader concerns is to demonstrate the means through which capital reproduces itself. However, Bourdieu delineates between 'types of capital' (c.f. Bourdieu, 1984, 1988). In particular, he argues that there are *'three fundamental guises'* of capital, notably the distinct categories of economic capital, social capital and cultural capital; which are not reducible to one another but are capable of being converted. While economic capital needs little elaboration, social capital refers to

the social networks that an agent is positioned within. In more common parlance, it is the 'who you know' of social action (see Grieco, 1987; 1986). Thus to be rich in social capital is to be well positioned in relevant social networks. For Bourdieu, social capital is tied to familial relations or positions within a particular institution (e.g. a profession). The third form of capital, and the one in which will form the focus of this section, is that of cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge of a particular domain - it is the 'what you know' i.e. skills, knowledge and competences (c.f. Guillory, 2000). For Bourdieu, cultural capital has three core manifestations: *embodied*, whereby a person is the embodiment of particular knowledge; *objectified*, where cultural capital is inscribed in artefacts such as books, paintings, reports etc (c.f. Fowler, 1998); *institutionalised*, this is where cultural capital is conferred or consecrated upon an individual by virtue of their association with an institution, such as through holding a particular appointment or holding a particular credential, such as a degree from an elite institution. In late modernity, Bourdieu (1988) holds that education institutions such as the (business) school or the French Grand Ecole are important sites for credentializing or consecrating cultural capital. Arguably Bourdieu's work has had greatest impact upon the sociology of education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1978; Bourdieu, 1988).

It does not follow that to be rich in one form of capital equates with an overall richness in capital. For instance, Bourdieu draws a distinction between those that are rich in cultural capital and poor in economic capital and vice versa. Bourdieu studied the dynamics of capital over two generations and discovered that those rich in a particular form of capital – especially economic – were able to convert richness in one form of capital to that of another; thus perpetuating an elite. It is the conversion mechanisms between the different forms of capital that are of particular interest to Bourdieu. Relating this to corporations, it may be that a managerial elite will be able use its economic capital in order to be able to purchase cultural capital.

The above account is necessarily a brief sketch of Bourdieu's work. But in relation to the present study, Bourdieu's analysis can be summarised in terms of the implications of differentials in individuals' mastery of a particular management discourse. In Bourdieu's metaphorical usage, such mastery means being *'richer'* in cultural capital. The acquisition of a richness in cultural capital affords, among other things, a capacity to speak and cast pronouncements on a particular domain. Parallels can be drawn with academic life, for example, where cultural capital is accumulated through publications in leading journals, the winning of prizes, and the attainment of research grants). Such parallels also make clear, however, the contingent nature of cultural capital. The indices of cultural capital are not fixed and its possession is related to fields of power and status defined by the wider institutional context. Thus cultural capital is a relational attribute rather than a commodity in its own right and the rates of exchange will vary over time and between contexts. In Bourdieu's terms, individuals access such capital through iterative exposure to different experiences and institutions, whereby they are able to appropriate elements of a discourse within a given habitus.

For instance, and in anticipation of chapter 3, if we are to focus on managerial cultural capital, there are a number of routes to acquisition. Joppke (1998:p57) in his applications of Bourdieu's work has argued for the importance of 'the incorporation of symbolic, cognitive and aesthetic competences via implicit learning processes'. These range widely, from reading pop management books to graduation from a prestigious business school. Business Schools, for instance, introduce MBA students and short course delegates to new managerial discourses: the language game which is contained in highly stylized devices such as the 2 x 2 matrix. Some writers (see Burrell, 1997) have referred to 'MBA speak', which in my view should be read not in a pejorative manner but rather as a manifestation of an elaborate communication code (see Bernstein, 1961; 1975). A further important but implicit route to the acquisition of cultural capital are those processes of knowledge exchange which Abbott, in a study of professional groups, termed 'workplace assimilation'. Abbott (1988) highlights the way in which less qualified workers are able to assimilate the practices and language of those that are relatively more qualified. It is especially relevant here, because management consultancy praxis is based in organizations, increasing the possibility that managers exposed to the consultants will assimilate some of the 'language and practice' of the consultants by virtue of their 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Within a discourse therefore it is possible to differentiate between actors on account of their social, cultural and economic capital. Therefore in terms of managerialism, it is possible to talk in terms of someone being bereft or endowed with managerialist cultural capital. As Bauman (1987) has noted, a richness in a given domain, can create an actor as a legislator, that is:

> 'Being in control meant operating , without much challenge, the mechanisms transforming uncertainty into certainty; making decisions, pronouncing authoritative statements, segregating and classifying, imposing definitions upon reality' Bauman (87:p134)

To recap therefore, a regime of power is constituted by a central meaning, is supported by a system that legitimates and perpetuates that system of meaning. The regime of power is ineluctably connected with knowledge: the knowledge created by the technologies of power and the knowledge worked with by members of a particular discourse (i.e. dispositional cultural capital). It is now necessary to extend our analysis, in order to consider the possibilities for a contestation or co-existence between competing discourses. My suggestion, which is not especially profound, is that within non-carceral institutions there is the possibility of a proliferation of discourses. Such discourses may well be complimentary, for instance that of the New Right and New Managerialism, in this sense they can be considered to be intertextual: there is enough overlap and resonance to allow for co-existence. Conversely, some discourses may well be considered the antithesis of each other, and may well 'confront' each other as competing ideologies. This raises the spectre of binarism with the concomitant notion of a context between good-bad, right-wrong etc (for instance,

the Cold War with the confrontation between two distinct ideologies). In interpreting such relations, i.e. how power operates in a particular society, which groups are relatively powerful in their ability to define 'realities' of situations. Thus for Foucault some discourses are elevated above others, are allowed a voice, at the expense of other discourses. Derrida (1978) has worked on this problem, arguing that in the contestation between discourses there is the tendency for a discourse to lock another into a violent hierarchy, whereby one knowledge is subjugated and rendered relatively powerless. For instance, Crowther et al (1999:p8) have argued that, 'all binary opposition seeks to polarise the text in terms of two opposite poles but this normally is undertaken in the context of portraying one pole as good and the other as bad'. Similarly, Laclan (1990) has argued:

> 'Derrida has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles ...' (p.33)

These insights are important for they are suggestive that there may not be room for a pluralist co-existence between two discourses, but rather that there may instead be a confrontation. The relevance of these insights for the study of organizations is through the way in which new discourses may emerge and problematise the status quo; and, the means through which the status quo may be challenged i.e. through a panoptic gaze or a dividing practice etc.

In terms of the links with the previous chapter, organizational change, whether an applicable or an analytical perspective, is ineluctably about some part of an organization's environment problematising the status quo.

2.7   Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the issue of power in organizations. It has presented four major perspectives, noting the criticisms of each. I have taken a deliberately inclusive notion of power, drawing from the recent work of Hardy and of Clegg. In so doing, and trying to develop power as an exploratory framework, rather than seeking recourse to abstract theological disputes concerning the nature of power. I have attempted to develop a framework that I have termed a 'regime of power' that acknowledges and fully appreciates the individual, machiavellian machinations that may well be engaged in by individuals i.e. the 1st and 2nd dimensions of power. Implicit to this thesis is the ubiquity of power (see Clegg, 1989; Hardy, 1997). In this paper I concur with the relational view of power, that has become, pace Lukes (1974), known as the fourth dimension of power (see Hardy 1997). While power is not viewed as a possession, but rather as a product of social relations, I note, that in a given situation, some groups will appear to have greater saliency, and as such can be regarded as being relatively powerful (c.f. The Sunday Times Power List, written by Stewart Clegg, 1999). In this sense, while I concur with the point made by post-structural, relational theorists that power is not a possession, but rather a property of relationships. That said, I also note the pervasive

and seductive linguistic turn that allows us to speak of 'having power' or 'being powerful'. It is possible that within a discourse, a group will possess the ability to 'legislate' (see Bauman, 1987) over a particular domain, for instance, Said (1978) demonstrates the way in which occidental scholars, in effect, defined and categorised the Orient, or the way in which Israel defines Palestine. Similarly, Foucault (1973) has demonstrated the position that a psychiatrist holds within medical health discourse as compared with the 'patient'. In terms of the workplace, Abbot (1988) has demonstrated the way in which some professions (c.f. medicine and law) have been able to gain full jurisdiction over their respective domains, while other groups such as Personnel Management have been less successful (see Armstrong, 1992). While power may seem to be a 'possession' especially in terms of powerful groups, it is important to recognize that while the relations of power can quickly change (see Carter & Crowther, 2000) they also have a tendency to exhibit high levels of recursiveness (i.e. compare the rankings of UK universities now with fifty years ago).

In terms of understanding the relations in power in an organization, I acknowledge the contribution of the behaviourist writers on power (Lukes' 1st and 2nd dimension theorists: see Dahl, Polsby, Bachrach & Baratz, Pfeffer), however, in my view it is mistaken to restrict analyses to these relatively limited positions. In particular, it is important to acknowledge the broader institutional structures within which organizational action takes place. While for instance, the work of Pettigrew (1973) can tell us a great deal about the machinations of power, there is probably more that it does not have a capacity to explain. Therefore returning to the work of Said (1978), Orientalism was a discourse that was sustained and circulated through institutions (universities; colonial civil service), texts (writings on orientalism) and the everyday action of orientalists (talking and implementing colonial policy; discussing the orient). This is a point that is resonant with the recent work of Hardy (1997;1998) whom attempts to develop a framework of power which accounts for the power of meaning (after Lukes; 3rd dimension of power) and the power of the system (after Foucault; 4th dimension of power). Hardy's analytical opening between the 3rd and her 4th dimension is highly problematic in the sense that it ignores the epistemological differences between the claims of false consciousness of Lukes and the denial of an essentialist reality postulated by Foucault and his interlocutors. Yet her framework is useful in that it opens an analytical distinction between the power of meaning (why do we do what we do ? What is taken for granted as commonsensical ?) and the power of the system (how is relative performance measured ? by what mechanisms and by whom ?).

The power of meaning as described by Steven Lukes is the ability for a dominant group to 'prevent conflict in the first place' (1974: p. 23) through shaping the views of other groups. This evidently possesses Gramscian overtones. Moving to the substantive the third dimension of power can be regarded as providing the unifying objective within an organization or a society - a raison d'etre - for instance, Jacques gives the American Dream as an example of a unifying myth Likewise in the

British public sector there is the alleged public sector 'ethos' of serving the community that bound (and continues to bind) the sector together. This sense of meaning - what it is that an organization is about - is something around which the rest of the organization revolves, in a similar fashion to the way in which for Ptomolaic astronomers the sun revolved around the earth (see Crowther & Carter, 1999). Cooper et al (1988) talk about this in terms of an organizational archetype - a dominant mode of organizing - which is a useful illustration of the power of meaning and the way in which it pervades the organization. Therefore according to Blackler (1993) in a given context there will be conditions for knowing, that is the ways in which things are done in a certain context will make sense to those within it (see Malinowski's –1959- seminal account of the Trobriand Islanders). Without wanting to revisit the discussions on corporate culture it is of course important to acknowledge that very few organizations are likely to be pure space, hermetically sealed and dominated by one overriding meaning. Instead organizations should be viewed as sites of contestation between different subcultures each being part of and being produced by a particular regime of knowledge. Moreover, organizations are ineluctably part of their sectoral and national environments.

I have drawn insights from the post-structural accounts of power to illustrate what Hardy (1997) terms the power of the system. The preoccupation of Foucauldian researchers is with the techniques through which power is exercised, the most famous examples being Jeremy Bentham's plans for the panopticon and the religious confessional. The techniques of power produce 'truth' on subjects be it the performance of an individual in an assessment centre (see Carter, 1996) or the financial performance of an organization. The panoply of such techniques can be seen to pervade contemporary organizational life, for instance, schools, universities and hospitals find their identity in the wider environment constructed through performance measures. Within the private sector, for example, the spectacular collapse of Marks & Spencer has been constructed through the various techniques of power which produce truth on organizational performance such as financial data, customer surveys etc. Immanent to the power of the system is the multiplication of such techniques and the importance that they are afforded, characteristics that has led Power (1990) to raise the spectre of the Audit Society. The power of the system is therefore fundamental to the maintenance (or the displacement) of meaning systems within organizations.

The relevance of a discussion of power in relation to organizational change is that the prevailing relations of power construct that which constitutes what is sacred and what is profane. Furthermore the interstices of the power of meaning and the power of the system combine to produce effects in the work place in terms of prioritising particular objectives over others. It is a position of this thesis that to engage with organization is to engage with power i.e. as such it is necessary to deconstruct an organization in order to uncover the dominant relations of power and concomitant constructions of knowledge. In a fast changing environment it is necessary to examine discourses that may well be

appropriated by an organization, or perhaps those that subject an organization to a *normalizing* gaze. The next chapter will deal specifically with such issues, it will introduce and critique the pantheon of the twentieth century management thought.

Chapter 3: Twentieth Century Management thought: A concise overview

3.1   Introduction

The histiographies of the twentieth century that are currently in vogue, in book shops throughout the country, chronicle the major events of the last hundred years; however, with the possible exception of Hobsbawn (1995), they are remarkable for the way in which issues of management, industrialism and organization are absent from the text. This in my view is a serious limitation of the fin de siecle genre, I would contend that management and organization has been the defining feature of the twentieth century (see Bauman, 1989 on bureaucracy and the Holocaust). Against this background, this chapter seeks to explore and unpack the pantheon of twentieth century management thought; it does so with the intent of making sense of management thought in order to try and understand what was regarded to constitute 'effective' management and good organization in a particular period.

This chapter will commence by providing a concise overview of the different themes in twentieth century management thought, this coverage will make the analytical distinction between populist thought and theorizing by Business School academics in order to gain a fuller understanding of organizations. This will be followed by a discussion of contemporary management movements such as Total Quality Management, Business Process ReEngineering and Knowledge Management. These initiatives will be considered in detail, the rationale for this is given the analysis of power presented in the previous chapter it is necessary to examine the discourse of managerialism, if that is what it is, in order to understand the supra-organizational perspectives that might inform organizational action. Furthermore, this chapter also seeks to discuss whether managerial thought can be viewed as teleological and whether the century presents us with a seamless accumulation and refinement of managerial knowledge. The discussion will then shift in its focus; it will proceed to examine management thought in terms of its regional and sectoral imprinting with a questioning of how transferable management ideas are across contexts. The chapter will make links between management thought, business schools and management consultancies in order to try and make sense of contemporary management thought.

3.2   Twentieth Century Management thought: A Concise History

As I have argued above one of the characteristics of the twentieth century has been the emergence and diffusion of management thought: discourses of managerialism. In order to understand contemporary managerialist thinking it is important to consider its historical development. In this section of the chapter I will seek to determine the key movements in the twentieth century discourse of managerialism, the accounts are deliberately brief, they act to try and put contemporary management thought into a broader historical context.

3.21   Scientific Management

An underlying characteristic of twentieth century Anglo-Saxon culture has been an interest in how best to manage large industrial organisations. The genesis of the discourse of managerialism was arguably in Taylor's factory, and his widely disseminated writings (from the 1890s). Whilst Taylor's ideas were not completely unique, indeed many US engineers were striving to fuse management with the laws of natural science, his ideas became seminal in theorising and popularising what was to become known as Scientific Management. Indeed, if one was to look at the histories of the Colt arms factory (Hartford, Connecticut) or the Singer sewing machine factory, both are remarkable for their early and successful attempts at mass production which predate Taylor's writings. Therefore, Taylor's role, which was of crucial importance, in relation to scientific management is probably best understood as the person who theorised and articulated what was happening in factories in the fast industrialising USA (see Lash and Urry, 1987). Crucially, Henry Ford's appropriation of Taylor's corpus of theoretical and practical knowledge in his 1913 automobile mass production line firmly established Scientific Management as the dominant paradigm for organising.

The meta-narrative of Scientific management was held to constitute the 'one best way' of organising. In the age of modernist-fuelled reason, the evocation of the natural science paradigm reinforced and legitimated Taylor's ideas as being a rational and scientific activity. The central concerns of Scientific Management concentrate on enabling efficient mass production. Taylor developed a package of measures to be employed, which he considered were the 'one best way' of organising work. The emphasis on the one best way underpins the scientific method he advocated. The principles of Taylorism are shown in table 3:1 below.

Table 3:1   The Principles of Scientific Management

1) Develop Science for each element of work

2) Scientific selection and training of workers

3) Co-operation between management and workers to ensure that the work is done according to science.

4) Equal Division of work and responsibility between the work and the workers, each doing what they are best fitted for.

It was held that this was to be achieved through the transfer of knowledge away from workers to the rule book in order to facilitate greater managerial control over the design, planning and pace of work which would *'maximise the production of surplus value'* (O'Connell-Davidson, 1993:14). Consequently workers were to become small cogs in a bureaucratic, industrial machine.

Implicit in this list is the transfer away of knowledge of the job from the worker to management through a rulebook. By recording the different components of a task, management could then split the task into smaller more repetitive segments; they could also exercise greater management control over the design, planning and pace of work to 'maximise the production of surplus value' (O'Connell-Davidson, 1993:p14).

Under Scientific Management jobs contained less discretion and were more highly specialised. Scientific management saw the genesis of 'time and motion' studies promoting the linear conception of time. Taylor's division of labour divided brainwork from manual work. Concomitant to Scientific Management was the adoption of a bureaucratic structure in which tasks were narrowly divided. The bureaucratic structure being characterised by many levels in the hierarchy, with very exacting descriptions of jobs thus there being little room for discretion within each job - this structure being entirely consistent with the ethos of scientific management.

The consequence of this Taylor argued was that productivity would rise. Taylor ignored the social impacts of such methods believing that increments in pay would be a sufficient motivator, in what Schein (1986) was to define later as the 'Rational economic man' construct. Ford famously employed these ideas with their $5 day.

The notion of representing Scientific Management as a logical, and rational method of organising is interpreted by Scarborough and Corbett (1992) as follows: 'just as scientific rationality encourages the view of scientists as the custodians of 'truth', Taylor's 'Scientific Management' encouraged the development of managers as the legitimate holders of explicit knowledge of the organisations in which they served' (1992:p81). The very term 'Scientific management' conjures up visions of cosmic unalterable laws of management, which is of course entirely consistent with Taylor's nostrum of their being 'one best way'.

Table 3:2   The Advantages of Scientific Management (Child 1984:p30)

1) Advantages ascribed primarily to greater specialisation:

- increase in the worker's dexterity
- saving of time lost in switching from one task to another
- reduction of time lost when jigs and tools have to be changed
- ability to hire lower skilled labour which is cheaper and more readily replaced
- reduction in training time and the attendant waste in materials
- development of specialised machinery is encouraged
- facilitation of the substitution of machine for manual pricing and guidance, and eventually the mechanisation or automation of manual operations
- eases the application of scientific method instead of the worker's 'rule of thumb'

2) Advantages ascribed primarily to reduced discretion

- permits management rather than workers to establish methods of work
- permits management rather than workers to establish standards of performance
- reduces loss of time involved in consultation and discussion with workers
- is consistent with hiring of less trained and cheaper labour.

In understanding the development of Scientific Management and its subsequent status as the hegemonic paradigm it is important to remember the historical context that was characterised by an unprecedented expansion of industry that saw the birth and wide scale diffusion of mass production. It is also important to place scientific management within the American context (see Clark, 1987), the exemplars of scientific management were large American corporations such as Ford, GM and more latterly MacDonalds (see Thompson and McHugh, 1990). The period in which scientific management took off in the United States was one in which there was massive immigration, primarily from continental Europe, thus ensuring a large supply of labour that were actively seeking work. Given the different nationalities (see for instance, the different languages that were used in notices that were displayed in a Ford factory) the production line, requiring little training or tacit skill, was well suited to the circumstances of the period. Rosenburg (1969) has argued that scientific management is the American system of manufacture, this point is also made by Clark (1987) who argues that mass production systems are enabled by the temporal reckoning practices possessed by members of the American service class. He contends that Americans are socialised as having an exacting and linear conception of time, the genesis of which lie in the temporal practices of the early non-conformist settlers. Clark (1987) points to this conception of time as explaining both why mass production happened in America and why it proceeded to be so durable within that context.

The difficulties with the practice of Scientific Management across a range of contexts have been recognised throughout its application. These problems centre on employees who found the deskilled work boring and monotonous (see Beynon, 1973). This sometimes resulted in employees engaging in unproductive activities, which often bordered on deliberate sabotage literally 'throwing a spanner

in the works'. The unrelenting monotony of work on an automated production was to lead to numerous revisions to theorizing on scientific management.

3.22   The Human Relations School

The social alienation and subsequent problems associated with Scientific management are well documented, and this in part led to an epochal shift in the discourse of Managerialism to what became known as the Human Relations school. The theoretical backdrop to the Human Relations school came with the Hawthorne Studies (1927-32) which emphasised the importance of informal social groups within the workplace. The results from the Hawthorne studies suggested that the output by a work group was controlled by the group in accordance to their conceptions of what constituted a fair day's work. Members of the informal social group adhered to such norms; as such it would appear that their membership of the said group was held to be of great importance, more important than earning extra money. The informal social group was policed to prevent members diverging, through overproducing or underworking, from the output considered to be a 'fair day's work'.

The findings from the Hawthorne Studies marked a departure from Scientific Management that had largely ignored the social needs of people (the assumption being that they would be motivated solely by financial reward). The Human Relations movement was developed and publicised largely by Mayo (1949) in the period immediately following World War Two. Their finding that employees have social needs as well as economic needs did not question either the legitimacy concerning the managerial right to manage, or the essentialism of Scientific Management. It posited the following strategy for organisations.

Management should try and cement good relations with informal social groups within the organisation so that they share the same goals and outlook (a worldview which, of course, corresponds with that of management). The suggestion was that this could be achieved by the intervention of the formal organisation into the informal organisation in an attempt to 'create and sustain consent' (Thompson and McHugh 1989:p80). Recipes to achieve this could include (taken from Thompson and McHugh 1989:p87):

- Democratic Supervision
- Good Communications
- Teamwork
- Socially Skilled Leadership

The manipulation or commitment of people was now core to an organisation's success in contrast to the scientific rationality espoused by Taylor. The chief difference from Scientific Management was its more sophisticated psychological construct of the worker recognising social as well as financial needs. Pollitt (1993:p17) views 'modern techniques of job enrichment, participative management styles are part of the intellectual heritage of the human relations school'.

3.23   Socio-Technical Systems

The Social technical systems approach developed from work carried out by Trist and Bamforth (1951) into the British coal mining industry. It explored the problems encountered with the introduction of new technology at the coalface that largely mechanised the coal industry. This mechanisation deskilled and routinised the miners' labour process and thus proved to be deeply unpopular with them. Many of the expected productivity gains from the new technology did not materialise. Trist and Bamforth (1951) believed that the problem arose from the new organisation of work accompanying the mechanisation of the coalface.

Trist and Bamforth (1951) endorsed the new technology but explored varying the work organisation at the coalface to attempt to improve morale and productivity. They found that when employees were organised into groups, with a degree of self-autonomy and working for collective group bonuses, they performed far better than before.

Table 3:3: Trist and Bamforth's Findings on the Use of a Socio-Technical System

New Technology Impact	Socio-Technical System
- Segregated Work	- work group responsible for the whole coalface work process.
- Boredom	
	- task flexibility for group members.
- Lack of Flexibility	

The Socio-technical systems approach advocates looking for the 'best fit' between the technology and the human requirements from a job. This denotes that the organisations have some choice, or room for manoeuvre in designing the work organisation around the technology. The degree of

choice is constrained by the managerial prerogative of 'economic viability'. The implication from the study is that success is dependent on designing the social system to allow for the needs of the social group. It draws on the Human Relations approach in its emphasis on social needs, and in common with the preceding management ideas retains a unitary approach. The Socio-Technical approach marked a move towards a more relativistic approach to organising.

3.24   Contingency Theory

Contingency theory developed in the 1960s[i], and it marked a significant departure from the doctrine of there being 'one best way'. It commenced the 'if then' approach which is characteristic of the contingency approach: for instance, Woodward (1958) posits that there is 'a particular form of organisation most appropriate to each technical situation' (cited Thompson and McHugh 1989:97), whilst Burns and Stalker (1961) divided organisations or sub parts of organisations into two typologies; organistic, and mechanistic[ii]. These typologies had different qualities, which suited different conditions. The Aston studies argued that organisational structures varied because of size, technology and location (see Clegg and Dunkerly, 1980). Fieldler's (1967) contingency theory of leadership argued that the type of leadership required depended on the favourability/unfavourability of the situation. These are a few examples; contingency theory was to cover the whole gamut of organisational issues.

The common characteristic of the contingency theorists was the rejection of there being a one-best-way of organising, however, there still remained a strong dose of normatism of what an organisation should do in particular circumstances. Contingency approaches, in common with the previous approaches ignored power and political struggles in the adoption of particular strategies. This is a point made by Hardy and Clegg (1996:9.18):

> 'So, although geographically located in the UK, intellectually the Aston School could have been anywhere ... when one inspects their work for signs of regional imprinting, none are visible ... bearing the sign of nowhere it was rapidly to travel everywhere ... their portability, their universal appeal facilitated the translation process that ensured their widespread acceptance'.

Contingency theory marks a departure with the three approaches outlined above in the sense that it is not clear that contingency theory was used to design organizations (see Clegg and Dunkerly, 1980; Hardy and Clegg, 1996); rather, it marks an attempt by management studies to try and make sense of organizations. In this sense the function of contingency theory differed from that of scientific management, Human Relations and socio-technical systems. When viewing these various modes of managerial thought they are useful in the sense that it provides an overview of what has been considered to be best practice. However, what has not been explored in this section is the degree of empirical evidence surrounding the diffusion of these ideas as practices. That question

will go unanswered; however, in this brief overview of twentieth century management thought it can be argued that, at least in the Anglo-American context, there has been a strong preference for explicit knowledge. Indeed it is only explicit knowledge which has been treated as knowledge. Thus Scientific Management can be seen as the codification of rules of thumb - tacit knowledge - into scripts which thereby take the form of explicit knowledge. This has been notable at the firm level and exemplars include titans of twentieth century modernity such as Ford and MacDonalds (see the discussion by George Ritzer, 1993). The quest for explicit knowledge has been sustained for much of the twentieth century in part through the chief organizational concern of improving efficiency (see Clark and Staunton; 1989). In this epoch efficiency was more important than innovation (Child, 1984), something that has arguably changed in the last two decades.

3.3   The Excellence Genre: A new Orthodoxy?

The excellence school emerged in the early 1980s in an attempt to find a new recipe for corporate success; the backdrop to the excellence genre was an economic scenario characterised by recession and the emerging dominance of Japanese industry. Were I to put a date to the emergence of the Excellence school, I would argue that 1982 marked a watershed in management thinking. The significance of that date was that it marks the publication of the ground breaking and definitive text: Peters and Waterman's 'In Search of Excellence' (1982). Kieser (1997) argues that this book is seminal in that it marks the beginning of the influence of the Business School, in my view he overstates the importance of the Business School, but I think he is right in drawing our attention to Peters and Waterman's book. The book claimed to identify traits of successful companies, they were unequivocal in their pronouncement that organisational success lay in having the right culture,

> 'We often argue that the excellent companies are the way they are because they
> are organised to obtain extraordinary effort from ordinary human beings'
> (1982:p81).

And:

> 'A shared set of values and rules about discipline, details and execution can
> provide the framework in which practical autonomy takes place routinely'
> (1982:p322)

Wilson (1992) in an account of the excellence school chronicles how corporate culture moved to centre stage. Organizations were now run by swashbuckling heroes, managers were to be looked up to; organizations that one might have previously been thought of as somewhat prosaic now had visions, strategies and missions. Further, corporations had to manipulate their visual symbols - logos, offices, uniforms etc. - to reflect their vision. Wilson (1992) demonstrates this by using British Telecom as an example, and how, at great financial cost, their vans were resprayed, a new logo was designed and their staff were issued with new uniforms in order to symbolise their position as a 'global' telecoms player. The notion of corporate culture has become so central to

organizational theory and practice that it is now commonplace to hear about how a culture is being symbolised through different artefacts. Such examples are illustrations of interpretative culture (see Alvesson, 1993), the other dimension of the corporate culture debate is that cultures are determined by particular structures. This argument is central to the position that Peters and Waterman advocate, the message is clear: change the structure in order to bring about a cultural change (see Handy, 1986).

Peters and Waterman (1982) listed the attributes of an excellent organisation as being:

1) A bias for Action, for getting on with it 'Do it, fix it, try it'.

2) Staying close to the Customer by 'providing unparalleled quality, service, and reliability' (1982:p14) 'everyone (employees) gets in on the act'

3) Autonomy and Entrepreneurship – Innovative companies foster many leaders and many innovators throughout the organisation.

4) Productivity through people – 'The excellent companies treat the rank and file as the root source of quality and productivity gain' ... Texas instruments chairman Mark Shepherd talks about it in terms of every worker being 'seen as a source of ideas not just acting as a pair of hands' (1982:p15), 'Many of the best companies really do view themselves as an extended family' (1982:p15).

5) Hands On, Value Driven – 'We are struck by the explicit attention they (excellent companies) pay to values' (1982:p279).

6) Stick to the Knitting – 'The typical diversification strategy dilutes the guiding qualitative theme - in part because the acquired institution undoubtedly has different shared values, but also because themes, even general themes, such as quality tend to lose meaning when the organisation strays far afield' (1982:p293).

7) Simple form, Lean Staff - The underlying structural forms (of successful companies) are elegantly simple.

8) Simultaneous loose-tight properties – 'they have pushed autonomy down to the shop floor or product development team' on the other hand they are fanatic centralists around the few core values they hold dear.

The structure advocated to accompany the 'excellence culture' is a flat, team based, matrix. Peters (1987) argues 'Excessive organisation structure is a principle cause of slow corporate response to changed circumstances. We must: - radically reduce layers of management - Establish a radically increased ratio of non-supervisors to supervisors, a 'wide span of control' at the organisation's front line' (1987:p354). Peters continues 'structure kills. Most are moving to reduce it ... **No more than 5 layers of management are necessary, regardless of firm size'** (1987:p354). Integral to this flattening of the organisational structure is a changed role for management; managers are

encouraged to become inspirational leaders, jettisoning old bureaucratic administrative behaviour adopting entrepreneurial practices. These attributes clearly identify the values or culture of the organisation as being the critical factor for success. Pollitt (1993) argues that in this new age of managerialism 'managers have to work to create the right climate, to encourage identification with corporate goals, high motivation and internalisation of constructive attitudes' (1993:p24).

Peters and Waterman's (1982) work spawned a whole genre of 'excellence' writers who wrote around the same theme. It shared a characteristic with Scientific Management in that there was 'one best way' (see Wilson, 1992), one culture in which people were empowered, obsessive about both the customer and product quality, was the only route to success. The genre was very recipe driven with checklists helping managers to achieve 'excellence', Clark and Staunton (1989, p8) somewhat sceptically liken the prescriptions to 'How to do it pamphlets for farmers' in 19th century North America. The excellence movement was accompanied by a new vocabulary, and legions of almost evangelical management consultants promoting the ideas.

Peters has proved to be a prolific and perennial writer and to date continues to write books on management issues. In his 1987 book 'Thriving on Chaos' he develops the cultural theme started in 'In Search of Excellence', he lists 'prescriptions for a world turned upside down' which include:

Table 3: 4 Creating Total Customer Responsiveness

Creating Total Customer Responsiveness

- Pursuing Fast-Paced Innovation
- Achieving Flexibility by empowering people
- Learning to love change: a new view of leadership at all levels.
- Building systems for a world turned upside down

The Excellence movement is unitary in its identification with organisational objectives, and looks for measurability on a host of measures such as: 1) Profitability, 2) Customer Service and Satisfaction, and 3) Employee Empowerment. Enormous importance is placed on the measures with a particular emphasis on seeing a constant improvement in organisational performance. Peters, as the prime mover in this movement, is at once populist, his books are punchy and low brow, and he hosts regular conferences throughout the world for fee-paying managers/consultants. These conferences have also been packaged into videos, a Peters' performance is contentious and questioning of managerial shibboleths, his message is supported by carefully choreographed footage from 'excellent' corporations. In summary, the packages he puts together are image intensive and

persuasive, clearly this is their intention. For instance, MBA students on watching a Peters' video often find his ideas far more exciting and plausible than those of the lecturer, again this is the intention[1].

Yet academia has not been kind to Peters or the Excellence genre. Drucker branded his ideas as 'for managerial juveniles'; Silver (1987), Thompson and McHugh (1990), Wilson (1992) all conduct an immanent critique which questions the validity of the assertions made; they argue that Peters and Waterman's (1982) research methodology is flawed and that there is no conclusive link between an organisation's culture and its success, or perhaps to use the Scottish legal term, any link is not proven. In particular, commentators sceptical of the link between culture and performance point out the poor performance of so called excellent companies such as Atari, and Walt Disney immediately following the publication of Peters and Waterman's work. Burrell (1997) describes this work as, along with that of Charles Handy, belonging to the Heathrow School of Management. By this he is referring to airport lounge books. This criticism could be pursued further by arguing that airports are the ultimate in non-spaces: decontextual, transnational hubs where bored passengers meander around duty free shops and await their departure. By the same measure it could be argued that the Excellence culture literature is, in the same, decontextual and as such belongs to a non-space.

While academia may be somewhat critical of Peters, a number of writers recognise his significance, for as Clegg and Palmer (1996) point out, a manager is far more likely to come into contact with Tom Peters through whatever media than he or she is likely to study at a Business School. This is particularly the case in the UK in view of the finding of levels of managerial education (see Handy, 1987; Bain, 1992; Scarbrough, 1998).

3.4 Leadership: The age of the corporate Buccaneer

One of the key features of the Excellence message is the importance of the 'leader'. Similarly, in the sections that follow, numerous references to leadership will be made as immanent to the discourse of new managerialism. I now wish to explore leadership in greater detail. This is necessary as in three of four elements of the intertextual discourse of new managerialism; leadership is absolutely fundamental to the effective implementation of the initiative. As I have alluded to in the coverage of TQM, leadership is a vast subject area, with a good deal of disagreement; it is therefore out of the scope of this thesis to consider the area fully. Therefore, I will have to be selective and concentrate on a slice of the theoretical perspectives on leadership, I intend to focus specifically on how leaders construct and make sense of their own particular approaches to leadership. In more specific terms, drawing on the analysis of power relations in chapter two, I want to introduce contemporary

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[1] This I know from my experiences of teaching organizational change at the University of North London, on their MBA programme.

constructs of leadership from the discourse of new managerialism which I will go on to suggest may act as an important normalising discourse for managers and aspirant managers in the contemporary workplace.

With the rise of new managerialism it is probably no coincidence that the theories and research into leadership have enjoyed something of a renaissance over the last twenty years. Studies into leadership are of course nothing new, and as such have long been a commonplace part of sociology, political science and psychoanalysis. Wilson (1992) draws attention to the emphasis placed upon leadership in initiatives such as TQM, he argues that an examination of managerialist texts (such as Peters and Waterman 1982) would lead a reader to believe that 'Corporations are led by heroes', such notions are, of course, evident in popular management autobiographies in which senior executives recount their managerial tales, or their 'corporate fables'[2] are relayed second-hand in hagiographic accounts (See the Peters oeuvre for illustrations). Clegg and Palmer (1996:p6) refer to such texts as 'karaoke' texts, arguing that as a genre they are characterised by their 'I did it my way' quality. This has resonance with Weber's (1947) conceptualisation of the 'charismatic leader' as being a superior form of leadership; when compared with say 'traditional' and 'rational/legal' typologies. For Weber, the charismatic leader possesses a character that:

> '...Set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman ...or at least exceptional powers and qualities... [Which] are not accessible to the ordinary person.' (1947:358 - 359)

Weber's insights are especially relevant to the study of leader's in contemporary society, or at least through the way in which leaders are represented. For instance, Kets de Vreis (1998: 6), in his analysis of two 'charismatic' leaders, Richard Branson and Percy Barnevik, constructs charismatic leaders as individuals who 'envision, empower and energise' and 'design organizations and institute effective control and reward systems'. He describes their characteristics thus:

> 'They display dissatisfaction with the status quo; they are restless and energetic; they are action oriented; their discontent pushes them into searching for new opportunities; they are entrepreneurial, impatient and gifted at articulating a strategic vision, making the big picture seem within reach of the followers. They are also very gifted at building alliances and making people feel special' (1998: 8)

More recently, Conway & Jones (2000) have de-constructed the autobiography of James Dyson, inventor of the *lifestyle* Dyson vacuum cleaner, and in doing so illustrate the way in which Dyson reproduces the discourse of the charismatic, maverick leader. They suggest an alternative account,

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[2] I am indebted to Professor Margaret Grieco for this phrase.

that Dyson's social capital, especially through his educational and familial ties provided him with the opportunity to exploit his innovations. In the discourse of managerialism, the cult of the leader is alive and well, it is an ever-present part of managerialist discourse. This of course is hardly surprising, for interventions that emphasise organizational change must necessarily construct a rhetoric emphasising agency, even if such belief in Herculean feats of leadership are ultimately misplaced. It would of course be foolish to suggest that the cult of the leader is in anyway anything new, orthodox historians for instance could at once point the discussions centred on the problematic of the 'great man (sic) of history'. They could also point to the way in which great industrialists have been lionised: for Branson read Beaverbrook, for Welch read Carnegie and so forth. Perhaps if there is a difference, it lays in that new managerialism invites every manager to think of themselves as a charismatic leader. In the sections that follow, leadership will be discussed in relation to both TQM and BPR.

3.5 Total Quality Management: The 'corporate religion' of the 1990s[iii]

In the late 1980s there was rediscovery and a renewed interest in the ideas of a number of post-war American management theorists. The reanimation of these ideas was to form the theoretical foundation of the TQM movement. In this section I will outline the central features of the TQM, in so doing I will argue that it is important to treat it as a movement, rather than merely constituting a set of ideas.

In terms of understanding Total Quality Management (TQM) it is important to recognise that both in terms of chronology and in content it has been inextricably linked to the excellence/culture genre of management; thus it can be viewed as sharing intertextuality with the excellence school, placing it firmly as part of the discourse of new managerialism. Part of TQM's appeal is that it offered western organizations an entry point into techniques alleged to be synonymous with the characteristics of Japanese organizations which were becoming increasingly dominant in important sectors of the world economy. The dominant representation of TQM was that the ideas were American but had been readily adopted by various Japanese corporations in the aftermath of World War Two, ironically American organizations had not shown a great deal of interest in the ideas. Therefore, we were presented with a situation whereby there was rediscovery of these ideas by observing Japanese corporations. It is of course difficult to give a view on this representation as to whether it is an apocryphal story or not, however, the salient part of this argument is that for the first time in the industrialised era, the west was looking outwith for ideas of best practice and work organization. It is beyond dispute that Japanese corporations have exercised a profound influence on western corporate thinking since the 1980s, this coincided with their domination of particular world markets (i.e. consumer electronics); their visible presence through their policies of foreign direct investment (i.e. Nissan and Toyota factories in the UK); and a realisation that the previous

explanations of Japanese competitiveness being attributable to low wages and 'shoddy' goods were no longer tenable. It is not my intention to explore further the Japanization industry that has emerged in British academia (see Smith and Elgar, 1994), rather it is to acknowledge the profound impact the emergence of the Japanese economy has had upon management thought in the west. My interest in Japanisation is to draw attention and to acknowledge that it is ineluctably linked, at least in the UK, with TQM and the quality movement.

Total Quality Management is a programmed change initiative, as described by Wilson (1992), it is aimed at the level of the organization. For a time TQM was represented as being synonymous with success, it was argued, by the TQM 'gurus' and their interlocutors, that TQM offered a new way of thinking and a superior way of organizing. The rationale for TQM was that it was a way of delivering customer service, which was held to be the key to competitive success. Total Quality Management aims to improve organisational competitiveness by improving quality throughout the organisation, quality meaning conformance to set standards. It is based on the work of (amongst others) Deming (1982), Juran (1979) and Crosby (1979), in the UK context it was built on and developed by writers such as Oakland (1989). Total Quality Management entered the vocabulary of many large UK organisations, including Government, during the late 1980s and early 1990s as they pursued a TQM orientation (Wilson, 1992); The Economist magazine estimated that 75% of UK and US companies were using TQM in the early 1990s. Some organizations' relationship with TQM amounted to a brief dalliance, while others pursued its implementation with an almost evangelical zeal: advocates of TQM argue that it is a means of moving an organization towards an articulated future state.

TQM seeks to improve quality throughout the organisation (quality is taken as conformity to the product specification) or as Wilkinson and Wilmott (1995:p3) put it: 'quality means whatever methods of work and organization generate low cost, dependable products and services'

In terms of putting TQM into a broader context, Wilson (1992) notes that:

> 'Change is oriented towards a specific goal which can be articulated and which
> can be achieved via a planned programme of steps ... TQM (is) a concept
> applicable to the whole of the organisation' (Wilson 1992:p93)

The content of TQM has, as outlined above, been expounded by a number of TQM 'gurus' whom have acted as purveyors of corporate nostrums. The overall philosophies are very similar, although the focus of different writers does vary. For instance, Crosby emphasises that quality is a philosophy based on zero defects; Juran emphasises the importance of being 'right first time'; Deming argues for the removal of quotas and controls, which need to be replaced by an emphasis on leadership, something that is articulated in Deming's Virtuous Circle of quality. The key components of TQM

rest on these points, the argument being that quality can be improved by concentrating on producing a good/service with zero defects, through getting production 'right first time'. In terms of bringing about these organizational desiderata it is argued that teamwork is essential, that employees need to be empowered, and that there needs to be commitment between the employee and the employer, in replacement of the more traditional adversarial labour/capital relationship. The replacement of adversarial relationships extends from labour relations to the political wrangles between different departments; TQM advocates argue that there is a need to reconceptualise the organization into a series of supplier-customer relationships. Therefore, rather than, for example, disputes arising between departments, turf wars in the lexicon of TQM argues to replace such thinking with a supply chain, whereby you treat people you supply as customers and so forth. Therefore, this procedure atomises the organization into a series of market relations (see Tuckman, 1995) governed through customer-supplier relationships. The encouragement for staff to regard other departments as suppliers or customers is for Tuckham (95:58) evidence of 'the internalisation of market relations.... The very penetration of new right ideology into production'. This according to the exhortations of the gurus will work in an atmosphere of trust [not being afraid to make a mistake] and empowerment. Different aspects of this assortment of work practices are, as has been stated above, germane to particular authors. Knights et al (1997) concur with this point, they delineate the TQM writings as into two camps: first, is the 'cost' camp, whereby the focus is on measuring cost savings, and through the use of statistical control techniques to measure errors etc. (i.e. Juran; Crosby); second, and in contrast to the first, concentrates on customer and cultural issues (i.e. Deming), which according to Knights et al are neglected in the first camp. This has led some theorists (see Hill, 1995; Wilkinson et al 1992), as well as the British Quality Association, to write of a 'hard' TQM [statistically driven] and a 'soft' [culturally driven] TQM; this distinction is visible within the literature, however, it remains to be seen whether this distinction is borne out in the implementation of TQM in organizations, or whether, instead, an initiative in an organization is an eclectic syncretic confluence of the two. However, this is not a point considered by Knights et al, which leads them to their position that it is dangerous to lump the writings of different TQM 'gurus' together. I do not agree with this position, clearly it is important to acknowledge and respect the differences that exist between different writers, however, it is also important to note that while the so called gurus may well differ in their prescriptions and in their emphasis, there is a strong affinity in the general message.

This is a point made by Huczynski (1993) who argues that TQM amounts to:

> 'A unified set of principles which can guide managers through the numerous choices [open to them] or might even make choosing unnecessary'. (Huczynski, 1993:p289)

In terms of operationalizing TQM the role of senior management is held to be crucial (see Deming, 1986); Hill (1995) notes that senior management is 'the main driver of TQM' (1995:p36), this is so senior management are able to push the message throughout the organization. In terms of the process of realising TQM, the recommended mode of organization is 'cross-functional management' (see Wilson and Rosenfeld, 1990), which is similar to the matrix organization. The corollary of this organizational form is that there is a structural duality: firstly, there would be the creation of a quality structure, which would in all probability consist of a senior management quality council, departmental quality groups and individual 'quality champions' operating throughout the workplace, contemporaneously, quality projects would be conducted across departmental boundaries; secondly, there would be the pre-existing organization which would be functioning alongside the newly created quality structure. Wilkinson (1992) argues that this feature of TQM can be characterised as a bolt-on duality. For Knights and Kerfoot (1992) this process is indicative of the contradictory nature of TQM with it simultaneously emphasising the need for empowerment and individual initiative, while also constructing a bureaucracy through measures.

The bureaucratic element of TQM should not be underplayed, at one level TQM is scathing of bureaucracy, as I have demonstrated it argues for the empowerment of people and of the removal of controls, the elimination of false customers. At another level, however, it advocates the construction of a bureaucracy in order to allow the empowered, TQM culture to thrive. For instance, Tuckman (1995:p71), in his historiography of the quality movement, opines that:

> 'A quality consultancy industry mushroomed to facilitate the writing of procedures'

As the statement suggests, it was core to TQM that every good quality programme should be copiously documented, this is an insight that supports Knights and Kerfoot's suggestion of an apparent paradox. However, the immanent critique of TQM has also been pursued by Wilson (1992), who takes a different line, in questioning TQM on the grounds of its treatment of leadership as being unproblematic. As I have suggested, the removal and elimination of formal controls in favour of a more participative leadership style is a central tenet of TQM, as Hosking (1990) has argued, this amounts to the placement of leadership back into the central spotlight in organizations. However, this is deeply problematic, for as Wilson argues: 'the emphasis on leadership as a substitute for organizational structure, hierarchy and controls is remarkable' (1992:p96). He goes on to point out that in terms of empowering people and creating an atmosphere of trust that leadership is viewed as being the key, TQM advocates that managers can be trained to be leaders. Wilson asks the questions:

1. 'What do we mean by leadership ?'
2. 'Can people change leadership style?'

These questions expose the epistemological assumptions that lay at the heart of TQM, he argues that the assumptions made by the advocates of TQM are highly questionable and problematic; Wilson (1992) backs up his assertion by drawing attention to the contested terrain of leadership theory, where, after a century of theorising, there is little consensus over whether leaders can be trained or whether they can change their style (see Fiedler, 1967), more importantly this dispute even extends to consider questions of whether leadership actually exists outside of social action (see Hosking and Morley, 1991 for a detailed discussion). However, Scarbrough and Burrell (1997: p181) argue that TQM marks a departure from the 'heroic manager', this view is at odds with the views presented thus far, perhaps it demonstrates the inherent fluidity of new managerialist initiatives such as TQM.

Another major criticism of TQM as an approach is that it has an under theorised and somewhat naive conceptualisation of organization, this is the case so far as there is an absence of discussion of resistance to TQM. As far as resistance to TQM is dealt with it is limited to a 'lack of understanding' on the part of individuals, who once educated into the ways of TQM will not fail to see it as a superior form of organizing. The epistemological narrowness of the notion of organization prevents a fuller appreciation of the inevitable tensions and antagonisms that are inherent in organizations (as discussed in chapters one and two). The UMIST studies into TQM in the 1990s encapsulate these problems well:

> 'Quality initiatives fail not only because of inadequate implementation, but also because management may not understand the implications of the appropriateness of the initiatives they adopt' (Knights and MacCabe, 1997:p371)

> 'Promoters of TQM often seem oblivious of the highly charged political and career based hierarchical character of organizations' (Knights and Kerfoot, 1992)

The over simplistic assumptions on organization are also reflected in the promotion of empowerment that accompanies the flattening of the organisational structure. The empowerment of employees generally signifies employees taking more responsibility for their jobs, often in training manuals this is promoted under the banner of 'owning the job'. Alvesson and Willmott (1996:p99) argue that empowerment is one of the ways in which TQM is couched in humanism. Consider for instance the claims of Bank (1992):

> 'Total Quality Management is part of the holistic approach to progress ... there is a tremendous unlocking of energy in management and the workforce.... Liberating people at work to become more truly themselves and more creative' Bank (1992: 195).

Against this very positive message, Wilkinson and Willmott (1995) take a more judicious approach, reporting that one of the possible positive consequences of empowerment is that:

'Employees are seen to welcome the removal of irritants such as excessively close supervision, the unreliability of irritants such as excessively close supervision, the unreliability of service from other departments, and the reluctance of management to lower needless barriers between themselves and the workforce' (1995:p12).

This is reflected by McArdle et al (1995) who argue pragmatically that in certain cases empowerment makes for a more·interesting workplace for employees. This is a point supported by Alvesson and Wilmott (1996:p189) who suggest that TQM can:

'Encourage limited, local forms of teamworking and involvement'.

However, other views of empowerment regard it as being a tool for intensifying the labour process, Lammers (1991:6) posits that:

'Empowerment results not in a power shift in the organisation, but in employees becoming morally bound to a system of management which enhances their own exploitation'.

Therefore empowerment can be viewed as a means of producing self-disciplining subjects (see Ball and Wilson, 1997) who effectively participate in their own exploitation, through contributing far more to the organization than was previously expected.

The immanent critique of both the UMIST school and of Wilson (1992) suggests that the coherence and consistency of TQM is open to question. The corollary of this theorising suggests that as a planned change initiative there is a good deal to suggest that the stated aims of an initiative may not be realised. I think the discussion thus far highlights that TQM is far from benign or neutral, moreover, there are serious questions to be asked of it as an initiative

In time it was argued, TQM would become the dominant mode of operating, for instance, Crosby (1979:pp26-30) argues that managers gradually become converted to TQM, going through the stages of 'Uncertainty, Awakening, Enlightenment, Wisdom and Certainty'. Curtis and Boaden (1988) comment on the implementation of TQM being about turning non-believers into believers through a process of cultural change, which Tuckman (1995) has characterised as an evangelical crusade, similarly Wilkinson and Willmott (1995) describe such cultural change programmes as Orwellian (see also Wilmott, 1993). The notion of TQM amounting to an evangelical crusade fits with my assertion that it is more than a set of ideas, but rather it is a movement. Indeed, some commentators (see Little, 1999) has drawn parallels between the TQM movement and religiosity, particularly in the manner which the ideas were presented at TQM conventions, whereby the writings of the gurus were treated as sacred tablets.

At this point, it is worthwhile reflecting on TQM; an initiative that promised so much, yet now is largely history within UK corporations. What was it that led to the demise of TQM, or is that being overly presumptive, for instance, perhaps it is the label that has disappeared but that the practices have become embedded within the UK corporate landscape. I think the disappearance of TQM will in part be explained in the section on corporate fashion in the section below, however, it is also useful to look to the accounts given by a number of management writers. Wilson (1992) highlights the difficulties that many executives have reported in attempting to implement TQM, these are largely consistent with his immanent critique i.e. how does one go from being a hard nosed, results driven manager to a visionary, charismatic leader? In addition, he documents the difficulties that managers have encountered in setting up quality systems and in imbuing them with any sense of long-termism. This point is reflected by Hill who laments that too often TQM has been treated as a 'quick fix on the cheap' (Hill; 1995:p49). Knights highlights how in some financial services organizations TQM has been implemented and is antithetical to the pre-existing organizational culture: for instance, creating a quality culture in an atmosphere dominated by the need to generate sales in order to earn commissions which is arguably the ultimate in short-term, individualistic. Knights et al also point out, that contrary to the assumptions of TQM, organizations aré not something that can simply be moulded and controlled by managers. In short, numerous studies (see Wilkinson et al 1991; Wilkinson and Wilmott, 1995) point to the modest or relatively disappointing results of TQM programmes, how then is one to make sense of the gap between the high expectations and the actual experiences associated with TQM. Clearly, the theoretical and empirical immanent critique chronicled thus far give us an indication as to why programmes may encounter difficulties when translated into action. There is also the possibility that the high expectations aroused by the intense rhetoric (see Jacques, 1996) and promotion of TQM provides a utopian blueprint which is simply not realisable (see Ramsie, 1997), alternatively, there is the suggestion by Mueller (1995) that organizations may adopt such techniques when they are already experiencing *'serious difficulties'*, and as such one should not be surprised when such techniques fail.

In conclusion, the quality movement, which captured the attention of UK organizations in the 1990s, has not transformed the corporate environment: the results have been patchy, and TQM has lost many of its advocates, with initiatives being abandoned in many organizations, although, to date, it lives on through the European Foundation of Quality Management model. Indeed, by the mid 1990s, TQM was encountering serious and sustained criticism from other initiatives that claimed to offer a panacea for organizations seeking to remould themselves as 'world class' (sic) organizations.

> Coda: 'In a decade, TQM has gone from being touted as the invisible key to Japanese management to being called a tired fad'. (Jacques 1996:p167).

3.6 BPR: The Business Process ReEngineering: A Manifesto for a Business Revolution?

'We believe that re-engineering is the only thing that stands between many US corporations - indeed, the US economy - and disaster' (1995, p. viii). (Hammer & Champy)

The genesis of BPR rests in Hammer (1990), and was subsequently followed by Davenport (1993) and by Hammer and Champy's definitive text 'Reengineering the Corporation' (1993). BPR claims to offer radical solutions to urgent competitive pressures, and proclaims that the alternative to BPR is 'for corporate America to close its doors and go out of business' (Hammer and Champy 1993:1). More extravagantly BPR protagonists suggest that BPR constitute a 'reversal of the Industrial revolution'. Broadly speaking BPR is a programmed change initiative (see Wilson, 1992) which views organisations as being unable to respond to the competitive pressures of a global economy because of the anachronistic nature of their current organisational design. It is worthy of analysis within this thesis as it is generally regarded as having had considerable influence on managerial thought in the 1990s (see MacCabe et al 1994). This popularity is in part reflected through the fee income generated by leading management consultancies in the 1990s.

The competitive pressures described by Hammer and Champy can be broadly characterised by the need for mass customisation (see also Pine, 1993), which is in response to the rise of the consumer, something that Hammer and Champy argue differentiates stagnant American corporations against their dynamic Japanese counterparts. There is little new in this argument, for instance Abernathy, Clark and Kantrow (1983) coined the dematurity thesis in order to explain how markets that were previously considered as, to draw from the marketing lexicon, mature were fragmenting. Furthermore, the Porterian 'Homebase' analysis suggested that the reasons that explained why Americans once dominated some sectors may no longer apply.

3.61 Recapturing the American Dream

In terms of understanding BPR, it is important to place it within the context of corporate America. The reason for this is that a number of commentators contend that BPR is American-centric, which is an argument developed by Grint (1994) who in a deconstruction of Business Process ReEngineering highlights the way in which Hammer and Champy (1994) describe the concept:

> 'Reengineering thrives on the juxtaposition of what are considered as cultural affinities with Americans and cultural differences from others, especially Japanese' (1994:194).

Furthermore, Grint argues that if this is indeed the case then only American corporations 'are likely to experience the full benefit of reengineering' (1994:195). If Grint is right, and certainly it is

possible to support his thesis, then this adds confusion to an analysis of BPR in the UK. A logical extension of this argument regarding the American rationale for BPR could be posited as follows:

> 'The competitive pressures in the world economy are such that an organisation needs to be totally focused on the customer, which is currently not the case. This means that radical change in the organisation design is necessary to facilitate this. However, in order to bring about this change an organisation will need to adopt the American qualities of being innovation, self-starting, able to change, and willing to take risks. Thus as a British organisation is unlikely to display such virtues, it is therefore unlikely to benefit fully from such a change initiative'.
> (Crowther et al, 1997 :p8).

The America-centric view of corporate life is a reflection of the American view of life in general and the implicit acceptance that the ultimate state of the world will be in accordance with the American ideal (see the discussion by Morino, 1999). This can be seen also in other writings emanating from America, such as Fukuyama's (1992) argument concerning the end of history which implicitly accepts that stability for the world will ensue from the arrival of the American political ideal of liberal democracy as the norm for the political organisation of any society. However Fukuyama also argues that liberalism is not in itself sufficient for continuity and that traditional organisations have a tendency to atomise in the pursuance of the ends of the individuals who have aggregated for the purpose which the organisation fulfils. This can be contrasted with Hammer and Champy's view of BPR as the final state of history as far as organisational activity is concerned. Indeed BPR as expounded by its proponents can be considered to be the one meta-narrative which both explains organisational existence and behaviour and which also leads the organisation into the future.

The America-centric part of Hammer and Champy's text is interesting in itself, as an attempt to recapture an idealised entrepreneurial past. In addition, it poses questions as to how this was represented in corporate contexts outside of the USA. One can only imagine that this has been downplayed as management consultants have hawked their BPR nostrums around the conceptual landscape of corporate Britain. In this respect BPR can be seen to differ significantly from previously promulgated change initiatives. Indeed, one of the characteristics of previous programmed change initiatives has been the lack of spatial imprinting so that an initiative can come from nowhere to travel everywhere (see Clegg & Hardy 1996), as was the case with TQM and other earlier programmed change initiatives.

3.62   'A Radical Solution for Turbulent times: What is BPR?'

BPR claims to offer radical solutions that will enable survival in the contemporary business environment. An examination of Hammer & Champy's text identifies ten key elements of BPR, namely:

1) Process teams replacing functional departments.

2) Multi-Skilled workers instead of single skilled workers.

3) Employee empowerment instead of a top down power relationship.

4) Education more important than training.

5) Payment for value added performance and not attendance.

6) Advancement through an assessment of ability and not based on current performance.

7) Customer focus replacing a management focus.

8) Management style to resemble a coaching style, and not a supervisory style.

9) Flattening of the organisational structure.

10) Executives becoming leaders rather than Scorekeepers.

In many respects these elements, which comprise the distinguishing features of BPR are not new and all have been promulgated in the past. Various of these elements can be considered in the work of Drucker (1980; 1985), Peters and Waterman (1982), Handy (1994) and many other management luminaries. Indeed, there is a discussion on BPR that is shaped by the question: is BPR neo-taylorist? Tinaikar et al (1995) contend that it is, while Davenport and Short (1990) view it as representing a fundamental break with Taylorism. For some it is only the aggregated package of elements, when taken as a whole, which distinguishes BPR from other earlier initiatives: Grint et al (1996) argue that novelty of BPR lies in its packaging, while Keiser (1996) describes BPR as being a 'container' concept rather than something new. It is perhaps self evident that any theory of organisational behaviour must take into account the fact that organisations consist of people, who plan, control and manage a business and also interact with each other, and Likert (1967) recognises this in advocating a recognition of the human element of management. In general terms, the questioning of the originality of BPR has been a common.

Grint (1994), in his analysis, suggests that there is little originality in many of these activities, certainly not enough to substantiate the claims made on behalf of BPR. This view is supported by Blair et al (1997:4) who view BPR as representing 'continuity in organisational theory rather than radical departure', while MacCabe and Knights (1998) regard BPR as the latest in a long line of innovations which claims to make organizations more flexible, more innovative and closer to customers. Therefore, there are serious questions as to whether BPR is a response to deep-seated changes in the global economy or whether it constitutes a fad. (Grint and Case, 1994).

Egan (1995) makes a contribution to this discussion; he takes a pragmatic perspective, and questions whether BPR can be considered to be a breakthrough or a bauble? Moreover, he asks whether BPR is an enduring or an ephemeral construct. The former line of questioning essentially seeks to establish whether BPR constitutes anything new. Egan (1995:p103) contends that BPR is broadly

comparable to elements of systems analysis, and Strategic Management Value Chain analyses. In an outspoken critique Egan (1995:p109) argues that BPR can be characterised by a fourfold critique: (i) nothing new; (ii) nothing happens; (iii) nothing strategic; and, (iv) nothing happens. He continues that,

> 'In the sense that it is nothing new, then, BPR is a bauble, a packaging solution to the core problems facing the consultancy industry as it struggled to sell its growth packages during the recession of the early 1990s'. (1995:109)

Egan's view is a direct challenge to the assertions of the advocates of BPR, furthermore, his contention that BPR is a commodified package that was created and propagated with the aim of generating business for management consultants. Therefore, in answering his own question Egan (1995) suggests that BPR should be regarded as an ephemeral construct. Grey and Mitev (1995) take a similar line arguing that BPR 'is the latest business panacea to emerge from the American academic-consultancy complex'. The notion that BPR is in some way a new theory or technique is contested between the claims of BPR's interlocutors and their critics. The link between BPR and the management consultancy industry is an important one, it is considered more fully in section ... below.

The commentary demonstrates that there is a fundamental ambiguity about the nature of BPR. Thus questions such as: is BPR something new? Is it related to TQM? Would draw very different answers from different quarters. Edwards and Pepper (1995) argue that BPR is ill-defined, while Keiser (1996) views BPR as being described in highly general terms (see also Benders et al, 1998); these features are something that perhaps allows for the myriad of competing views on the initiative. As BPR does not appear to consist of a discrete set of unique activities which distinguish the concept from other change programmes it is unsurprising that organisations which claim to have adopted BPR tend to have adopted their own version of BPR and selected techniques from within its repertoire which meet the needs of their own organisation. Indeed Hewitt and Yeon (1996) found from a study of UK companies undertaking reengineering that they shared a common vision that they were undertaking BPR, which was desirable, but little in the way of techniques. More particularly Hammer and Stanton (1995) change the definition to compensate for the statement made by Hammer and Champy (1993) that 50-70 percent of reengineering efforts were not successful. This redefinition is that if the reengineering fails this is because it is not done correctly. By implication therefore BPR must succeed and is redefined as a symbol of success.

The arguments outlined above confirm Knights and Macabe's observation that BPR is 'a far from certain cocktail'. In taking a position on whether BPR constitutes anything different it is worth drawing comparisons with its immediate predecessor in the chronology of managerialist thought, namely TQM. BPR is the direct successor of TQM, and some writers have pointed to the links

between the two initiatives, Schonberger (1994) regards it as a refinement and variant of TQM. However, Knights and MacCabe argue that it is important not to lump them into together, while Davenport (1993) argues that there is contrast between the two in the sense that BPR is radical while TQM is incremental. In contrast, Keleman et al (2000) suggest that there is little to separate them as initiatives. Hammer and Champy, in order to establish BPR as something different from TQM, contend that TQM is incapable of delivering the radical changes immanent to BPR. In this respect it could be argued that the claims made by BPR 'gurus' are in part intended to draw a distinction between the two initiatives. In the section discussing TQM a number of difficulties with TQM were discussed, one of which was the frustration of incrementalism, another was the difficulty of managers becoming 'leaders' that empowered, listened and coached. BPR presents an alternative to this mode of thinking which in theory at least is in complete binary opposition: incremental change vs. radical change; participative leadership vs a 'Tsarist change agent'. One respect in which BPR does differ from previous initiatives, however, is in its emphasis on Information Technology in enabling the new organisational design; Conti posits that IT is the definitive characteristic of BPR, the corollary of which is that it enables the circumstance for enacting radical change. However the similarities with the previous initiative hardly gives credence to the claims that BPR marks a radical rupture with the past.

Indeed even the central argument of Hammer and Champy that American corporations must change in order to succeed in competition with their Japanese counterparts is not a new argument. This argument has in fact pervaded mainstream management literature for the past 20 years with various writers proposing methods of overcoming this perceived problem. Various solutions have been proposed and, for example, Ouchi (1981) advocates a change in management style to include communication, involvement of people, and trust in relationships, suggesting that while these are present in the best run companies they were missing from others. He labelled this theory as Theory Z to distinguish it from, and imply its superseding of, Theories X and Y of MacGregor (1960) concerning human behaviour, and implying that there was a logical progression in understanding human behaviour in the work place from theory X to Y to Z. In this respect his arguments ran counter to the prevailing concerns of the time; such concerns have not however died away and indeed have been resurrected by Hammer and Champy (1993) in order to provide an underlying justification for their new initiative. Again it can be seen to provide a reflection of the American view of the world as insular, isolationist and threatened by anything that challenges their hegemony.

3.63   BPR Eugenics: A Pastiche ?

In the sections above it can be seen that the genesis of BPR comes from within a text Hammer and Champy; 1993; Davenport, 1995). BPR protagonists then try to disseminate and diffuse BPR throughout the corporate world. In order to understand the dynamics of BPR in the organisation it is

useful consider what exactly organisations are trying to replicate, what was the original BPR organisation? This problematizes BPR, as it soon becomes apparent that there are no original BPR organisations from which the practices are based; rather it is an acontextual pastiche of different practices from different organisations which organisations are trying to replicate (c.f. architecture). This insight perhaps helps explain why there is such ambiguity with the concept, something that is apparent when it is clear that there are fundamental disagreements over both the content and nature of BPR. As Baudrillard (1981) would argue BPR is a simulacrum - there is no original. The concept of BPR has however attained a life of its own, with the image of BPR taking precedent over the content of BPR, in this sense, it can therefore be considered to have attained hyperreality through becoming more real than reality (see Kellner 1994:p8). This is particularly evident in the way in which BPR is represented to be far more than a new management technique, it is the very intensity of its message takes BPR as a phenomenon into a new dimension: it represents itself as a revolutionary creed (see Grey and Mitev, 1995) which must be done.

3.64 The impact of BPR

The notion of BPR as amounting to a post-modem pastiche is resonant with the packaging solution/bauble concept advanced by Grey and Mitev (1995), Egan (1995) and Grint (1994) respectively. These are pursued in the greater detail chapter four below on 'management knowledge: commodified and consumed, I now wish to turn to considering the potential impacts of BPR something that has thus far been ignored. The whole rationale of BPR is that it has to be implemented in order to improve productivity, customer service and therefore to develop and sustain competitive advantage. So was the algebra for corporate success represented by BPR ([process + empowerment + IT] – [existing structure] = reduced costs + increased customer satisfaction = corporate success) realised?. Knights and Willmott make the point that they are neither interested in reproducing a 'paradise found' or a 'dystopic' vision of BPR. Rather, given the inevitably variegated experiences of implementation of BPR across a range of sectoral contexts they seek to engage with the empirical experiences of BPR. It is claimed that the transformation of an organization to a BPR organization is achieved through radical measures.(Johannson et al, 1996), one illustration of this is through Hammer and Champy's exhortation to corporations to ask of themselves a fundamental question:

'Why do we do what we do at all?'

The reason for this question is for the decision making elites within organizations to break with the established modus operandi in an organization and to start with a blank sheet of paper to design an organization that can meet the demands of the three Cs: *customers, competition and change*. Therefore users of BPR are encouraged to design their organization around the 3 Cs, using information technology to replace paper tasks, and organizing around processes rather than through

functional departments. In this sense BPR is another initiative that is a reaction against bureaucracy. Egan picks up on the impact that BPR appears to have had on performance, he concludes that 'there is no robust, generalizable evidence that BPR has made any significant impact on business performance. The evidence given in its support is partial and anecdotal'. Egan's position of immanent critique - theoretically and empirically does BPR stand up to verification - places the claims made on behalf of BPR as being dubious.

While BPR may not realise its expectations in terms of delivering competitive advantage, given its claim of radicalism, it must surely have consequences within the organization. Grey and Mitev (1995) unleash a polemic attack on BPR arguing that pursuing a different line of enquiry argue that BPR is a watchword for work intensification and unemployment:

> 'According to Mullin, James Champy, one of the founders of BPR, claims that unemployment is not an intended effect. In other words, "Don't blame me – I'm just the engineer". In fact, BPR promises unemployment in almost every page written about it. In IBM, BPR led to one specialist replacing four generalists. In Ford, 500 people working in vendor payment were reduced to 125 as a result of BPR. But BPR is to be differentiated from mere downsizing because along with unemployment there is also an intensification of work, so that it is possible to increase overall output while diminishing "headcount". The claim that BPR enables organizations to do more with less is merely a euphemistic way of expressing this intensification of work' Grey and Mitev (1995:p3)

The question therefore becomes one of whether BPR is a device to legitimate managerial behaviour (see Willmott, 1995) and more particularly whether it amounts to means for creative destruction within organizations (as discussed in chapter one above). This is a view held by Scarbrough and Burrell (1997) for whom BPR amounts to the production of:

> 'Fine-sounding euphemisms [which] covers senior management's shame-faced participation in this blood-letting - we're giving you ownership of your career', or 'we're freeing up your future'....'

Knights and Macabe (1998) argue that one of the roles of BPR may well be to legitimate managerial behaviour. In this sense BPR within a particular context would be emergent in which case, as seems to be borne out empirically, there may not be a strong correspondence between the BPR of the textbook and what is being carried out in the name of BPR in the organization. Knights and Macabe take issue with the line pursued by Grey and Mitev (1995) and accuse them of essentialism and of decontextualism by imputing an uni-directional link between BPR and unemployment. Moreover they argue that BPR might reinforce job losses but that it not the intention of the initiative to bring about redundancies, in the context of their research they argue that the recession (1989-1995) was the main cause of redundancies in the financial services sector. They continue this line of argument with the rhetorical question of if BPR is unable to deliver positive

benefits then is it capable of delivering the negative consequences? Moreover, they go on to question whether inflexible bureaucracies might be as injurious for workers as unadulterated BPR?

On the arguments presented above, I think that Knights and Macabe mistakenly polarised cause and effect. They deploy a Cartesian logic which in my view leads them to lose sight of Grey and Mitev's argument, which I take to be suggesting that there is an elective affinity, a constellar relationship, within the morphological entity that is BPR. This elective affinity, inter alia, includes the reintegrating of tasks into processes, the flattening of organizations and 'rightsizing'. Moreover, I think Grey and Mitev (1995) are revealing that the indexicality (see Wittgenstein) within BPR uses terms such as rightsizing and empowerment which can be interpreted in a myriad of different ways, however, implicit in these arguments is the understanding that there will be less staff in the organization than prior to the reengineering initiative. The language of BPR while appealing is therefore pregnant with Orwellian meaning. One of the few theorists to consider the implications of BPR is Gregor Gall, who asks the question 'what about the workers?'. He then argues for a close examination for what happens when BPR is implemented on the shopfloor. Gall (2000) sets out his case by arguing that BPR is fundamentally an assault on workers in spite of the seductive 'newspeak' that is used through terms such as empowerment, trust, commitment etc. Gall then proceeds to highlight the ineluctable links between the mantra of the New Right and BPR. This sense of political economy contributes much to this book, it highlights, beyond any doubt, that BPR was introduced and caught the imagination of a generation of managers at a time where labour especially in the UK was experiencing the chill wind of Thatcherite restructuring. The crux of Gall's argument is that BPR is injurious to the interests of workers. At this point, it is clear that he is arguing from an essentialist position. That said, he goes on to marshal a powerful array of data to illustrate his argument. In short he argues that BPR amounts to a recasting of management-labour relations through a substantive extension of managerial prerogative. Moreover, he documents the relative failure of combating of BPR by Trade Unions at a national level, whilst noting that localized (and unofficial) resistance has proved more fruitful. He ends his piece by noting that nothing is inevitable and that Trade Unions need to mobilise in order to defeat such initiatives.

In terms of Knights and Macabe's suggestion that the recession was the source of unemployment in the financial services industry, it should be noted that large swathes of the financial services industry remained hugely profitable throughout the recession; it is likely that the recession was called upon to legitimate the implementation of BPR, which as Grey and Mitev (1995) point out has redundancy written all over it. The paradox of Knights and Macabe's point about the undesirability of working in an unflexible bureaucracy is that it reproduces the discourse of BPR in the sense that it views organizations as being bureaucracies and that a bureaucracy by implication is necessarily 'bad' (see Thompson and McHugh, 1989).

However, the broader implication of Knights and Macabe's message is that there is a limit to the efficacy of deconstructing the prescriptions of the gurus, at some point BPR 'in action' in organizations needs to be analysed. This is something that I would concur with, for one, as was discussed in chapter one, there is the emergent characteristic of change; secondly, there is the inherent ambiguity immanent to BPR: if BPR means different things to different organizations then it is necessary to extend an analysis beyond the prescriptions of the gurus. For instance, in their analysis of the food sector in the UK, Frances & Garnsey (2000) draw from work that resembles BPR in all but name. This is interesting, as it might indicate the confidence of large supermarkets that they can appropriate ideas from the contemporary canon of managerial ideas, without feeling the need to have to legitimate themselves externally through consuming and proclaiming the sign of BPR. In short, Frances & Garnsey (2000) argue persuasively that BPR has led to more effective management of supermarket supply chains, which may well result in benefits for both suppliers and consumers. That said, the corollary of this is to produce a powerful hegemony that in effect controls the UK food system. Over a generation there has been a massive shift in the power relations between food producers and the large supermarkets, their argument being that tools such as BPR have provided the technology through which the supermarkets have been able to further cement their supremacy. The authors point with some irony at the way in which this has been achieved whilst invoking the language of the free market: The UK food sector being anything but a free market.

The subject of BPR in the workplace has been looked at from a number of different perspectives. For instance, there are a tranche of 'how we did it' type articles within practitioner style journals (see for instance the journal of Business Process ReEngineering); there is the immanent critique of writers such as Egan; there are also a number of empirical analyses that have sought to gain empirical insights of BPR in the workplace. The work of Willmott (1995) is resonant with that of Grey and Mitev (1995); his focus is on the experience of middle managers in the midst of BPR. Willmott (1995) points out that BPR advocates lower numbers of more highly skilled workers doing complex work ("knowledge contributors"); his finding was that this led to eventual burnout and disposal (Willmott 1995) of middle managers. This is a point which both Reed and Scarbrough & Burrell (1996) make, that in the environment where BPR is being implemented to be a middle manager is to be in a precarious position.

Scarbrough and Burrell (1996) talk of the 'axeman cometh' while Clark (1996;1999a;1999b) argues that:

> 'BPR is clearly a form of symbolic analysis designed to juxtapose an abstract minimal organisation blueprint with the actuality and to reveal porosity in value

addition. These areas of porosity are then ripe for exnovation' (1999a:p16).

The extract above from Clark (1999) highlights his view that BPR amounts to a tool for the creative destruction of an existing organization through placing it in a violent hierarchy (see Derrida 1978; Lacan, 1990) with an allegedly superior alternative. Therefore the leitmotiv of BPR, according to this analysis is the removal of existing organizational practices.

Knights and Macabe (1998) examine the experience of bank workers in a BPR environment, they discovered that their respondents found their work less satisfying and more stressful. Moreover, they found that employees were self-disciplining in terms of attaining targets, thus BPR acted as a force for individualisation in the workplace. This was largely because in a climate of BPR people were fearful of retaining their jobs, therefore they were in competition with each other. In spite of this, Knights and Macabe (1998) found that there was considerable space for employee resistance, and that rather than eliminating organizational politics as an aberration, it actually served to intensify political feeling and action. This they argue explodes the notion that the implementation of BPR is unproblematic (see chapter one), it also highlights the depthless epistemology of organization which underscores the BPR gurus belief that politics are a sign of dysfunctional organizations. This view is a product of systems thinking that is suggestive of the idea that organizations are smoothly oiled where there is no room for politics. Such a view is deeply problematic as it presumes that all employees should subscribe to the unilateral views of management, it does not acknowledge that there are equally rational, competing views in any organization and as such that organizational politics are an integral part of organizational life. In terms of making sense of this position, it is useful to draw on the work of Fincham (1996) who makes the point that reengineering is a totalising discourse that closes off dissent and alternatives. In general, Taylor, (1995: p84) argues that BPR is 'technical rationalist' and as such does not pay any degree of attention to issues of people and organization. More recently, Knights & Macabe (2000) have reported their findings from a study of the implementation of BPR in Probank (a pseudonym). They cogently demonstrate that when the nostrums of BPR are translated into a work context, that far from being a Staknovite process, an initiative is instead subject to all the usual short-term expediencies and pressures that are an immanent part of organizational life. They point to the paradox of BPR, namely, that 'BPR produces many of the problems that it is supposed to eradicate' (p82). Their empirical findings, whilst not making claims for generalizability, highlight that the practicalities of running an organization – answering phones and the like – mitigate against the 'revolution' so dear to Hammer & Champy (1993) and their interlocutors.

Knights and Macabe's final conclusion shifts us back up to the level of Egan's immanent critique: they demonstrate how the espoused aim of improving customer service in the bank was sacrificed to short term financial considerations, thereby giving rise to the apparent paradox that BPR actually led to reduction in the level of customer service. However, there has been a general paucity of

critical empirical analyses of BPR, this is something that is in need of redress given the huge interest in the subject in the 1990s. Further, given the essentially contested nature of BPR research into the subject should 'steer a course between the paradise gardens of the gurus and the dangerous jungles of their critics'.

3.7   Knowledge Management: In place of land, labour and capital

The corporate world is experiencing the emergence and widespread diffusion (see Swan, 1999; Clark and Carter, 1999) of Knowledge Management. This is evidenced through inter alia: the transformation of Business School Operations / Information Management departments into Knowledge Management departments (see for instance, Aston University); the explosion of knowledge management operations within major consultancies (see Carter, 1998; Clark and Carter 1999; the jobs pages of the Sunday Times); and the proliferation of Knowledge Management publications (see Marsh, 1998). Moreover, it is clear that the term 'Knowledge Management' is arousing considerable interest within the domains of government (see DTI policy statement, December 1998), business schools as well as the corporate world: it is the latest supernova to cross the corporate skies. Advocates of Knowledge Management emphasise its importance as a new paradigm for competitive advantage (e.g. Reich "The work of Nations" 1992; Drucker "Post-capitalist society" 1993). Increasingly, they argue, intellectual capital is central to the performance of a firm and as such this should be the focus of attention. The counter position to this perspective is one which is critical of the intense attachment that some parties have to Knowledge Management, they argue that it amounts to little more than the latest in a long succession of management fads; they argue that as a fad interest will inevitably wane. Thus there are at least two futures regarding knowledge management: in this section I intend to explore the knowledge debate; the next section will unpack features of the knowledge debate.

The current debate, therefore, surrounding the concept of Knowledge Management (KM) has tended to bifurcate between those who see it as simply the latest management fad and those who claim that it reflects the changed conditions of competition (see Drucker, 1993; Reich, 1992) in the globalized, (post) modern world. While one group sees a cynical repackaging of consultancy services and IT products, the other sees a crucially important resource. There is arguably a need to transcend and hopefully to challenge such oppositional stances (Scarbrough & Swan, 1999) through the construction of a critical account which relates discursive changes in managers' apprehension of knowledge to substantive changes in the political and organizational context within which such knowledge is deployed.

That knowledge is increasingly becoming the master concept within organizations is therefore not in doubt. Bracketing for the moment the question of its epistemological validity, one of the most

striking features of this discourse is the way knowledge is presented as an endogenous, if sometimes elusive, organizational resource. The spread of the discourse seems to be driven by claims that this hitherto hidden but highly valuable resource is now accessible to management and exploitation. Advocates argue, for instance, that the insights of KM mean that the 'knowledge creating process is no longer an enigma' (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995:p236). The root metaphor (Smirchich, 1983) of the discourse – exemplified by references to data mining, for example, or 'drilling down into the knowledge base' - represents knowledge as quasi-natural resource which requires conversion into more explicit forms. Through the use of the mental maps and practical tools of KM, managers are able to achieve the 'quintessential knowledge-creation process', namely, 'when tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge' (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995: p230-231).

To accept the current mantra of mainstream KM as exemplified by Nonaka & Takeuchi is to accept not only the privileging of tacit knowledge but also this (equally tacit) epistemological assumption. Thus it makes sense to talk about building data warehouses and constructing a knowledge base (c.f. Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991). Moreover, it presumes that knowledge can be abstracted and reified from individuals. This understanding has fuelled the development and growth in Intranet facilities and other such data mining techniques (see Newell et al, 1999). The corollary of the importance of such techniques to the discourse of KM has led to the nascent discipline being largely dominated by technicist approaches that seek to provide the means of making tacit knowledge explicit. It is the technical fix, the intranet dominated view, that is undoubtedly the dominant orientation to KM. Swan (1999; 2000), for instance, has argued that KM has been colonized by the Information Systems profession. KM provides a new lexicon through which analysts and practitioners alike can speak of an organization's knowledge assets, managers' may well talk of the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge, while consultants may explain how their tools help to leverage knowledge. The creation of knowledge as an epistemological space (see Knights, 1992) within the realm of organizations must be regarded as a new phenomenon, as must the linguistic register (see Bernstein, 1975), that has accompanied it.

3.71   The revitalisation of tacit knowledge

In the section above on scientific management it was argued that much of twentieth century management thought has been concentrated on tacit, codifiable knowledge. This was certainly the case with scientific management and the management disciplines that have their origins in scientific management. Furthermore, the role of explicit knowledge was placed within the organizational dilemma of efficiency versus innovation; as Child (1984) noted, the dominant concern within management thought has until recently been with efficiency. As a result of this the role of tacit knowledge was largely absent from the canon of management thought. For instance, exponents of explicit knowledge tend to define their interests as 'knowledge management'. Their metaphors treat

knowledge as objects, bricks, granules, as being parcelled, chunked, black-boxed, captured and similar. These metaphors emphasise the notion of 'passive knowledge warehouses' (e.g. Strategic Management Journal) and tend towards a linear vision of knowledge creation with stage rather than state models. The cognitive dimension is dominant and knowledge is presented as discrete, stable, objectified, embodied and unchanging. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that attention to explicit knowledge is uniquely Western and especially American (cf Little & Ray, 2000). It is technicist, too rationalistic and naively functional. Through the influence of information technology there are an array of metaphors about knowledge as 'mining' and as 'data warehouses' which suggest that all knowledge is useful. Also some consultancies have created the role of 'keeper of the knowledge capital' (e.g. Andersen Consulting, Carter 2000a).

More recently theorists have argued that tacit Knowledge is now widely argued to be central to organisational activities (see Suchman; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Hutchins; Weick, 1995); it is continually mentioned within popular literature. This recent work has built on the early contribution of Polyani who argued for the importance of tacit knowledge. Closely allied to this elevation of the importance of tacit knowledge, thus opening up the possibility of a reversal of the previous dominance of explicit knowledge, there is a discussion that a new paradigmatic form of organisation has emerged, whereby its business is knowledge (e.g. Blackler 1997). This position is central to the knowledge thesis. Knowledge Businesses are typically service firms in areas like accountancy, advertising, management consultancies, trade specialists and head-hunters. The contention is twofold: first, that such firms exhibit properties that are knowledge intensive; second, that this knowledge intensity amounts to something new in terms of organisational morphology and in terms of being the basis for competition. Professor Peter Clark, of the University of Birmingham, argues of the current attention being paid to tacit knowledge as:

> 'There are too many prescriptive accounts with too little systematic evaluation of concepts against empirical evidence, sometimes the claims for tacit knowledge represent heroic assumptions ... Organizational knowledge as a domain is casually defined and its relationship to knowledge in the wider context is not made clear'.

He goes on to point out that KM needs to free itself of the notion that knowledge is an inherently good thing, rather he suggests that:

> 'There is considerable anecdotal evidence that suggests existing knowledge, tacit and explicit, can undermine future performance.... For instance Rover possessed extensive tacit knowledge in its occupational communities based in the local district regarded by Marshall as a model of flexible production. However, Rover needed to exnovate – to remove – these communities of practice in order to survive. Rover needed to acquire new areas of knowledge. Sadly, the pace of exnovation and innovation in knowledge was too slow'

Promoters of tacit knowledge emphasise that it is intangible, situated and embedded in communities

of practice with shared meanings (cf. Conway & Steward, 1998; Conway, 1994; Conway, 1999). They highlight the nature of social apprenticeships (e.g. legitimate peripheral participation, Lave & Wenger, 1991) as the means of acquisition. For instance, the practice of strategic marketing requires the learning of firm specific knowledges about the timing of product launches and the like (Clark 2000). The debate between knowledge management (explicit) and organizational learning (tacit) has been in the heartland, but recent reviews of 'knowledge management' suggests that the dichotomy is the problem. The insightful review by Weick and Westley (1996) reformulates the controversy and argue that 'managing organization knowledge' and 'organization learning' are two identifiable yet related domains of academic and practical work. For the moment this fusion might be expressed as the plurality, or spectrum, of explicit knowledges. Baumard (2000) is one contributor for whom tacit knowledge is a crucial ingredient of organizational success. Baumard's thesis is threefold: first, that under conditions of ambiguity (the peak of uncertainty) managers of successful firms re-discover their existing tacit knowledge and gain flexibility to face challenges (p. 22). Second, that most managers rely too much on explicit plans and interpretations and therefor over-manage. Third, tormented knowledge (Ch. 3) and the behaviour of puzzling situations as in the distinction between (a) thinking within the thinkable; (b) thinking within the recognizable.

His case studies are Quantas, Indigo, Pechiney and Indosuez. The cases are somewhat light and lacking in detail, more particularly they concentrate on events rather than the knowledge base of organization as enacted through tasks. Each of the organizations are faced with puzzling situations, for instance in the case of Quantas it is the late 1980s and the airline industry is in a general state of crisis i.e. increased competition, over supply etc. In the case of Quantas and Pechiney, both of the organizations 'exhibited a tendency to privilege explicit knowledge when the disconcerting situation first emerged' (p.199). In both cases, knowledge was de-institutionalised: that is they moved from an institutionalised explicit knowledge towards practical knowledge contained in communities of practice. The smaller organizations in the study, Indigo & the New York division of Indosuez dealt with difficult situations through socialization. In short, Baumard argues that in each of the four cases 'the resolution of an ambiguous situation was inscribed in a community of practice; actors elaborated an informal matrix of relationships with each other; actors developed an attitude for tacit complicity; actors employed repertories of actions which were commonly used within the organization; and, actors referred to and relied upon local collective knowledge' (1999:p200). From this position Baumard argues that there is a dialectic between tacit (fluid) and explicit (which he refers to as fossilized) knowledge whereby there are immanent difficulties for explicit knowledge to have a capacity to deal with ambiguity. In contrast, organic organizations making use of tacit knowledge knowledge are more able to cope with such situations, especially through the mobilisation of communities of practice – something that is viewed as being particularly important. Baumard proceeds to articulate a highly normative list of the obstacles and triggers of ambiguity resolution. Baumard finishes the book by outlining a manifesto for organizations, that, among other

things, requires:

> 'This new architecture (organization) has to be able to privilege the formation of tacit knowledge, and its articulation as close as possible to the organization's strategic preoccupations. We can visualize a flexible, decentralized organization, encouraging horizontal and vertical socialization ... to make knowledge explicit is to seek security through stabilization and regularity, whereas to privilege tacit knowledge is to gain pertinence through irregularities' (p223)

3.72.1   Knowledge and the Resource Base

Resource Based theory in essence marked a break with previous market based approaches to strategy. It has been termed as the inside-out view of strategy, as opposed to the outside-in view. It has in the last ten years become a highly influential approach to the analysis of strategy. The suggestion is that rather than deploying elaborate tools that seek to evaluate the market position, plan a segmentation strategy, or take decisions to acquire or diversify, instead strategists should look internally to the organization and ask the question: 'what is it that the organization can actually do?'. Part of the rationale for this resource based approach is that in turbulent and fast-moving market conditions it makes little sense to orient the whole strategy of an organization towards a fixed view of a market based, which by its very nature is likely to change. The resource based approach suggests that by looking at the capabilities of a firm offers a better starting point for the development of a strategy. The crux of this approach is that if firms can mobilise their resources, they can create firm specific capabilities that are capable of being a source of competitive advantage.

It is the creation of capabilities that lead Resource Based Approaches to Strategy as being inextricably linked to the concerns of knowledge. This is a point emphasised by Grant: the firm specific resources being the difference between the sales value of a firm's tangible assets (i.e. plant & land) and its stock market value. The difference between the market and tangible value of a firm can be attributed to intangible assets, which Grant describes as being either related to reputation (i.e. brand image) or capabilities. He (1990,1998) develops Porter's value chain analysis in order to try and identify which activities contribute most to an organization's financial performance. Central to such an analysis is that the executives in an organization may not actually be aware of where the organizational capabilities actually lie. Grant's analysis is an attempt to engage with the 'how' of the translation of resources into capabilities. He draws from Edith Penrose's seminal early work on tacit knowledge, in terms of trying to make sense of the complex interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Penrosian learning, as it is now often referred to, emphaizes the role of the knowledge of experience, something that is in contrast to notions of objective, explicit knowledge. Grant is interested in the role of experiential learning, viewing it as tacit expertise that is physically embodied in employees.

3.73   Combining Explicit and Tacit Knowledge

A number of theorists in the field of knowledge have recently taken to integrating explicit and tacit knowledge within one framework. For instance:

- Gibbons et al (1994) with their The New Production of Knowledge and Mode 2 knowing (Gibbons et al 1994) have been influential within the British Academy of Management (see Clark 1999a; 1999b).
- invisible assets as knowledge in the resource based approach to the firm (e.g. Spender, Grant 1992).
- locating tacit and explicit in the same framework. The capability framework (Prahalad & Hammel); knowledge assets (Boisot); knowledge creation (Nonaka-Takeuchi); knowledge across nations (Lam 1998). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), in particular, have achieved significant influence; Nonaka can be regarded as the doyen of KM.

The aim of these frameworks is to make explicit the tacit knowledge that exists within organizations. In a hagiographic turn, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that the hypertext organization, resembled by Japanese corporations[3], is one whereby knowledge is created through turning tacit knowledge held by the individual into knowledge held at a collective level. Thus it is this interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge that Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue is vital for the creation of new knowledge. This argument is the intellectual foundation of the current activity in knowledge management initiatives. Lam's (1998) framework, similar to Nonaka and Takeuchi, is shown in table 3:5 below.

The contours of the model below divide knowledge into the epistemological dimensions of tacit and explicit; it also makes an ontological distinction between the individual and the collective. The model presents a series of questions for organizations and employees particularly in terms of where accounting is located and what the implications of turning tacit into explicit knowledge might be. In all probability most of these forms of knowledge will be found in any organization, however, Lam posits that one is likely to be dominant.

The tacit-explicit school would seek to shift the ontological level of the knowledge from the individual level to the collective. Such an exercise would invariably entail an attempt at codifying tacitness. For the tacit-explicit framework this creates the problem of how best to vacuum up all the knowledge:

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[3] I am indebted to Dr Tim Ray, of the Open University, for discussions around the hypertext organization in contemporary Japan.

> Lam (1998:p12) argues "the inherently tacit nature of a large part of human knowledge means there are natural limits to codification. Knowledge that can be expressed in words and symbols represents only the tip of the iceberg of the entire body of possible knowledge. Codification inevitably involves a data sacrifice; some part of the knowledge will always stay behind in the minds of the knowing subject. More importantly, the creation of new knowledge will necessarily involve the use of and generation of tacit knowledge"

At the individual level of, for instance, an accountant or an engineer the issue is that knowledge is physically embodied. It is clear however that one significant distinguishing factor as far as knowledge intensive firms are concerned is that the knowledge resides within the individuals comprising the firms. Thus the capital of such firms consists primarily of the knowledge residing in its workers. This thereby creates a danger that the knowledge capital of the firms can evaporate as its employees leave. This in turn has led to new forms of employment contract in an attempt to thwart this danger and has led also to attempts to codify such knowledge to turn it into explicit knowledge which can be retained. These concerns are arguably one of the principle reasons for the current knowledge debate and concern with knowledge management.

At a more macro-level the implications for particular sectors and workers within those sectors are that there are serious issues of who owns a particular knowledge, this is particularly the case in the age of information technology, smart systems and artificial intelligence. A number of theorists have examined this element of the knowledge thesis. They have highlighted a number of issues that are problematic, for instance:

-        there is a tendency for knowledge to be regarded as a functional resource rather than as a social process. For instance, Swan et al (1999) note that there is the assumption that 'that valuable knowledge can be codified'. It is apparent therefore that functionalistic forms of knowledge seem to prevail within the discourse; there would appear to be much talk about the social nature of knowledge but little in the way of analysis. It is perhaps for this reason that functionalist derived popular metaphors abound such as:

-        Building work (Pettigrew and Whipp 1991)
-        Robustness - mass of knowledge
-        Warehouse – a storing metaphor
-        Furthermore, there is the feeling that 'work' which is currently being labelled knowledge intensive is actually ambiguity-intensive.

Table 3:5   Knowledge frameworkpresented to the International Sociological Association and the British Academy of Management by Alice Lam (1998)

Aston University

Illustration removed for copyright restrictions

The presumption behind such models is that tacit knowledge can be converted into explicit knowledge. Taking this as axiomatic, the issue then is reduced to the efficacy of the tools used to capture knowledge, be they an intranet or more discursive methods such as David Snowden's 'story telling', knowledge spirals. A feature that is germane to the mainstream in KM, is the notion that knowledge sharing is a good thing and is in everyone's interests. This is the crux of Nonaka & Takeuchi's hypertext organization. However, as Little (2000) has pointed out, in a hierarchical society where promotion is age based and individual behaviour is frowned upon, combined with a context of job for life employment, it is hardly surprising that they reach these conclusions. However, I want to argue that knowledge is inherently political and hence part of a configuration of

conflicting interests (see chapter two). Too little attention has been given to the politics of distributed knowledge and a division of knowledge amongst the major interest groups within and between firms. In fact, Nonaka & Takeuchi are remarkable for their silence on the politicised nature of knowledge. Their account of knowledge could be mistaken for a corporate utopia whereby the sharing of knowledge is 'good' and the 'inevitable' corollary of the 'hypertext' organization. Three nano-seconds in a sociological library give the lie to such a suggestion. Rather, as Clegg (1989) notes, power is a master concept to the whole conception of organization. Relating this to organizational knowledge, it is less a case of Bacon's dictum (Knowledge is Power) and more a case of Foucault's conflation (Power/Knowledge). Returning to Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), it should be patently obvious that their 'quintessential knowledge-creation process', namely, 'when tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge' (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995: p230-231) involves the encroachment into the territory of the vested interests of different groups. Put simply therefore, knowledge management is far from neutral, its power effects may have profound consequences for members of an organization.

At the time of completing this thesis, KM's stock is high, it remains to be seen what the future will bring for KM. Will it help deliver competitive advantage for organizations? Or, will it take its place in the new managerialist mausoleum alongside TQM and BPR. For Grant, KM has had its use in terms of refining resource based theory; for Swan & Scarbrough (1999), the challenges that KM seeks to address are likely to remain an enduring.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a grand sweep of twentieth century management thought. Its particular interest has been to engage into a detailed discussion of TQM, BPR and KM. This is of course no accident, for in line with the arguments in chapter two, these initiatives can be regarded as power/knowledge discourses. As such they define an ideal type of organization, provide tools and techniques through which to realise such an end; this links into ideas discussed in both chapter one and two. The striking feature about this chapter is the proliferation of management ideas over the last twenty years, and the way in which their results have been patchy, at best. In many respects this chapter opens up more questions than it resolves. At an abstract level, there is the notion of how are we to understand this take-off of ideas, are we to view it as a teleology, or, does it mark an epochal break with the past. More pressingly, how are we to understand the way in which ideas, products of the imaginations of luminaries such as Michael Hammer, get turned into initiatives that are widely diffused. Equally, why are initiatives such as TQM, BPR or KM so seductive to the corporate world? These questions are addressed in chapter four. The challenge for initiatives such as TQM or BPR must be in terms of their performativity. For instance, could an application of BPR have saved Rover and does it explain Cadbury? What would KM's advice to Marks and Spencer's be? And,

through following it would they become the *'awakening retailer'*?

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[i] some of the work that is seen as an important reference point, such as Burns and Stalker (1961), preceded the articulation of this theory.

[ii] In my view Burns and Stalker (1961) have been misrepresented in that most of the citation and discussion refers to the first half of the book. The second half of the book provides a nuanced account of process, which has largely been forgotten.

[iii]Financial Times report, 3rd February 1992.

Chapter Four: The Production of New Managerialist Knowledge: Consultants, Phantasmagoria and Consumption

4.1   Corporate Fashion Thesis.

The discussion in chapter three introduced the main currents within the discourse of twentieth century management thought. The array of different movements within the twentieth century is both striking and at times bewildering, particularly when one attempts to make sense of a discipline. It is important, in the context of this thesis, to determine whether the recent raft of managerial ideas such as excellence, TQM, BPR and Knowledge Management constitute a culmination, that is - a teleological crescendo of management thinking, or whether, instead, they are a fundamentally different phenomena. These are questions that I will now seek to address in the discussion conducted within this chapter. In short, in this chapter I attempt to make sense of managerialism. To recast Whittington's question, I will ask is managerialism important and should we know about it? Without pre-empting the discussion that follows, it is argued that this endeavour requires an analysis both of the management consultancy industry and at a more abstract level, it necessitates an examination of theoretical insights into consumption. The overarching aim of this chapter is therefore to ground the account of the initiatives presented in the previous chapter.

4.2   The end of History?

It is necessary to consider whether managerial thought can be considered as a seamless progression through time? Can the undoubted changes in management thought be considered to constitute a development in knowledge? i.e. is there a teleological progression, whereby theories on management have become increasingly refined, ultimately reaching a zenith or an end of history (see Fukuyama, 1992). These issues are important in terms of trying to situate management theory. The argument for a teleological progression of knowledge is that as management ideas are scrutinised and put into practice, then the theory is revised, and thus improved, in accordance with experience. Therefore it could be argued that the management theories outlined above amount to a teleological progression in terms of providing knowledge on organizations: in particular, in terms of how what they have to say about organizing for efficiency. Such a perspective would also seek to explain more contemporary management movements as being part of that tradition: attempts to provide templates of understanding (contingency theory) and best practice (scientific management, human relations, socio-technical systems).

It is tempting to treat histories in terms of continuity, for instance, as I argued in the section on BPR, the dominant Whiggish interpretation of history has been to represent the condition of man as having progressed since the enlightenment. This view would look to the past and see continuity between managerial thought in the present and that of the past. For instance, a continuist view of history would point to the many parallels between scientific management and some of the more recent managerialist initiatives. Writers on management theory have noted the similarities, especially with Taylorism and Human Relations, and therefore the obvious question to ask of Excellence, TQM, BPR or KM is: does it amount to anything new? Theorists of the labour process also point to the parallels between the aims and effects of management practice now with those of nearly a century ago: common problems, common explanations. This is an oversimplification of the variegated views held on a continuist notion of management theory, and theorists who occupy this position are alert to the challenges posed by new technology and the concomitant pressures of globalisation. In looking for continuity, I have already discussed how BPR draws upon a huge array of previously promulgated management techniques; how in some respects TQM resembles Scientific Management – for instance through its embrace of a 'One Best Way'; how the driving force behind knowledge management has been to appropriate the knowledge of an individual worker - once again just like Scientific Management; equally, the current elevation of the semi-autonomous team is remarkably similar to the Human Relations and Socio-Technical schools. Just on the basis of this brief consideration of the parallels between *new* and *old* it would appear that there is an overwhelming case for arguing that there is an undeniable continuity in the history of twentieth century management discourse. As Egan (1995) has argued:

'Exciting tools for doing 'strategy' - business process reengineering, benchmarking, TQM - will be discussed but will often be exposed as mere packaging i.e. as constituting no more than the appellation of labels to age-old techniques for dealing with age-old problems'. (Egan; 1995:p1)

Arguing from this perspective, I would make a slight amendment to this thesis: in addition to continuity, there has also been advancement, therefore work on teams in the present can draw on experiences from the past, the end result being an advancement to knowledge which hopefully translates into improved organizational performance. For instance, Jacques (1996) states that:

'I consider Scientific Management, Total Quality Management and Business Process Re-engineering to represent a single, coherent line of thought through the history of management. Each has contained insights and blinders specific to its time and context, but all share a paradigmatic philosophy that 'organization' represents a network of product-related workflows' (Jacques, 1998:p167).

In 1996, the theme of the British Academy of Management Conference centred on the question of '30 years on, what have we learned?' The continuist perspective would argue no doubt that we have gained a good deal of theoretical and empirical knowledge that makes us more enlightened than 30 years'ago In the light of the cogent argument for a continuist view on the discourse of managerial thought, is it possible to seriously countenance an alternative? Thus, it self-referentially draws on its own traditions and revises itself in the light of experience How has management thought been anything over than continuist? This account is further supported when one studies the views of the critics of management For instance, labour process theorists have pointed out that while different labels may be used in management theory the experience of work, within a capitalist context, boils down to the inevitable antagonisms between the agents of labour and capital For instance, Marxian theorist, Marglin (1979 p476) argues

> 'So long as the basic features of capitalism must be respected, solutions (i e
> forms of control such as human relations)   will inevitably change the form of the
> problem (i e labour discipline) rather than resolve it in a fundamental sense'

On this basis it would appear that there is strong support for the continuist view of managerialism I will now explore the conjecture that managerialism as experienced in the present constitutes something new – that is distanciated from the past

4 3   Teleology versus Discontinuity A New Managerialist epoch?

A critique of this line of management thought would firstly highlight the problematic nature of knowledge claims that are at once decontextalised, essentialist and universalistic Such accounts may be legitimated through Business Schools and other institutions, but nonetheless, it is clear that there are diverse modes of organizing and that the application of any particular initiative is likely to be uneven Therefore, it is crude to suggest that Scientific Management was the dominant mode of organizing for much of the twentieth century, such an assertion is overly deterministic, it is perhaps safer to claim that for much of the twentieth century Scientific Management, with the objective of achieving efficient mass production, was held up as the dominant blueprint for organizing The experience of Scientific Management suggests that in key American sectors (i e automobiles, fast food), the practice was widespread Concomitantly, evidence from the UK highlights the difficulty UK organizations had in adopting scientific management (see Clark, 1987, who describes attempts at this endeavour) In summary, it is undoubtedly the case that some management ideas gain dominance and are accorded a plausibility in a given period, however, it is something else to make the claim that this is the way organizations *were* in a given period

An alternative view to the cumulative generation of knowledge thesis is the notion that the history of thought, and thus of management discourse, is characterised by epochal ruptures which revolutionise thought and are inherently discontinuous· rather than representing teleological progression These views within the philosophy of social science have been expounded by Feyerabend, Foucault, Kuhn and Lyotard (see Chapter 7, for a discussion of the work of Feyerabend and Kuhn) Foucault (1972) and Lyotard (1984) contribute to this position Foucault argues that thought is not a Whiggish progression but rather it undergoes periods of discontinuity whereby what constitutes truth and how truth is defined changes Therefore, what once counted as truth may now be considered absurd, or may simply be incomprehensible In a similar vein, Lyotard (1984) also attacks enlightenment thought He posits that a characteristic of the way in which modernity has treated knowledge is to seek to explain the world through metanarratives, Lyotard develops his argument by stating that metanarratives (such as class) no longer have a capacity to speak to issues facing the world Therefore, he would be dismissive of a metanarrative such as scientific management However, the paradox is that despite the diminished saliency of metanarratives, there is a proliferation of them in order to try and make sense of the world

The relevance of these issues to management thought are that they present a number of options in relation to how one is to read twentieth century thought Option one is a Whiggish teleology, whereby our knowledge of management has developed, with it being 'qualitatively' better than it was at the start of the twentieth century Option two would be to question management thought, it would be to look at management thought for signs of discontinuity· has there been a rupture, has there been an epochal shift in terms of management thought? The two options outlined are important in terms of how we are to relate to management thought and is something that requires further exploration. The case that there has been a fundamental shift in managerialism would need to look to the present and question whether there were substantive differences between current management thought and that of the past There would of course likely to be differences within a teleology, i e. as one idea was discredited another would emerge The next step, however, would be to trace the differences in initiatives, to ask what then were the surfaces of emergence (see Foucault, 1972) – that is the conditions that allowed a particular discourse to emerge. For instance, the changes in the world economy since the early 1970s could be construed as constituting an epochal break that led to the emergence of a new discourse of managerialism. This position is in need of some clarification, I will now present an argument as to how contemporary managerialism could be considered to represent a break with the past.

For much of the twentieth century there has been a pre-occupation among UK organizations in their attempts to adopt 'Best Practice', which traditionally has revolved around attempts to

replicate the American System of Manufacture (A.S M). Studies demonstrate that British organizations have found the adoption of A S M. problematic (See Clark 19 87) Furthermore, such critiques generally point towards the difficulties of transferring recipes across contexts From the 1980s to the present, there has been an explosion in the production and dissemination of a number of highly popular managerial concepts, these initiatives, such as TQM and BPR, highlight a number of themes, which include, inter alia, a move away from bureaucracy, a flattening of the organizational structure, an emphasis on creating the 'right' culture, and an elevation of the importance of the role of charismatic leadership (See Wilson 1992, Burrell 1997) This wave of managerial ideas marks a departure from A S M , and as such I refer to it as the discourse of New Managerialism, with it setting the tone, and acting as a 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1972) for what constitutes 'good practice'

Thus far I have suggested that we make a periodization between new managerialism and old on the basis of the changed economic conditions encountered by the advanced industrialised nations of the west. This view is broadly resonant with the analyses of a number of writers who have commented, from within the context of the UK public sector, on the new managerialist sensibility (see Ferlie et al 1996, Pollitt, 1993, Broadbent et al 1997, Clarke and Newman 1997). The basis of their thesis is that the macro-level policies pursued in the period from 1979 onwards have given rise to a new form of managerialism Furthermore, new managerialism has therefore been driving and setting an agenda for change Reed (1999 p1) asks the question 'What is 'new' about new managerialism?' to which he conjectures that 'it seems to signal a radical break with older managerialist ideologies and control strategies which had primarily focused on the restructuring of organisational forms and practices through bureaucratic rationalisation'. For Reed there has been a shift from the cage to the gaze (1999b) In terms of theorizing the discontinuity between new and old managerialism, Reed argues

> 'It seems to a signal a radical break with older managerialist ideologies and control strategies which had primarily focused on the restructuring of organisational forms and practices through bureaucratic rationalization' (Reed, 1999 p1).

In a similar fashion, Clegg (1990, 1997) argues that there has been a shift from modern to post-modern organizations, whereby a new paradigm of organizing has emerged Clegg's new paradigm is shown in table 4 1 below

Table 4:1 _____ Old and New paradigms of management (Clegg et al, 1997:p205)

Clegg et al (1997) paint a rosy picture of the new management paradigm. New managerialism a la Reed (1999) is more dystopian, for it revolves around the following watchwords:

'Neo-liberal economics; cultural control; a promotion of entrepreneurialism; a centralised form of control through decentralised measures; flexibility; performance control; low trust; visibility/transparency'.

I will now explain why I consider the latest managerial ideas to constitute a break with the past. That is, I do not regard them as merely constituting the latest nostrums in a teleology that spans back to Taylor's work a century ago. This is necessary given that I have pointed to a number of parallels between Scientific Management and contemporary ideas. In defence of my position I would argue that there are fundamental differences, not just in the content, but also in the institutional frameworks that support, reinforce and circulate the discourse of new managerialism when compared to old managerialism. Therefore, I would argue that the 'surface of emergence' (Foucault 1972), or the conditions that allowed the discourse to emerge, were a product of the crisis of western capitalism experienced with the collapse of the 'golden

age of capitalism' The loss of confidence in the American system of manufacture was arguably borne in part from the growing competition from Japan and the South-East Asian economies This combined with a New Right political agenda, which heightened the institutional clamour for globalization, pursued privatisation, and was accompanied by rapid developments in the field of information technology, served to create the conditions of uncertainty that led to the emergence of a robust, discourse of new managerialism Thus there are parallels between my position and that of Reed (1999) and the other new managerial theorists However, in order to get a greater sense of the rupture between new and old managerialism I want first to consider the epistemological foundation for treating a group of concepts as constitutive of new managerialism This will be followed by closer attention being paid to the notion that new managerialism is actually new.

4.4   Intertextuality and Pastiche: The language games of new managerialism

The term 'new managerialism' suggests a unity among contemporary concepts, is this at all a tenable proposition particularly in view of the critique between and across ideas (i e KM and BPR, BPR and TQM)? I want to suggest that at the point of marketing there is a difference in order to provide the space for the 'sale' of the concept to take place i e it represents something new However, the general theme of all of the messages in the concepts analysed share a strong theoretical affinity in terms of their anti-bureaucratic, customer focused, results driven, everything must change approach to organizing In this sense they are intertextual (Kristeva, 1973), that is, while they are different at a semantic level, they are nonetheless underscored by common themes they constitute a language game, as first outlined by Wittgenstein The notion of the language game is articulated in Tractacus, Pears (1971 p14) describes it as follows·

> 'Language has no common essence, or at least, if it has one, it is a minimal one, which does not explain the connections between its various forms They are connected with one another in amore elusive way, like games, or like the faces of people belonging to the same family'

Thus some managers may draw from the lexicon of Peters and Waterman (1982), others might speak from the quality literature and so forth, the point being that these approaches share a common, related message that overrides any differences It was out of a coalescence of political and intellectual forces that what is commonly termed a new form of managerialism emerged; a discourse, which among other things emphasised the need for flat, customer, focused, entrepreneurial, empowered organizations Since the early writing of Peters and Waterman (1982) there have been a range of initiatives talked about by the so-called gurus, blackboxed and imbued with a veneer of science by consultants and then diffused throughout the corporate world From my perspective, the differences between particular initiatives (c.f. TQM with BPR) in either content or relative sophistication (see Fincham, 2000) are less important than what

binds them together - their intertextuality - which in terms of content is their messages of anti-bureaucracy, change, managerial unitarism and the celebration of the customer.

Another entry point into grappling with the differences between new and old managerialism is to depart from the 'old wine in new bottles' type argument, preferring instead to regard similarities between the content of current initiatives and those in the past as amounting to a pastiche. This is a post-modern argument, most closely developed by Jameson, whereby he states that:

> 'All that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum.'

Jameson goes on to develop this argument by talking about nostalgia and retrospective styling,. 'The allusive and elusive plagiarism of older plots is, of course, also a feature of pastiche'. In relating this to new managerialism there is the sense in which current initiatives can draw selectively and eclectically on the past. This serves to create a managerialist initiative which is a pastiche: for instance, as I have demonstrated, BPR draws on a number of previously promulgated initiatives. Another dimension of this notion of pastiche is that through the creation of pastiche the original meaning of a particular initiative is emptied out (see Rabinow, 1996), in its place a new meaning can be created through the new initiative.

4.5 The Production and Commodification of Managerial Knowledge

In addition to this notion of intertextuality, there are also the institutional supports that enable the discourse of new managerialism to function; I regard these as being as least as important as the change in the content of the new managerialist message. Therefore the circulation of new managerialist thinking through Business Schools, the popular business press, management consultancies and the so-called management gurus is in my view essential to understanding new managerialism. In this sense there is more to new managerialism than the exhortations of the gurus, it is not enough merely to look at the ideas but it is important to inspect the mechanisms through which they are disseminated. As such there are limits to the efficacy of the guru critiques undertaken most prominently by T. Clark and Salaman (1995), for they do not help to explain new managerialism in action. More pressingly, such work does little to explain the seductiveness of a particular movement – for that is what they are – beyond the *here and now* of a guru performance. This myopia leaves a lacuna, namely how are we to explain the popularisation of particular ideas?

Paraphrasing Latour's (1993) seminal account of the Pasteurization of France, it is not enough to solely look at Pasteur's ideas (or those of management gurus), it also necessary to look at the

way in which these ideas received institutional support It is this type of analysis that is crucial to an understanding of how it was, for example, that most large UK companies in the 1980s came to experiment with TQM This is an illustration of a second dimension of intertextuality, namely the way in which each idea has been supported by an academic-consulting actor-network. Returning once again to Latour (1993) he pointed out that in order to explain why there is rue Pasteur in every French town, it is not simply enough to provide an account of Pasteur's exploits in the laboratory Rather it is necessary also to study the public health campaigns (no spitting) and the municipal sewer programmes this is equally the case with understanding the diffusion of new managerialist initiatives

Similarly, theorists for whom new initiatives are similar to what has gone before (see Smith, 1989, Ackers et al, 1995)- plus ca change- are blind to such concerns Instead they rely on the notion that somehow the UK 'floodgates' have broken leading to a deluge of new managerial ideas, primarily originating from North America Such a suggestion is difficult to sustain for it crudely ignores the complex constellation of forces and actors that promote and disseminate managerial ideas. I would argue that to engage with this complex constellation is vital to an understanding of what actually constitutes new managerialism. It is this point that separates my understanding of new managerialism from that of other theorists (Reed 1999, Ferlie et al, 1996, and Broadbent et al, 1997) Therefore, new managerialism as I have articulated it requires an examination of the forces that constitute the supply side of the production of managerial knowledge Equally, in order to gain a greater comprehension of this dynamic, it is necessary to explore the issue of how such ideas are then consumed by managers in the workplace

4.6 The Management Consultancy Age

For Blackler (1993), *'Conversations are McKinseys'* this may be so but the conversation is not extending to Organization Studies. Despite the apparent importance of management consultants in the corporate world, very little is known about them This is a result of insufficient attention having been paid to the sector, the corollary being that there is a dearth of public domain knowledge existing on consultants. The reasons for this lack of knowledge, both in their internal workings as well as in their relationships with clients, are three-fold First, the difficulty of obtaining access to management consultancies Second, the unwillingness of organizations to talk about their relations with consultants. Third, many Business School academics have a performative role in the consultancy industry This paucity of knowledge is in urgent need of attention; in the context of this thesis I will seek to present some prodaedeutic work on the nature of management consultants. The nature of this work is prolusory, with it constituting an attempt to prise open debate, in order contribute to our understanding of management consultants. This is important in terms of this thesis given that I am arguing that

management consultants constitute an important part of the constellation of new managerialism.

> *'Between 1970 and 1980, the revenue of management consultancies registered with the Management Consultants' Association doubled; from 1980 to 1987, it increased fivefold. In the UK, over the eleven years 1980-91 the number of consultants registered with the MCA more than quadrupled to 6,963, and their fees increased almost seventeenfold. By the early 1990s, there were reckoned to be 100,000 consultants world-wide. Growth figures in recent years for major players in the global consultancy game confirm the continuing acceleration in business from the late 1980s. Thus the largest company, Andersen Consulting, has been posting 9% growth regularly (and as high as 19% in the recession year of 1992). Second largest players, McKinsey, doubled revenue to $1.2 billion (between 1987 and 1993). Coopers and Lybrand, third globally (but second in Europe), saw revenues grow 107 per cent over the five years to 1993, and by then had 66,000 staff in 124 countries'. Ramsie, (1996:p166).*

The corporate landscape over the last twenty years has been characterised by a huge growth in the use of management consultancies by organizations (Ramsie, 1996). My interest is not in terms of the analysis of gurus which have been fruitfully described elsewhere (see T.Clark 1995; Fincham 1996), rather my concern is to engage with the consulting complex (see Grey & Mitev, 1995) which I am suggesting plays an important role in the contemporary corporate world. By the consulting complex I am referring to organizations such as McKinsey, Andersen Consulting and A.D. Little each of whom are major players in providing 'corporate professional services'. The importance of such organizations has however not been lost on some Business School theorists.

Whilst the consultancy sector is under theorised, there have been a number of notable contributions. For instance, Huczynski (1993) provides a delineation of the field; he commences by assuming that the use of consultants can be equated with the desire for new ideas to be imported into an organization. This is followed by a concentration on the motivations of different organizational actors for the reasons that they make use of management consultants. The motivation to use consultants, he contends, may be conceptualised as resulting from three different sources, namely; from the realm of the internal organization, the threat from external competition, or from the ambition of individual managers. Huczynski (1993) regards the consultancy industry as being dynamic, partly as a result of organizations seeking new ideas, but also through the consultancies propensity to expand their businesses (see Egan, 1995), and their need to package new ideas every two or three years. Huczynski's (1993) overview is insightful, particularly in his attempt to link consultants with management theory, something that is particularly relevant given the exponential take-off in managerial ideas since the 1980s. However, it is my view that Huczynski's (1993) position is weakened by the way in which he downplays the role that consultants play in the social construction of organizational reality.

Sturdy (1997), in a recent article, presents an interesting critique of consultants, in which he attributes their increasing popularity in the corporate world as being due to their ability to imbue managers with a sense of control over their environment This creation of a feeling of order (in an increasingly uncertain world), whilst perhaps illusory, helps to explain why they are increasingly drawn upon as a resource by organizations

.

This argument is resonant with Czarniawska-Joerges (1988) thesis that consultants are 'Merchants of Meaning' Guest (1990), meanwhile, in his critique of Human Resource Management, contends that consultants hawking Human Resource Management packages around the corporate landscape should be viewed as DreamMakers in the sense that they are selling the American dream (see also Grint 1994) In a later article, Guest (1992) in examining the work of gurus such as Peters and Waterman (1982) argues *'that the medium is the message' (1992 p13)*, adding that such messages are '*right enough to be dangerously wrong'*. Clark and Salaman (1995) present an interesting account of consultants, whereby they represent the consultant as playing the role of a 'Witch Doctor' in the setting of modern organizations In their analysis, they delineate different generic types of consultants, pace Huczynski (1993), before focusing on an analysis of 'management gurus' of which popular examples would include such luminaries as Tom Peters and Sir John Harvey-Jones Clark and Salaman (1995) commence their critique by stating that '*the key to understanding what they [management gurus] do is as a performance'*, from this point they liken the performance of a Management Guru to that of a WitchDoctor, they also highlight a number of similarities between Gurus and WitchDoctors, one of them being the '*magical properties of the knowledge'*

In a similar vein, Crowther and Cooper (1998) also look to metaphors outside of the immediate lexicon of industrial capitalism, they draw on the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell and apply his ' A Hero with a Thousand Faces' work to management consultants, likening the consultant to the hero The broad thrust of their argument is that the hero is depicted as an individual from outside the culture who arrives when needed and brings weapons to defeat the foe, whether this adversary is human, natural or supernatural The actions of this hero both defeat the adversary and bring about a unification and reinvigoration of the organizational culture Thus far there has been very little empirical work investigating the role of consultants within organizations Yet there have been some noteworthy interventions in terms of how are we to understand management consultants Numerous high profile management theorists have lined up to pour opprobrium on the consulting industry. For instance, Kerfoot and Knights (1992 p653) argue that,

'Strategic Management has assumed an overwhelming significance among
practitioners partly as a result of being subjected to a 'hard sell' by management
consultants'.

In a similar vein Burrell (1992:p87) opines that consultants are,

'Seeking to provide the expensive but quick fix to an industrial and commercial
audience who, ever hungry for novelty, are eager to consume different ideas
before turning greedily to a newer fad in the relentless pursuit of busyness'.

While Bloomfield and Danieli (1995) contend that,

'Although consultants have to sell their services, this requires a redefinition of
themselves; in other words, they do not so much target themselves at a particular
niche as seek to create a niche and persuade clients that they are within it'.

4.7 The Consultant's embrace: Making sense of Client Relations with Management Consultants

There is very little work on the relations between consultants and client organizations.
Lamentably, as Clark and Salaman (1995) note, what coverage does exist has generally been
restricted to focusing on consultants as being providers of professional assistance. This work is
somewhat prosaic and, as such, contributes little towards gaining a rich understanding of the
world of consulting. Writers from the strategic contingencies of power perspective offer a
cogent account of the potential use of consultants for political ends by drawing upon their
'expert knowledge' (see Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

Clearly the interaction between consultants and their clients amounts to a relationship. A
number of writers have argued that managers are placed in positions of anxiety and uncertainty
in the current corporate environment. For instance, Watson (1994) points out that:

'The more I saw of the managers [in the organization].... The more I became
aware of the extent of human angst, insecurity and doubt and frailty among them'
Watson (1994:p178)

This is a common theme in extant accounts of management consultants and managerial ideas;
there is the related notion that in periods of uncertainty, consultants and their ideas can provide
a sense of control over the environment. Huczynski (1993) draws a comparison between new
management ideas and religion. He argues that they constitute a new religion in the sense that
they promise certainty and controllability. Mueller (1995) takes a different approach and
demonstrates how consultants and blueprints come to the fore when it is apparent that the pre-

existing mode of organizing is no longer proving to be effective. Jackall (1988) explores the interaction between managers and consultants and represents the relationship as one where managers are anxious for new approaches with which to control their organization and career. These approaches of course are supplied by a consultancy industry that derives its identity and saliency from providing *rational* solutions.

What is striking about many of such accounts is the way in which managers are presented as ingenues, that is naïve and ready to be exploited by a rapacious consulting industry. One reading T.Clark's account could be mistaken for considering consultants as ineluctably parasitical, their quarry being managers in search of an algebra of corporate success: thus there is a danger of presenting managers as cultural dopes or as docile bodies (see Foucault, 1977). There are a number of difficulties with this perspective, for one, it presumes an essentialist relationship between consultant and manager; this point is rebutted by Fincham (1998), for whom there are no pre-determined consultant-client relationships. Secondly, it falls silent on the possibility of managerial agency. In a refinement of Jackall's (1988) relational approach to consulting, Sturdy (1998) develops an iterative model, based on his empirical work, in which he argues that:

> 'It is shown how consultancy is fuelled by their provision of a sense of reassurance to management and at the same time *reinforcing* or creating insecurities. The consultants' sense of control may however be *challenged* by the increasing sophistication of clients and their criticisms of, and resistance to, consultancy, which is shown to be founded on the threat consultants pose to their own sense of competence. Anticipatory responses by consultants such as developing new styles and solutions may counter criticisms and *renew* managerial anxiety'. (Emphasis in original) Sturdy 1998:p397.

Sturdy's account is noteworthy for the way in which it highlights the possibilities for the maintenance of a dominant position by management consultancies; yet he makes great play of emphasizes the agency of managers: they are anything but 'passive victims'. This perspective is a central theme of Fincham's (1998) perceptive account of management consultants in which he demonstrates the way that the exhortations of consultants are resisted through a variety of discursive strategies that include tropes such as 'the idea is not invented here', or, 'the consultants do not understand the business'. Fincham's contribution highlights that the consultant-client metaphor may have limited facility in terms of explaining the multiplicity of responses to the exhortations of the consultants, especially as sobriquet 'client' has connotations of passivity or docility. In short, his article demonstrates the way in which from within the confines of an organization the claims of a consultant may be 'delegitimised'. This is a point that is made by Grey et al (1997) in their study of Big 5 accountants whereby they highlight the fragility of identity immanent in any relationship between consultants and managers. Similarly, Alvesson (1998), employing a Goffmanesque turn, argues that it is not so

important to be an expert rather it is crucial to give the impression of being the expert in a particular relationship. Alvesson argues that this impression of expertise is produced through image and rhetoric intensity and that it is characteristic of situations of ambiguity.

The insights of Alvesson (1993; 1998) are important in the sense that they illustrate the relational nature of expertise i.e. a consultant is only the expert if he knows, or more importantly gives the impression (s)he appears to know, more than the manager. The corollary of this position is that the relative power which allows the consultant to legislate (c.f. Bauman, 1987) is specific to a particular relationship in a given time and context. The concentration on the consultant-client relationship is of course a classic dyad relationship (see Conway & Steward, 1998). Numerous criticisms have been leveled at dyadic understandings, with the chief complaint being that they are overly reductionist (see Grieco, 1987), in the sense that such a conceptualisation excludes other actors (both human and non-human). I concur with this critique: relations between managers and consultants do not (generally) take place within the confine of a hermetically sealed pure space.

While it makes little sense to talk of predetermined relations (c.f. Fincham, 1998) between consultants and managers, it is clear nonetheless that the major consultancies have experienced spectacular growth in the last twenty years. II want to suggest that there are a number of reasons a consultant might be used by an organization: Firstly, a consultancy could be used politically in order to legitimate a particular position within the organization (see Pettigrew, 1973, Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Secondly, consultants could simply be used as, an albeit very expensive, reserve army of labour: being brought into the organization on an ad-hoc basis or deal with a particular contingency (c.f. Tisdall, 1982; consider the use made of Information Technology consultants in preparations for the millennium bug). Thirdly, consultants can be used as providers of new ideas; that is, bringing blackboxed programmed change initiatives to an organization.

4.8 The Cultural Intermediary

It is this latter function that is of particular interest to this thesis and thus merits further discussion. Mindful of my criticisms of the dyadic approach to theorizing consultant-manager relationships, I want to make the point that the discourse of new managerialism exists outside of consultants, although it is of course very often embodied by consultants. This is distinct from the position of Sturdy (1998), for whom 'management ideas / consultants' (Sturdy 1998:p403) are conflated. My argument is therefore that the textual canon of new managerialism, which consists of works of the so-called gurus such as Deming, Hammer & Champy, Womack, Peters & Waterman, Nonaka & Takeuchi, Ohmae and so forth, exists independently of the major

consultancies. Although the textual canon exists independently of the major consultancies, many of the best selling authors have worked for and had their 'research' funded by the consultancies; for instance Kenichi Ohmae and Tom Peters are referred to by McKinseys as figuring among their 'alumni' (for instance, McKinseys funded the research for the Peters and Waterman 'In Search of Excellence' text). In terms of understanding the role of management consultants in this take-off of managerial initiatives, they must be seen as being inextricably linked. I will now propose a thesis that consultants are locked in a close embrace with the discourse of new managerialism. This is something that is reflected by McKinsey consultants who represent their relations with management theory as follows:

> 'Business consulting has its origins in the work done in the United States by Frederick W. Taylor and his disciples at the turn of the century. Taylor, a young engineer, devised a philosophy and system of production management. His book, the Principles of Scientific Management, converted what had been a technique into a systematic, teachable approach to the study of work and its rational organization. Other figures who contributed their thinking to management theory include the German theorist Weber, Simmel, and Schmalenbach'
> source: http://www.mckinsey.com/about/about_consulting.html

The extract above clearly conflates the genesis of consulting with that of management theory. I support this, arguing that there is a concatenation between consultants and programmed change packages. However this does not preclude consultants and the discourse of managerialism from existing separately to one another. I argue that the phenomenal growth of the management consultancy sector is closely linked to the proliferation of managerialist packages with the two being linked in a relationship of symbiosis. This phantasmagoria of managerial initiatives, as I alluded to in my treatment of Huczynski's (1993) arguments, can be linked with ideas of fashion, which are propagated and disseminated by a burgeoning consultancy industry. This is something that Wilson notes(1992:pp72-3)

> 'Yet the excellence tradition. was to fuel the fires of corporate culture in a way unprecedented in management theory and practice... A whole consultancy industry also apparently sprang up overnight to help them achieve It'

In this sense the management consultant visiting an organization can be read as acting as a cultural intermediary for the discourse of new managerialism. This relationship requires some exploration: I am suggesting that in the first instance the guru text is written, elements of this are then adopted and developed into a framework for application with concomitant tools and techniques, which serve to imbue the ideas with a technical rationality (see Scarbrough & Corbett, 1992). This stage of the process is the creation of image intensive (see Lash & Urry, 1995), blackboxed knowledge. Management consultants in provincial offices throughout the world then set about purveying the blackboxed initiative. Therefore I am arguing that the

management consultancy in this respect can be viewed as a cultural intermediary, which following Bourdieu (1984), Lash & Urry define as follows: .

> 'The 'new cultural intermediary' plays a role in the production, codification and
> diffusion of symbolic goods; such intermediaries would include people working
> in fashion, the media, marketing and design' (Lash & Urry, 1994)

My argument is therefore that management consultants can be considered to be cultural intermediaries in the sense that they help create, package and disseminate cultural signs i.e. blackboxed, programmed change initiatives. Before exploring the cultural intermediary, by way of an aside it is important to consider the phenomenon of the 'black boxed' initiative. New managerial ideas rest therefore upon the assertion that they represent a 'new' best way of organizing, something which is of course reminiscent of the unitarism inherent in early managerial movements such as Taylorism. This 'one best way' is packaged, that is turned into a blackbox, which is capable of being made portable from one context to another. The process of blackboxing is an important one, for it acts as a device whereby at one level an idea can be transformed into a serious of tools and techniques; this process allows for the successful commodification and portability of expertise. At a further level, there is an attempt for the blackbox to appear mysterious: thus it is not easily replicable by 'non-initiates'. An illustration that might be used to outline this point is the case of the internal combustion engine in a car. Most drivers know that the car will (hopefully) get them from a to b, yet they do not require an esoteric knowledge of the workings of the engine, rather it is a blackbox. In a similar fashion, when appropriating a managerial initiative, detailed knowledge of the tools and techniques is not required. Rather the adoption is predicated upon the belief that the initiative be it TQM, BPR or whatever will deliver certain outcomes. It is this point which is critical to understanding the popularity of managerial initiatives. Dyerson and Mueller (1999) have introduced the concept of 'superstitious learning' to describe such a situation whereby an organization unreflexively adopts the blueprint advocated by a consultant.

Featherstone (1991) has further developed the concept of the cultural intermediary to suggest that cultural intermediaries 'have an important role in educating the public into new style and taste' (Featherstone 1991:p77). It is clear from the definition of the cultural intermediary, and similar work such as that of Reich (1991) on symbolic analysts, that as an analytical category it is qualitatively different from the role of the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper role (Grieco, 1987), which functions through means such as boundary spanning (Conway, 1994) and the control of alternatives (see Pettigrew, 1973, has been more generally associated with the diffusion of innovations.

In terms of drawing on the insights of Alvesson (1993:1018), who argues that the key to knowledge intensive work is the ability to tell 'credible stories about the world', it would be

imperative for consultants to present ideas that seem to be credible. Therefore the string of logic presented in support of a TQM programme might argue that the key to corporate success is through delivering high quality customer service. This it would then be argued would be achieved by creating a participative culture whereby people have a responsibility for their own work and so forth. What is clear is that such an argument is seductive and at a surface level it is difficult to rebut. Moreover, such an argument might be presented as being neutral and as such nothing more than common sense.

Recent years have seen notable contributions that have gone some way in attempting to redress the dearth of extant analytical literature in order to make sense of the role played by management consultancies in contemporary organizations (see T.Clark, 1995; Sturdy 1997; Fincham 1998). The question of how we are to understand the role of management consultants is therefore of considerable interest. This is especially so in terms of their interventions as change agents (see Wilson, 1992) in organizations; for it is not in doubt that the last twenty years have been characterised by radical organizational changes that have been deemed as necessary responses to the exigencies of both technological and institutional changes. Before I proceed to a detailed analysis of management consulting it is worth reminding ourselves of the prevailing discourses in the Anglo-American environment throughout much of the 1980/90s. In the UK there was an emphasis placed on the collapse of the post-war political consensus which served to legitimate the need for drastic changes to be made in order to bring about an industrial renaissance and thus arrest an alleged century of decline. Contemporaneously, arguments that gained currency in the United States reflected the fear of Japanese competition that was challenging the teleological growth that had been experienced since the New Deal (Jacques, 1996). It is no accident that management consultancies have expanded at an unprecedented rate during this period, with part of their apparent saliency coming from their perceived ability to help organizations enact change (see Huczynski, 1993;T. Clark 1995). Thus far I have introduced the notion of the cultural intermediary, and in so doing have disaggregated the consultant from the discourse of new managerialism, yet at same time have demonstrated that in practice there are elisions.

4.9 The Art of Persuasion: Image and Rhetoric Intensity

My assertions above suggest that there is a knowledge discourse that exists independently of both consultants and managers; this renders the notion of a dyad as inadequate. As such the relative power in the relationship between consultant and organization is by virtue of the consultants' superior knowledge of the discourse of new managerialism, or following Alvesson, their 'perceived' superior knowledge. Before moving to a substantive discussion, it is

worthwhile first to consider Alvesson's insights into the 'art of persuasion', that is image and rhetoric intensity.

Alvesson (1998) adds to this discussion on *credibility* through his ideas on knowledge agnosticism; he counters the robust, tangible image of management knowledge with the notion of ambiguity-intensity. He claims that it is problematic to isolate 'knowledge'; instead, what is central is the realm of the relational i.e. the dynamic between the apparent suppliers and the so-called clients. Alvesson points out that there is a demonstrable ambiguity in terms of technical expertise. For instance, he reports that there is a tendency for there to be less consensus between accountancy experts than among accounting novices. For example, a group of accounting novices may be given a particular taxation question; it is, according to Alvesson, likely that they will come up with similar answers. In their early socialisation as accountants, there is likely to be a high degree of consensus: possessors of relatively low levels of cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1984) are, once they have reached a general level of competence, likely to converge in their solution. However, in examining possessors of high levels of cultural · capital in taxation (i.e. a senior partner in taxation) there is likely to be far less consensus as to what the solution to the problem should be: consensus is in an inverse relationship with expertise. How are we to make sense of this apparent canard? Alvesson (1998) explains that as problems become increasingly baroque, there is a proliferation of possible and plausible solutions. Therefore in situations of high uncertainty there is an inherent ambiguity, the corollary of this is that it leads to a downplaying of the relative importance of technical expertise. Instead, the art of persuasion, that is, the ability to convince a client, assumes a greater importance. Alvesson (1998) contends that the rhetoric and image-intensity required in the act of persuasion is central to the concept of knowledge, rather than technical expertise. The key issue therefore is to be perceived as an expert in the dynamic between clients and their advisers.

Alvesson's image-rhetoric intensive nature of knowledge highlights that the issue is not the formal rhetoric of explicit knowledge, but as in advertising it is the display of identities. While Alvesson has argued that these ideas are applicable to knowledge intensive firms, in the previous paragraph I used Alvesson's example from accounting, it is equally applicable to management consulting where the display of identities is of paramount importance. This for instance, helps to explain why management consultancy firms have a tendency to use their most senior and experienced people to liaise with clients rather than to solve particularly difficult technical problems. Similarly, the image and rhetoric intensity of large, blue chip management consultancies, as compared with smaller provincial boutiques, might explain why they are able to command higher fees and are preferred by some organizations. Alvesson's insights have important implications in the discussion of the future of new managerialism and of

management consultants. Importantly, it concentrates our attention on factors other than technical competence, it takes us into the domain of the presentation of self of the consultancy industry as a whole. This opens up interesting research issues such as how do management consultants and the ideas of new managerialism appear to be convincing in a given context? What is it that gives them an 'authority to speak' (Foucault, 1972)?

4.10   New Managerialist Cultural Capital and its acquisition

My argument is that the role of cultural intermediary relies on 'knowing more' than the recipient of such a service, which in this case is the manager(s) of an organization. This can be explained through the existence of differentials in cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984) highlights the role of cultural capital in social life, it can be understood to be the relative mastery of a specific discourse, to have a greater mastery of a particular discourse is to be 'richer' in cultural capital. Bourdieu's work examined the way in which cultural, economic and social capital combine in order to produce symbolic capital. My concern is necessarily more limited in that in terms of this thesis I will focus on cultural capital alone. I will now explore in more detail characteristics of cultural capital, this is perhaps best served by way of example: In academic life for example cultural capital is accumulated through publications in leading journals, the winning of prizes, the attainment of research grants (see Holt, 1998). It is through such means of course that an academic rises to the position of professor, which symbolizes richness in cultural capital. Cultural capital should not be regarded as either transhistorical nor as transcontextual: to be rich in cultural capital in the context of the British Museum is very different from that of a Starbucks coffee bar.

In terms of the discourse of new managerialism the questions become 'what is' and 'how does one acquire' cultural capital of the discourse. What does it mean to say that someone is relatively rich in new managerialist cultural capital while someone else is described as having relatively low levels of cultural capital? Before attempting to address this question, we firstly wish to add a caveat, by describing a manager as having low new managerialist cultural capital does not mean we are suggesting that they are in any way inadequate managers – far from it – instead we are contending that their mastery of the lexicon of new management thinking is limited. As such the discourse of new managerialism should not be regarded as having a definite effect on business performance, rather it should be viewed as a self-referential language game. It is therefore a code or a register (cf. Grieco, 1996) that can be mastered.

To be rich in new managerialist cultural capital is to be able to explain, to understand, to be able to place into context different new managerial approaches such as TQM, BPR and more recently KM. All of these approaches possess a broad rationale and specific prescriptions; they also possess a number of practical tools and techniques that claim to assist in the successful

implementation of a particular initiative. To be rich in new managerialist cultural capital is not necessarily to share the worldview or to place particular faith in the claims of the techniques. For instance, to be able to conduct an immanent critique of a new managerialist technique requires a reflexivity that comes through an understanding of the technique (see Wilson, 1992; Egan, 1995; McKiernan, 1993; Grey & Mitev, 1995; Grint, 1994): such a line of critique would not of course be open to an ingenue. While immanent critique of new managerialism is restricted to those possessing relatively rich levels of cultural capital, i.e. those able to engage at the levels of both empirical and theoretical analysis; it is of course not my suggestion that this behaviour is a necessary part of being rich in cultural capital. Rather I would suggest that it is far more likely for someone, who is rich in new managerialist cultural capital to constitute himself or herself through the discourse, accepting its claims and its ideological standpoint. Such a perspective is of resonant with a Foucauldian position, the idea of a person as subject constituting themselves through the normalizing gaze of a broader power/knowledge discourse (see Foucault, 1977; Townley, 1994). For Bourdieu (1984) the crucial point is that the new managerialist subject is one whom is in sympathy with the discourse of new managerialism, that is they are an apparatchik (Bourdieu, 1981:p18). In this vein, Mueller et al (2000) demonstrate the way in which non-executive directors in a hospital trust were the embodiments of a new right, new managerialist message.

What I am suggesting is that the extensive use made of management consultants is in part through their relative richness in new managerialist cultural capital, which has enabled them to introduce new managerialist initiatives to organizations. The proposition that we wish to investigate in the remainder of this paper is what happens to relative differentials over cultural capital over time. I wish to consider in particular how this might impact upon the consultancy-manager relationship? In particular, we shall seek to develop further the ideas promulgated by Sturdy (1997) and Fincham (1998). Prior to moving to the empirical study we must in the first instance turn our attention to the means through which individual levels of new managerialist cultural capital could be raised. The production of cultural capital clearly does not take place in a vacuum or a platonic cave; rather individuals access it through iterative exposure to different experiences and institutions, whereby they are able to appropriate elements of a discourse within a given habitus.

In my view there is a panoply of means through which cultural capital in new managerialism can be generated or transmitted. In the first instance, we see Business Schools, through MBAs and short courses, as producing cultural capital in individuals. Business Schools occupy within the realm of social sciences an unusual position in that they seek to legitimate themselves not only on academic grounds but also on the grounds of the performativity (see Lyotard, 1984) of their knowledge i.e. 'attending Business school will make you a better manager'. This may or

may not be the case: the definitive demonstration of the pedagogy for performativity argument has yet to be made. Yet what is certain is that Business Schools introduce MBA students and short course delegates to the discourse of New Managerialism: the language game (see Wittgenstein) which is contained through highly stylized devices such as the 2 x 2 matrix. Some writers (see Burrell, 1997) have referred to 'MBA speak', which in our view should be read not in a pejorative manner but rather as a manifestation of an elaborate communication code (see Bernstein, 1962). Business Schools therefore educate students in this very code, which students gain a greater or lesser fluency in.

As Clegg and Palmer (1996) have noted, the number of managers (or aspirants) that get to study at Business School is relatively low. Instead they suggest that managers are far more likely to buy and read (the two should not be conflated) popular guru texts such as Peters and Waterman. Clegg & Palmer go on to outline their notion of the genre of the karaoke text, which are the nostrums of successful executives and are characteristic for their Frank Sinatra style 'I did it my way' quality (see Iaocca; Harvey-Jones; Gates). Such texts are held in low esteem within Business Schools. They constitute 'straw men' for critical analysts, while failing to conform to the legitimation of empiricism demanded by the academy. Another popular genre is that of the more technicist 'tools and techniques' style which is more practice driven. The relative status of such texts is variegated and the 'karaoke books' are unlikely to endow the reader with a richness in cultural capital but they are nonetheless significant access points to the discourse of new managerialism.

The final mode of the transmission of cultural capital that we shall consider is that of workplace assimilation. Abbott (1988) highlights the way in which less qualified workers are able to assimilate the practices and language of those that are relatively more qualified; Abbot uses the example of the medical profession and their relation to nurses. Clearly there are powerful symbolic distinctions that are employed as dividing practices (see Foucault, 1977) to manage the art of separation (see Du Gay, 1995) between the two occupational groups. Knowledge intensive work, such as management consultancy, of course differs from this example in that there is not an exclusive legislative right to practice on the basis of certification (see Reed 1996; Alvesson, 1993). Given that the praxis of management consultancy is based in organizations, it is of course possible that managers exposed to the consultants will assimilate some of the 'language and practice' of the consultants by virtue of their legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For instance, drawing on earlier it has been demonstrated how large consultancies make much of their close working relationships with their clients:

> 'Andersen Consulting and Star basically formed a partnership on our SAP project ... I'd say that we operate as one team. You can't tell the difference between an Andersen person and a Star person on our team. Everybody works together' (A

client describing their relationship with Andersen Consulting, Carter 2000).

It is therefore my contention that through this triumvirate of means that it is possible for an individual to ameliorate their relative levels of new managerialist cultural capital. An interesting question therefore is to consider what an increase in senior management cultural capital might have upon an organization, with specific regard to its use of management consultants.

4.11   An Enduring Embrace?

The role of cultural intermediary is however not necessarily enduring over time: for instance, drawing on the section above, consider the following scenario that within a particular organization, a cadre of managers increase their cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1998) in managerial ideas through studying for an MBA. The relative increase in levels of cultural capital, i.e. the mastery of the new managerialist discourse, poses a challenge to management consultants. This challenge requires consultancies to be able to respond to criticism and to be able to legitimate themselves with clients and to remain the expert in the relationship; it is at this point that Sturdy argues that consultants often come up with new ideas. Sturdy continues by suggesting that the very popularity of consultants to managers is that they provide a sense of reassurance and a sense of security. However, at the same time the consultants for their presence and through their need for continued, repeat business need to build in a sense of uncertainty. There is at present a total absence in the literature of the coverage of relationships between organizations and management consultancies over time. This is a research gap, with a temporal account of the relationship between an organization and management consultancies being long overdue. The strength of the temporal approach is that it has the capacity to move away from a time-free (c.f. Clark, 1975; Hassard, 1990) understanding of organization-consultancy relationships; the benefit of such an approach being that it enables an analysis of the stability of the properties of the relationship over time.   .

These sections have attempted to unpack management consultants and relate them to the production of management ideas, and more generally in trying to understand the role that they play in the corporate world. The section certainly, at least in my view, lends support to the argument that the initiatives discussed in chapter three are the products of a powerful consulting actor-network that in its own right has become a major industry. Thus far I have discussed the 'supply side' of the management ideas industry. In short I have suggested that ideas are crafted by so-called gurus (see T. Clark, 1995); they are then adopted and packaged and commodified by management consultants. The resulting blackboxes travel far (see Hardy & Clegg, 1996): being diffused across sectors, nations and continents. Ackroyd & Lawrenson (1996) question the extent to which such initiatives constitute 'innovative knowledge', suggesting instead that

are better considered to be 'expensive Taylorist solutions'. Not withstanding my argument for an injection into temporality in terms of understanding the relations between management consultants and managers, using notions of cultural capital to further understand the management ideas industry it is necessary to get some sense of the *'momentum'* that is an immanent to it. This is the concern of the next section.

4.12 Dedicated Followers of Fashion?

As the work of Pascale (1990) demonstrates there has been an exponential take-off in management initiatives from the 1980s onwards, more recent analyses have highlighted that this has continued unabated (see Swan & Scarbrough, 1999). There has been a growing recognition that a fashion metaphor may usefully be employed to describe the short shelf life enjoyed by numerous managerial initiatives. Such a metaphor naturally requires us to reflect upon how are we to understand such a phenomenon? Quite clearly such initiatives have not emerged in a vacuum. Therefore in terms of trying to answer this question we suggest that it is necessary to situate the explosion of management ideas into the broader political-economic context. If one takes 1982, the date of publication of the best selling Peters & Waterman 'In Search of Excellence', as being significant in terms of marking the genesis of the management ideas industry (see Clark, 1999; Clark, 2000). It is clear that in terms of chronology that this is linked with the rise of the New Right that has been characterised by Reaganomics and Thatcherism within the Anglo-American context. Marquand (1991) rightly points out the dangers of conflating the doctrines and practice of the new right with other contemporaneous social movements. Mindful of such strictures instead we suggest that there is a resonance between the messages of both the New Right and New Managerialism: in this sense they are intertextual. The whole project of macro-economic restructuring I want to suggest opened up an epistemological space (c.f. Knights, 1992) which the management ideas industry was able to fill.

My argument is therefore that the sense of insecurity engendered by the whole economic restructuring discussion served to open up a space for the production of management ideas, which were able to purport to transform organizations. The appeal of such texts was that they offered the lure of certainty in what were increasingly seen as uncertain times. The work on consumerism by Nava is illustrative of this point:

> 'At [a] socially precarious time, new signs were required as emblems of status and individuality' Nava (1997:p65)

This in my view is applicable to the contemporary epoch, whereby new signs become irresistible throughout the corporate landscape. Thus I am arguing that organizations adopt

blackboxed ideas or 'signs' as means of attempting to cope with environmental uncertainty; thereby using such techniques as a map which they use to navigate the organization into the future (see Weick, 1969). Moving the level of analysis down to that of individuals, Huczinski (1993) argues that in part the adoption of ideas can be linked with the career aspirations of individual managers, something that is resonant with Grey's (1994) insights as the career being a bourgeois project of self. Moreover it is management consultancies, as important actors within the business of management ideas, that produce and commodify signs for managers' to consume. Moreover, as Egan (1995), Fincham (2000) and Grey & Mitev (1995) have noted managerial initiatives follow a two to three year shelf life before they are deleted from the product range and superseded by the next manifesto for corporate success.

Initiatives which were highly popular in the 1990s such as TQM and BPR should be understood as programmed change initiatives, that is they concentrated on the process of change. The seductive quality of such initiatives rested in their image and rhetoric intensity, put simply grand claims were made. In both cases, it was argued that to fail to adopt a particular initiative was to risk corporate failure, for instance, according to interlocutors of BPR, the alternative was 'for corporate America to go out of Business' (Hammer & Champy, 1993). For TQM, the initiative was represented as being the elixir for corporate malaise. It is of course fanciful to suggest that such messages were passively consumed, the important point being the way in which a new initiative establishes itself through self-aggrandisement, which involves a problematisation of the status quo. As was discussed in chapter three such initiatives can be said to open up a binarism between themselves and extant modes of organization. Within such a polarity the new initiative is held to be 'superior' and thus defining the status quo as 'inferior'.

One of the key properties of the academic-consulting complex (see Grey and Mitev 1995) is its ability to generate new packages which frame and offer solutions to apparent organizational problems. I am arguing therefore that large consultancies which are genera of the consulting population; examples of which would include McKinseys, Andersen Consulting, Ernst and Young, and AD Little, act as cultural intermediaries, whereby they circulate signs rich in symbolic capital which are appropriated by organizations in their processes of aestheticization. The phantasmagoric characteristic of the diffusion of such initiatives has led a number of theorists to speak of 'fads and fashions' (see Pascale, 1990; Abrahamson, 1991; Clark 1999; EGOS 1999; Huczinski 1993; Keiser, 1997), whereby an organizational appropriation of an initiative can be understood as an act of consumption. Recent examples would include programmed change initiatives (see Egan 1995; Wilson, 1992) such as TQM, BPR and KM In the last decade all of these initiatives have at some point been regarded as being at the zenith of organizational thinking. For a time at least they have each been rich in symbolic capital (see Bourdieu, 1984) and have thereby transmitted that capital to the users of the technique:

therefore to 'do' TQM in the early 1990s was to be at the vanguard as an organization and as a manager.

Numerous commentators have explored the 'fads and fashions' nature of contemporary management thought, for instance, Swan (1999) talks of there being 'classical pattern associated with management fads', whereby she takes the number of articles on a particular subject (i.e. the learning organization or knowledge management). The work of Abrahamson (1991;1996) has been important in developing the notion of fads and fashions, he argues that there is a supply-side of fashion whereby management consultants, business schools or large corporations market 'new ideas'. The supply side process is fourfold: first, a concept is created; second, the 'best practices' inherent in the new concept are selected; third, the idea is processed, something which serves to produce an intense and cogent legitimating argument as to why the idea must be applied. Abrahamson notes that the new way of working produces significantly superior results to the old and that it provides a panacea for the problems of an organization; four, the idea has to be disseminated though media such as conferences, workshops, the business press etc. Abrahamson further develops this sense of fashion by referring to the importance of timing in the launch of a particular initiative something that clearly has parallels with the processes found on the catwalks of Milan, New York and Paris (see also Kieser, 1997). The fads and fashion argument helps to explain why some initiatives such as BPR are so ambiguous. The more ambiguity involved the greater applicability of the concept. This apparent paradox is explicable in the sense that if an initiative presents a particular vision, then if the more abstract the better as this then provides opportunities for consultants to contextualise (see Czarniaska and Sevon, 1996) a vision into a specific organizational context.

Another example is the work into BPR by Jones & Thwaites (2000). Following a fairly standard bibliometric analysis of the citations for BPR, they discuss the lifecycle of a fashion from 'the perceived failure of a previous solution' through to the 'search for the next solution' (p57). They present new empirical data from a study of the Canadian public sector to further illustrate their point. From their data, they argue that BPR should be understood as a fad that will be followed by another initiative that will be either cumulative or reactive (p61). Their work is chapter is a useful application of Abrahamsonesque style thinking. However, given the title of 'Dedicated followers of fashion', the reader is told very little about the managers following fashion. What is served up is a basic cycle which resembles a temporally collapsed product life cycle (see Kotler, 1991; see Gill and Whittle, 1993). This is similar to the approach of Keiser (1997) for who studies managerial ideas which he regards as being fashionable in the period 1982-1985. He employs a similar methodology charting the number of publications in selected media. Accepting the limitations of a book chapter, an alternative, in my view, would

be to open up the question of why managers were so ready to 'consume' the simulacrum of BPR. This would possibly lead to a recasting of Descartes to: I consume therefore I am. Therefore, in the phantasmagoria of management ideas, it would be useful to know why particular signs are consumed in a given time, and the role that such signs play in both individual and organizational identity projects.

Abrahamson's contribution is to draw attention to the apparent characteristics of managerial ideas in recent times; this is a perspective that is beginning to be explored more extensively. However, to date the debate has been somewhat narrow in terms of its conceptualisation of the fashion process. I intend to open up this discussion through a focus of the work conducted on consumerism outside of organization studies, which I view as being important in terms of trying to theorise the apparent fads and fashions being talked about in relation to management ideas. I will now explore consumption in greater detail, this is in order the suggestion viewpoints in that we are interested in considering consultants from the perspective of consumption, seeing consultants in some way as 'commodifyers' (see Fincham, 1995). My interest in consumption is two fold, first, the existing commentaries on management consultants concentrate on other factors and tend to ignore consumerism. Second, we aim to explore how management consultants fit into the broader scaffold of emergent ideas on consumerism which are encapsulated in debates surrounding late modernity.

4.13   The Consumerist Turn: the Phantasmagoric nature of New Managerialism

> 'The sales pitch [of managerial packages] has grown more clamorous and hyperbolic in recent times, though; the packaging more sophisticated, the dismissal of past models more scathing and complete, the tone more edgy, the pace of the product life cycle more frantic' Ramsie (1996:p155)

Marcuse (1964) argued that consumerism was becoming increasingly pervasive in society. This, in his view, was leading to the creation of the 'One Dimensional Man', a theme he explores in the book of the same name. An earlier theorist of consumerism, Veblen (1970), coined the term 'Conspicuous Consumption', which described the way that the 'Nouveau Riche' consumed particular items in order to denote their social status. Anthropologists have subsequently referred to the 'Veblen effect' (McKendrick et al, 1982) to refer to consumption that is ostentatious and 'organized around the imitation of social superiors' (Appadurai, 1996:p66). In the main, however, there has been a notable silence on the nature of consumerism, with it as a 'discourse' being subjugated to the more dominant discourse of production. This has led McCracken (1990) to comment that,

> 'The history of consumption has no history, no community of scholars, no tradition of scholarship' (1990:28)

In recent years, the emergence of post-modern thought has elevated the discourse of consumerism to centre stage in social theory. Post-modernism is a highly controversial corpus of work, which is compounded by the lack of agreement among leading post-modern theorists, some of whom deny the term. This general state of confusion has been the source of a good deal of criticism from those uncomfortable with the denial of progress, reality and truth. A discussion of the post-modern project (a term which is perhaps illusory, suggesting greater unity, coherence and purpose than is in existence) is outside of the scope of this thesis; thus no attempt will be made to detail the debates taking place about post-modernity (from both within and without). I take as my starting point Featherstone's (1991:p1) assertion that postmodernity has a,

'capacity to speak to some of the cultural changes we are currently going through'

Featherstone expanding on this statement explains that this is particularly the case for:

'the way in which the culture of contemporary western societies seems to be undergoing a continuous series of major transformations which must be investigated in terms of intrasocietal, intersocietal and global processes. It should be apparent that this is one reason for the rise in the interest in post-modernity and a further reason why as cultural theorists and researchers we should be interested in it' (1991:p12)

In theorising consumerism Featherstone (1991:p16) argues that,

'We also need to pay attention to the ways in which some goods can move in and out of commodity status and the different length of life enjoyed by commodities as they move from production to consumption'

In terms of attempting to make sense of consumerism, work by a number of commentators' points to how goods can act as communicators (see Bourdieu 1998, Douglas and Isherwood 1980). Appadurai (1996) contends that consumption can be linked to a 'rite of passage'. This may be significant for organizations such a Regional Electricity Companies in their 'coming of age' as a corporation *so to speak*. Bourdieu (1998) examines the elective affinities of taste, lifestyle, occupation and class. He develops his analysis further by arguing that *'new cultural intermediaries'* act as purveyors of taste, which Featherstone (1991:p77) notes, that in this capacity, they *'have an important role in educating the public into new style and taste'*. The *'new cultural intermediary'* plays a role in the production, codification and diffusion of symbolic goods; such intermediaries would include people working in fashion, the media, marketing and design. In my argument above, I have suggested that management consultants should be regarded as 'new cultural intermediaries'. The recipients of the 'messages' on symbolic goods would be people who may be considered to be desirous of acquiring 'symbolic capital' to a greater or lesser degree. For example, Nava (1997:p66) demonstrates how

Edwardian women acquired 'cultural capital' from department stores, as the *principle source of information about the meaning of how others... and dressed was found in the stores'*. Nava makes the point that cultural intermediaries are linked to particular spaces, a number of theorists have remarked on the 'aestheticization of space' (Lash and Urry:1994:p288. See also Zukin 1992, Burrell 1997) which might include, inter alia, the construction of malls, and striking corporate buildings.

Equally, I am arguing that management consultants may be important sources of information for managers in terms of the appropriation and education in managerialist ideas. This is particularly the case when managers possess relatively low levels of cultural capital. There are of course other means of acquiring such information, for instance, through practitioner journals, through professional associations (see Swan & Newell, 1997). Appadurai (1996:p33) in his attempt to understand 'global cultural flows' talks in terms of there being five dimensions that require attention: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes. Media-scapes are of particular importance when it comes to understanding the flows of images and ideas. Appadurai (1996) claims that:

> 'Mediascapes refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information .... What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed ... the lines between the realistic and fictional landscapes they see are blurred.... The more likely they are to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic even fantastic objects. What they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives'
> (Appadurai, 1996:p35)

Appadurai (1996) has a direct relevance to understanding the take-off of blackboxed programme change initiatives, and an application of his analysis would be to turn our attention to the mediascape as applied to management, this might include publications such as the Economist, Harvard Business Review to more specific publications such as People Management or Accounting Age. The question becomes, does a mediascape for management ideas exist, and if so, what is it comprised of? We suggest that the mediascape would include generalist publications such as the Economist, Harvard Business Review etc. and more specific, practitioner journals such as Accountancy Age or People Management. Equally, drawing insights from Appadurai (1995) it highlights our attention towards the realisation that not only are management ideas now trans-sectoral, but also they may not be based on an 'original' organization. Thus whereas Child & Smith (1987) could demonstrate that Cadburys were attempting to copy Mars, the same can not be said for contemporary initiatives: for instance, packages such as TQM, BPR or KM can be considered to be simulacra: that is copies without an original (Carter & Crowther, 2000). Fincham (2000), by way of illustration, has argued that

the case studies used to legitimate BPR are methodologically valueless, but symbolically important in the sense that they are highly stylized, formulaic and make direct connections between means and ends. Thus his contribution is to situate BPR as a social phenomenon, the metaphor of magic being a useful means to highlight the social constructedness of initiatives such as BPR.

In late capitalism there is widely regarded to have been a collapse in the difference between high culture and mass culture; such a trend that was noted, with considerable antipathy, by the Frankfurt School. The dissolution of the difference between high and mass culture is evident in the art world, where 1960s Pop-Art not only challenged the notions of what constituted art, but also led to the spillover of art into everyday life, through its use, inter alia, in television advertisements[i]. Nava (1997:p57) has argued that *'there is a new stress on display and the visual'*, with the process being heralded, more generally, as the *'aestheticization of life'*. Closely linked to the emphasis on 'aesthetics' is Featherstone's observation that,

> 'Consumer Culture through advertising, the media, and techniques of display of goods, is able to destabilize the original notion of the use or meaning of goods and attach to them new images and signs which can summon up a whole range of associated feelings and desires... [This] points to the significance of the active cultivation of lifestyle within the imagery of consumer culture. That is, individuals are encouraged to adopt a non-utilitarian attitude towards commodities and carefully choose, arrange, adapt and display goods - whether furnishings, house, car, clothing, the body or leisure pursuits - to make a particular stylistic statement which expresses the individuality of the owner' (1991:p114)

Baudrillard's (1988) analysis of society supports many of these propositions, although he would regard theorists such as Bourdieu (1998) as outdated. A characteristic of Baudrillard's position is that he regards the 'sign value' of commodities to be of prime importance. In his early work, he drew attention to thinking semiotically about the world as a 'system of objects', that is:

> 'Consumption is not a material practice, nor is it a phenomenology of 'affluence'. It is not defined by the nourishment we take in, nor by the clothes we clothe ourselves with, nor by the car we use, nor by the oral and visual matter of the images and messages we receive. It is defined, rather, by the organization of all these things into a signifying fabric: consumption is the virtual totality of all objects and messages, ready-constituted as a more or less coherent discourse. If it has any meaning at all, consumption means an activity consisting of the active manipulation of signs' Baudrillard (1996:p200 – orig. 1968).

This is predicated on his assertion that we are in a society in which the mode of production has given way to the mode of consumerism, to mark this assertion, Baudrillard (1981) outlined a theory of the political economy of the sign. This epochal shift, is for many, the basis for

claiming that we have moved into a new Post-Modern era; Lash and Urry (1994), for instance note that,

> 'The aesthetic component in manufactured products (and services) has in particular come to the fore in recent times' (1994:p123)

In their investigation of post-modernity, Lash and Urry (1994) provide an analysis of the culture industries (i.e. art, film and music); this leads them to argue that the culture industries can be viewed as *'post-fordist avant la lettre'*, and that, as such, they represent an blueprint for other industries on the basis of their symbolic characteristics,

> 'We mean that production has become not just more knowledge infused, but more generally cultural; that it has become, not just a question of a new primacy of information-processing, but of more generic symbol processing capacities' (1994:p123).

Lash and Urry (1994) expand on this argument commenting that *'cultural artefacts'* have a new significance, in that they,

> 'Have become immanent as objects amongst others circulating in information and communication structures; and that these become the reality of everyday life... Madonna as a star is not just an image, a representation. She is a cultural object in the anthropological sense of culture. As a cultural artefact, young people wear her on their T-shirts; they dress like her. Such artefacts structure the way young people classify things and tell them who they are... we are suggesting instead that it is only with the declining significance of (society as) social structures and their partial displacement by information and communication structures that the aestheticization of everyday life is possible'. (1994:p132).

In understanding Baudrillard's (1988) position the basis of the argument is that when purchasing, for example, a pair of trainers or a carbonated drink, we are not buying them for 'use value' but rather we are buying them because of the signs and symbols attached to them. This is a point supported by Featherstone (1991) who argues that *'goods [act] as communicators not just utilities'*. For instance, the purchase of Nike trainers is made not because of their use value[ii] but because of their sign value, their symbolic capital, which in this case is the image of top sport superstars starring in visually arresting adverts. Featherstone (1991:p13) argues that such issues give rise to,

> 'There is the question of the emotional pleasures of consumption, the dreams and desires which become celebrated in consumer culture imagery and particular sites of consumption which variously generate direct bodily excitement and aesthetic pleasures'

The signs associated with consumption can be explained in terms of cultural capital as acting *'as a positional good, a store of economic, social and cultural value'* (Lash and Urry

1994:p289). Moreover, Lash and Urry (1994) note that the objects possessing cultural capital can be subject to juridification, by being turned into intellectual property. This is especially noteworthy when we are dealing with managers as consumers rather than with individual consumers. This is an important insight into the nature of consumption, moreover, it has profound implications, for instance, while certain images are attached to a product, this in itself, leads to the suppressing of other 'images'. Thus an item of clothing may conjure up spectacularly fashionable images which then, according to Baudrillard (1988), become hyperreal i.e. *'More real than the real''*. This can serve to suppress, or to write out of the text, factors germane to the production of the said item i.e. it may have been produced in horrendous conditions in the less developed world (see Burrell 1997; Little, Grieco & Holmes, 2000; New Internationalist).

I am arguing that within organization studies that consumerism is increasingly needs to become a site for academic research, which in my view would constitute a long overdue recognition of the importance of the relations of consumption in contemporary society. The aestheticization of organizations, is I believe, evident throughout the corporate landscape, with it becoming an increasingly important dimension of organizational life. However, at this point, writing in what Bauman (1987) might describe as the *'mid-career'* point of this process. It is important to sound that the caveat that this process may only represent a temporary aberration, and not as I believe constitute an irrevocable change in the corporate landscape which places a primacy on the 'sign' value of organizations. The sign values of the symbols that are purveyed by consultants offer organizations, or senior managers within organizations, a form of social identity. However, at this point, it is important to make clear that we do not regard managers as being cultural dopes or docile bodies merely consuming such images, instead we take the view that managers become skilled at reading and using the images. Moreover, I align myself with the view promulgated by Foucault (1984), whereby he argued that power relationships can have positive effects as well as being repressive (see chapter two for a discussion). Foucault's point is that people or institutions construct truth and reality through the prevailing relations of power; the implication being that the exercise of power can be positive. Thus an organization adept at constituting itself through the cultural signs propagated by management consultants could be deemed to be successful. This is a point that Featherstone (1991:p117) makes when he posits that cultural capital can act effectively as a means of accumulating status, prestige and power.

As Stallybrass and White (1986:p189) note there is a binaryism of symbolic functioning which elevates the status of a particular cultural sign which acts as a device to 'other' those not possessing the sign. The corollary being that a violent hierarchy is created between the superiority of those possessing a particular sign to the inferiority of those without it. This

dividing practice serves to lessen a cadre of executives' likelihood of not consuming the sign; to forgo the sign is to label oneself an anachronism. Alvarez (2000) notes that managerial initiatives are temporally punctuated between being adopted as 'haute couture' fashion, that is the preserve of an elite of organizations, to being 'pret a porter' fashion, which is more akin to high street fashion, that is consumed more widely. This presumes that organizations are in position whereby they are required to demonstrate that they are at the vanguard of management thinking. This is a point supported by Featherstone (1991) who argues that *'goods [act] as communicators not just utilities'*. The signs associated with consumption can be explained in terms of cultural capital as acting *'as a positional good, a store of economic, social and cultural value'* (Lash and Urry 1994:p289). Moreover, Lash and Urry (1994) note that the objects possessing cultural capital can be subject to juridification, through the process of being turned into intellectual property. This is especially important to note when we are dealing with managers as consumers rather than with individual consumers. Our argument falls broadly within what has been termed the 'Veblen effect' (McKendrick, et al, 1982) i.e. that consumption is conspicuous and imitative. For instance, BPR was consumed by many organizations in order to demonstrate that they were 'up to date'; in contrast, Frances & Garnsey (2000) in their study of the food sector in the UK draw from work that resembles BPR in all but name. This is interesting, as it might indicate the confidence of large supermarkets that they can appropriate ideas from the contemporary canon of managerial ideas, without feeling the need to have to legitimate themselves externally through consuming and proclaiming the sign of BPR.

It is not my suggestion however that to become regarded as a state of the art organization is simply a case of assembling quickly the correct 'system of objects', the deportment of a successful organization is clearly a far more complex set of relationships. As Kopytoff (1986) notes entities have a cultural biography and as such there is more to an organization than the here and now. As such organizations that rush to consume signs run the risk of appearing as *counterfeit* (Goffman, 1961) or as MacKracken (1988) argues that may exist the problem of 'patina', that is misreading a sign or confusing 'wear with tear': the example that he gives is the considerable maintenance that antiques require in country houses. While Appadurai (1996:p76) suggests that this the problem faced by the nouveau riche, namely 'regulating the pace' at which an 'ensemble of objects' is assembled. Equally, such concerns are of equal relevance to organizations. In short, this section has suggested that the production and consumption of managerial initiatives are an important, and as yet under-researched, area of concern for Organization Studies. I have suggested that the political economy of signs is a feature of organization in the late capitalist period. This section has suggested that in terms of trying to understand why new managerialist initiatives have proved to be so popular in recent years with them pervading numerous walks of life far beyond the business world (for example health and

increasingly education). It is important to look to consumerism as a means of explaining the adoption of such ideas.

4.14   The Transplanting of Organizational Concepts: Convergence vs Specificity

In my analysis of new managerialism thus far I have described why I think new managerialism is actually 'new'. I have outlined the content of the new initiatives and have gone on to explore the consulting industry. My argument is that this is ineluctably linked to new managerialism: thus that new initiatives are not autochtonous, but rather that they are the products of a consulting industry attempting to generate sales. It is now important to consider whether such initiatives offer universal ways of organizing in what is increasingly being touted as a globalized economy (Clegg & Clarke, 1998). As templates for organizing, or as blueprints for success, they are deictically universal, however, as has been discussed in the sections above such initiatives are often acontextual or at the very least decontextualised. Therefore, the question becomes what happens when an initiative is brought into a particular organization and translated into action?

There are two broad arguments at play in terms of answering this question, they both attempt to deal with that which, Lash and Urry (1994) have referred to as the complex dialectical relationship between global and local forces. The first thesis, which I shall term as the convergence thesis, suggests that, largely as a result of globalisation, organizations are becoming more alike. The rise of global capital and of the discourse of unfettered markets, there has been a skewing of agendas in favour of capital and its interlocutors. The convergence is embodied in the work of writers such as Ohmae (1992), for whom markets and organizations are now borderless, and Ritzer (1993) for whom the world is becoming increasingly MacDonaldised. The crux of both arguments are the same, organizations are becoming decontextualised out of their previous national archetype in order to resemble a global template. The difference in their positions is that Ohmae regards this template as resembling the Japanese organization while for Ritzer it is MacDonalds that is increasingly coming to pervade the world. Other theorists concur with Ritzer, for instance, as has been outlined above, Fukuyama (1992) declared the end of history, while Jacques (1996) argues that twentieth century management thought is about the colonisation of firstly America by ideas from its north-eastern seaboard, this being followed by the world. Because of the role of legislation and professional associations, coercive and normative pressures are primarily intra-societal (Maurice et al., 1980), whilst mimetic pressures have become more oblivious to national borders (Mueller, 1994). Whilst Max Weber had derived his concept of the 'iron cage' from the pressures market rationality would enforce on its participants, DiMaggio & Powell writing some eighty years later, found that both the state and professional associations had in fact, contrary to Weber's

expectations, become the primary forces in erecting the 'iron cage'[1]. However, the substantive changes afoot in the global economy over the last two decades, since DiMaggio & Powell, do much to vindicate Weber's original thesis.

There are points to note with the convergence thesis: the first is a suggestion that theories of management are free of cultural imprints; the second is that management theories are culturally bound, but, that culturally societies are becoming more and more similar. The second thesis is resonant with Ritzer, whereby he views a Weberian iron cage extending from corporate America to encompass the whole world: American values become world values.

The convergence thesis would seem to be irrefutable in this age of globalisation, how could one question the logic of convergence in the wake of global markets and transnational corporations? It is, of course, widely documented (Hickson et al, 1986) that an organization entering a new national context should be sensitive to the social and religious mores of that context, but that organizations are increasingly becoming alike. However, a number of writers have rejected the notion that organizations are actually becoming more alike (for instance see Cray and Mallory (1998), Clark (2000), Sorge (1991), Lane (1989), Maurice (1980), Mueller (1992) Porter (1990), Whitley (1991). The broad thrust of their argument can be characterised as the societal effect or the elective affinities approach. The idea is that within a given context social, institutional and cultural factors 'hang together' in order to create unique features which lend themselves to a particular form of organizing. For instance Lane (1989) in her comparison of UK, [West] German and French work organization argues that in order to explain the differences between the countries in terms of work organization one must look to the institutional, cultural and social differences between the countries. Thus the apparent capability that Germany possesses in producing high quality manufactured goods is explained with reference to the industrial harmony that has been evidenced since the 'social partnership' between labour and capital since the end of world war two, the high level of vocational education and training received by factory workers; the education and attainment of the 'meister' qualification for foremen; and the long termist relations between banks and factories.

These are just some of the factors that Lane (1989) identifies as producing a reinforcing constellation of factors that helps to explain why Germany has been able to compete effectively in markets for high quality engineering products. Lane suggests that these factors do not exist in the UK. In fact in contrast, the industrial relations in the UK have, at least until recently, been broadly characterised as adversarial. The funding of companies takes place largely through the City of London, which is notoriously short-termist and capricious. Engineering is not viewed as

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[1] I am indebted to my discussion on Weber, and his contemporary relevance, to Professor Frank Mueller.

being a prestigious career in the same way as it is in Germany. Top graduates have a predilection for careers in the City and the Professions. The education levels of factory workers is generally poor; foremen have little formal preparation for the role and Lane claims that they are often promoted because of a 'bad back' which disables them from the physical labour process. Therefore, Lane constructs elective affinities, the corollary of these elective affinities are that it problematizes the notion that in an eclectic fashion an organization can draw a particular practice from another country; the reason being that a practice is deeply embedded in a particular national/regional context. From the position of elective affinities, it would be absurd to suggest that Britain, for example, could emulate the German system of vocational education and training (Lumley, 1992; Lumley, 1995). Similarly, Mueller (1992) suggests that there would be difficulties in transferring work organization practices that appear to be successful in the German context into the UK; this is also argued by Sorge (1991) and O'Reilly (1994). Similarly, Abo (1994:p286) argues that to lift and distend lean production from the Japanese institutional, social and cultural environment is mistaken.

Both Porter (1990) and Clark (1996) argue in a similar vein, they suggest that the homebase of particular industry is vital, the rationale being that the homebase possesses a particular and unique cluster that is not replicable elsewhere. For Porter (1990) the homebase consists of a diamond of interconnecting factors: home demand, factor conditions, related & supported industries and interfirm strategy and rivalry; for Clark the homebase is an amalgam of socially embedded explacit knowledge. Therefore, they would both argue that Ford was able to succeed by establishing his factory in Detroit, but would have almost certainly failed had he set up his factory in the industrial west midlands (see chapter one). A more contemporary example would suggest that silicon valley is a story peculiar to west Coast United states, and, would for example be difficult to replicate in, for instance, South Wales.

The elective affinities approach poses serious dilemmas for policy makers and strategic decision makers, it challenges the assumptions of the convergence school, as Smith and Meiskins (1995) note:

> 'American writers interpreting Japanese patterns of organisation identified
> standards, practices and methods which were transferable to the west as neutral
> organisational innovation' Smith and Meiskins (1995:p245)

The implication of the Elective Affinities school seems to be: do not attempt to import ideas from outside of your context, as you are likely to fail in successfully embedding the operation. The question then becomes why bother? Clearly across a whole gamut of sectors, organizations do attempt to implement ideas/practices from other contexts: is this an act of corporate/governmental futility? Certainly, the Elective Affinities discussion has not, to any

degree, extended beyond Business School academia. If we accept for a moment the determinism inherent in the Elective Affinities model, this then opens up the question of if particular modes of organizing are not applicable across contexts then how can we understand the continued attempts to do so in the age of New Managerialism? At one level, this might help to explain why there has been such an awesome proliferation of initiatives; quite simply the failure of one transfer requires the emergence of a new initiative. At another level it might be that such initiatives are emergent (see Whittington, 1993) in any given context, thus Japanisation in Britain becomes a hybrid that may bear little resemblance to Japanisation in Japan, it will be adapted, shaped and translated (Latour, 1994) by the adopting organization. Smith and Meiskins (1995) extend this notion of hybrid by asking the question:

> 'If British management reflects British social and economic institutions, how does the nationality of the firm influence this equation? Are British managers in Japanese or American Transnational companies (TNCs) in Britain different in style, authority and attitude because of firm ownership? Is the management style Japanese or British?' Smith and Meiskins (1995:p243)

The Elective Affinities discussion has stimulated a great deal of discussion within the confines of academia, and it challenges the notion that one set of operating practices can simply be uprooted and replicated elsewhere. Further, it would suggest that representations of successful transplants should be scrutinised in order to ascertain how deep the practices actually go. There is the likelihood, according to elective affinities, that attempts to replicate practices from overseas with result in a relatively superficial resemblance.

The elective affinities arguments have been disputed, Rose (1985) argues that they are contradictory in the sense that they acknowledge global and universal forces such as globalisation but retain a sense of local difference. However, in my view Rose's critique fails to implode the case for elective affinities in that elective affinities recognizes the complex engagement between the global and the local (see Castells on glocality) as outlined by Lash and Urry (1994). The relevance of the elective affinities approach is that is acts as a corrective to the notion that ideas can easily transported across contexts, which of course is the approach that underscores the work of the major consultancies. In many senses, the Elective Affinities approach returns us to the caveats that I outlined in chapter one, in terms of realising organizational change.

4.15   Conclusion

This chapter has sought to build on the discussion in chapter three. More particularly, it has tried to situate new managerialism as a phenomenon that cannot be understood in a vacuum or in a platonic cave. Instead, I have argued that New Managerialism is a cultural product, that in

many respects is peculiar to the 'here and now'. While undoubtedly it is intertextual or perhaps, following Jameson, a pastiche of previous ideas, there are fundamental problems with understanding New Managerialism as a whiggish teleology. Rather, I have suggested that there is a rupture between old and new managerialism, based not so much on the tenor of the ideas though there are differences, but primarily through the emergence of a powerful 'supply side', actor-network that produces and commodifies management ideas into 'blackboxed' programmed change initiatives. Therefore, ideas produced in the imagination of the so-called gurus, get packaged, replete with tools and techniques, by management consultants and purveyed in the corporate landscape. This process produces blackboxed techniques that perhaps owe less to the observation of apparently successful practice and more to image intensive, hyperreal representations of what constitutes good practice.

The role of the large management consultants in the growth and circulation of management ideas is pivotal. In the coverage of consultants, I took issue with the notion of pre-determined relations between consultants and managers, something that I felt to be problematic and seriously downplaying of the agentic features of managerial behaviour. Instead, I introduced insights from Bourdieu in relation to cultural capital. In essence, the position I argued for was to disaggregate consultants from the discourse of new managerialism, thus imploding a dyadic relationship, and instead to understand management consultants as a cultural intermediary i.e. linking, but also embodying, a message to managers. Immanent to this discussion was that this role was sustainable while there were differentials in the amounts of cultural capital relating directly to new managerialism. I argued that if managers were to ameliorate their levels of cultural capital then this might serve to efface their dependence on management consultants.

The chapter then went on to discuss the current issue of 'fads and fashions' in the workplace, an epthemerality that is an ineluctable part of an industry that works on a management consultancy industry that works on three year cycles. I attempted to contribute to the extant theoretical understandings in this nascent field through moving beyond the simple truisms of bibliometric analyses that are regularly served up as a demonstration of fashion. Instead, I argued that there is a 'political economy of signs' at play, which invites organizations to assemble a certain system of objects. The chapter closed by shifting to concerns of implementation, through asking of New Managerialism, how applicable it is across a range of sectors and nations. The optimism of much of the universalistic school was tempered by the grounded contextualism of the elective affinities school.

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[i] The spillover between art and everyday life is particularly evident in the work of the contemporary 'artist' Ken Done. Done spent much of his career as a graphic designer, painting in his spare time. After growing critical acclaim of his work, he devoted himself full-time to art, and has been notable for his works hanging in galleries whilst at the same time adorning swimsuits, tablecloths and all manner of other consumer goods. In his home town of Sydney, there are

numerous "Ken Done" shops where it is possible to purchase the aforementioned items. The genesis of this movement rests in the 1960s, and the collapse in the distinction is summarised by Andy Warhol, who argued,

> *'Real art is defined simply by the taste (and wealth) of the ruling class of the period. This implies not only that commercial art is just as good as 'real' art - its value simply being defined by other social groups, other patterns of expenditure'*
> *(cited in Frith and Horne, Art into Pop, 1987:p109)*

[ii] This is not to deny that items do not have a use-value, rather it is to suggest that for a particular brand the use value is secondary to the spectacle of image. For instance, one has to ask why Gucci ? Why buy a Paul Smith suit rather than one from Debenhams ?

Chapter 5:   Professions in Travail: Modes of Organizing

5:1   Introduction: The New Managerialist Challenge

The previous chapters in their engagement with twentieth century managerialist thought have chronicled the rise of the discourse of new managerialism. In view of the insights provided by Foucault (1978) on regimes of truth, and of Derrida (1977) on the subject of the existence of violent hierarchies between discourses, there arises the question of the implications of the discourse of new managerialism for other modes of organizing. Germane to this thesis is the whole issue of the challenges that the discourse of new managerialism poses to the discourse of professionalism. This is an argument that has been picked up by a number of theorists (see Ferlie 1996; Reed 1996, 1999; Ackroyd, 1996; Tinker, 1999). More specifically this chapter deals with the implications that the discourse of new managerialism may have for the discourse of professional engineering. This chapter will commence with a discussion of the professional project as a mode of organizing; this will then be followed by analysis of engineering in Britain. Finally, an account will be given of the current twilight of the professions debate. The chapter is a necessary counter-position to chapters three and four, for it chonicles a form of work organization that has proved to be enduring but which also in its ideology and praxis is markedly different from new managerialism. Moreover, it is a form of organization that was important to the case study organization, CoastElectric.

5:2   The Professional Project: Black Boxes and the Structuring of Expertise

In their seminal study of the stages of capitalism, Lash and Urry (1987) highlight the role of the service class in the development of organized capitalism; important groups within the service class are professionals. Indeed, Abbot (1988:p323) states that,

'Professionalism has been the main way of institutionalizing expertise in industrialized countries'

This is supported by Giddens, for whom professionals:

'provide the systems of technical accomplishment and professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today'. (Giddens. 1991:p27).

Jacques (1996:pp90-91) argues that while the 'learned professions' of law, medicine and the clergy can be traced back to feudal times, the professions are ineluctably linked with modernity. This view is in contrast with Haber (1991), for whom professions are idiosyncratic, who poses the question: can professions continue to smuggle the pre-modern into a modern (if not post-modern) world? Jacques (1996) argues that in the nineteenth century secular notions of specialised knowledge

replaced earlier notions of a calling or a vocation 'professionalism had been industrialised' (Jacques, 1996 p90). Burrage (1992) argues that professions have some continuity with the past, while Ackroyd (1996) cautions against viewing professions as a linear development, arguing that this century has seen the development of *'new-model professions'* that have been forged concomitantly with the emergence of large scale bureaucracies This new model is contrasted with the 'old', that which was characterised by private practice, fee based work. However, Ackroyd (1996) notes that professions are important institutions within the UK world of work

In terms of explaining the emergence of professionalism in the industrialised age, a functionalist account would suggest that a profession came into existence because of a need for it (for instance, see Lindsay, 1925). The broad argument is that professions are containers of specific expertise or knowledge that are of great societal importance (e g Barber, 1963) The corollary of such a viewpoint is that the social and economic rewards monopolised by the professions are explained, and treated as legitimate, through reference to their functional usefulness Rueschemeyer neatly summarises the functionalist perspective as 'positing that professions are service- or community-oriented occupations applying a systematic body of knowledge to problems which are highly relevant to the central values of society' (in Johnson, 1972 34) For example, Nettleton (1994) demonstrates how dentistry could be explained through a functionalist frame by drawing attention to the problematic posed by the huge increase in the need for dentistry following increases in sugar intake. Alternatively a causal account suggests that a profession can be explained by developments in its past, therefore a profession is the result of a steady teleology that sees gradual increases in knowledge· therefore the medical profession has developed gradually since the nineteenth century. However, both of these views are relatively uncritical and free of an understanding of power relations that in view of the discussion in chapter two must be seen as inherently problematic For instance, Tinker (pers. Comm 2000) has referred to the 'stench of functionalism', in that it is nothing more than a technocratic legitimation of the existing relations of power

The question of 'what actually constitutes a profession' is an important one, at least in so far as it necessitates a consideration of the socially constructed nature of In terms of answering this question, Abbot argues for a loose definition of. 'professions are somewhat exclusive groups of individuals applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases' (1988 p318) The 'professional project' as Larson (1977) has noted, has long been associated with delineating and thus protecting an occupation group from an external market through making claim to the special nature of the group's knowledge (see Perkin, 1995). Similarly, Ackroyd (1996 p602) notes that with professions 'particular skills are packaged as the properties of particular occupants'. As such a profession can be viewed as having a mastery over a particular domain. This is largely due to its prior monopolization of the domain i e an actuary is a legislator (Bauman, 1987) in the field of risk and actuarial science. As such professions are generally regarded as being largely self-regulatory

and autonomous[i] (see S. Weber, 1987). Such insights return us to the issue of power, something that writers on professions since the 1970s have taken as one of their master concepts. Writers such as Friedson (1970) and Johnson (1972) were notable for explicitly articulating such a perspective that brought issues of power to the centre stage in terms of conceptualising professions. In short, their critique suggested that for too long the functional usefulness of professions had been taken as axiomatic, rather than viewing professions as a site for domination (see Witz, 1992: 40). Johnson, for instance, contends that 'the institutionalised form of the *control* of occupations' (Johnson, 1972: 38, emphasis added) is the overarching raison d'etre of professionalisation. Larson (1978) later builds upon Johnson's neo-Marxist critique, accounting for the power of the professions as derived from a monopoly, 'the attempt to relate one order of scarce resources - special knowledge and skills - into another - social and economic rewards' (Larson, 1977: xvii). Such a conversion analysis shares parallels with Boudieu's (1984) insights into the conversion mechanisms between different forms of capital i.e. that cultural and social capital can be converted into economic capital (see chapter four, above).

Alvesson (1993) states that a strict definition of a profession exhibits characteristics as shown in table 5:1 below:

Aston University

Illustration removed for copyright restrictions

Alvesson (1993) suggests, somewhat mischievously, that based on these criteria only, 'physicians and perhaps dentists, vets and psychologists would qualify as true professions'. In effect, Alvesson is holding a mirror up to another dominant trend that of the *trait* approach to theorzing the professions. While some professions may indeed share some characteristics, the problem with compiling an exhaustive list of features which constitute the core elements of a profession (e.g. Merton *et al*, 1957) is that it presents a broadly athereotical, ahistorical understanding of professions. In this sense, Alvesson goes on to suggest that perhaps it is time to bypass the whole notion of the profession, concentrating instead on knowledge work. This is a perspective worth

exploring, and it has parallels with some of the arguments in chapters three and four on knowledge. Alvesson (1993) contends that it is 'not reasonable' to differ between 'professions' such as law and accounting on the one hand and management consultancy on the other. As such he argues that the dividing line between profession and non-profession is socially constructed and should be regarded as being totally arbitrary. In this sense, perhaps the distinction is peculiar to the Anglo-American context, something that Kocka (1990) suggests: his argument being that in other contexts the concept is of an 'educated community' which embraces both educated professionals and members of the business community respectively. This has parallels of Clark's (2000) recent observation of the existence of an 'international service class', drawing on organizational position as well as professional qualifications. This is something also noted by Tinker (1999) who has highlighted the way in which accountants (CPAs) in North America are increasingly being re-labelled by the Big 5 as 'Certified Professional Advisers'. This is a significant symbolic departure from their professional title of Certifed Public Accountant. Much of the work around so-called knowledge workers, or to use Reich's (1992) term, symbolic analysts, is redolent of the notion that a new group of experts, outside of the ambit of the established professions, has emerged.

While the trait approach, as with the functionalist approach, is undoubtedly somewhat suspect, it is nonetheless important to have a sense of categorisation: without which the term 'professional' would be rendered meaningless. As it has been argued above (see chapter one) the chronology of a profession, and its founding conditions, may have an important bearing upon the characteristics of a profession. Put simply, there is a useful distinction to be made between professions hailing from different eras and having different histories. Reed (1996) suggests that it is useful to regard professions as falling into three broad categories: liberal, such as medicine and law; organizational, such as professional managers, social workers, teachers; and market, such as management consultants. Reed (1996) points the rise of the market professional at the expense of other groupings. David Cooper and his colleagues at the Alberta School, in their work on organizational archetypes, have made similar interventions, arguing that market based changes have resulted in the formation of the P2 form; that is a managed professional bureaucracy, that is a melange of professionalism and managerial bureaucracy.

The protection of expertise and the structuring of it into a profession can be compared with the construction of a blackbox (Trepos, 1996). This blackbox acts as a block between the profession and external forces such as the market. Or as Larson (1977) highlighted, professional work is sufficiently 'intangible' thus obviating the possibility of it being traded as a commodity on an open market. The creation of the blackbox inheres a sense of mystique about a profession, and as I discussed in chapter two, this can be maintained in many different ways, such as through the use of arcane language or jargon. The blackbox therefore acts to obscure what it is that the professionals practicing a particular profession actually do. The blackbox allows the profession to make a

particular set of ideas portable, something that allows them to generate business across a range of sectoral contexts. The blackbox metaphor is useful in that it highlights the sense of mystique that can be imputed to professional work: only capable of being understood by the priesthood, so to speak, of a particular practice. The blackbox is illustrative of the total lack of transparency of what it is that professions actually do. In this regard, and drawing from Latour (1987), most people know very little about the functioning of an internal combustion engine, but they *know* (sic.) that their car will get them from a to b. Friedson (1985) has also noted this characteristic of professional work, something he has termed as 'labor markets shelters built around (professional) credentials' (p109).

Moreover, professions in order to legitimate themselves make claims to serving some goal outside of the profession; this may be couched in somewhat lofty terms deploying legitimating rhetoric of science, technology and neutrality. This is a point that Brante (1988) makes:

> 'Image of a largely autonomous, self-regulating and self-perpetuating institution, the altruistic members of which are filled with a desire to work for the common good in the most effective way' (Brante 1998:p122).

For instance, lawyers may lay claim to serving justice; medical doctors may lay claim to serving health or truth (see Osborne, 1993). The accountancy profession legitimates itself in relation to providing accurate information on companies in order for shareholders to be able to informed and rational decisions. If, however, the assertions of theorists such as Johnson & Kaplan (1987) and Tinker (1985) are correct, the accountancy profession no longer serves the needs of its 'masters'[ii]. However, it is the espoused purpose which provides the central point around which the profession functions, it provides the profession with its raison d'être. As the critical accountants argue, such altruistic claims must be viewed with a heavy dose of scepticism. Equally, as Alvesson (1993) contends, the ethical code of a profession is a symbolic vehicle that supports the political interests of the profession.

Numerous commentaries have charted the strategies pursued by professional groups in their efforts to gain the right to legislate over a particular domain (see Abbott, 1988; Larson, 1977; Witz, 1992). It is interesting therefore to consider the case of professions that have been relatively successful in terms of embedding themselves as important players within particular contexts. For instance, both the British and North American legal and medical professions would count as good examples (for example, see Foot (1973) on Bevan's protracted negotiations with the British Medical Association for an illustration of the relative power of a profession). As I have suggested a profession needs to establish its legitimacy, therefore within a given discourse a profession needs to possess an 'authority of delimitation'. This amounts to a right to speak or to be taken seriously (see chapter two). An obvious example of this would be that of an 'expert' witness being called in a criminal law trial to deliver nostrums to the courtroom. What does an expert look like? This is, of course, an

overly simplistic example, yet it is illustrative of the tendency for some actors to be relatively more powerful within a discourse. Consequently as a result of their position they are able to define and categorise situations. This is the aim of a profession, to be in the position that Bourdieu illustrates:

> 'Doctors and diet experts armed with the authority of science, who impose their definition of *normality* with height-weight tables, balanced diets or models of sexual adequacy'. (Bourdieu, 1986:p143)

Pringle (1996) has demonstrated the strategies of power deployed by lawyers, whereby linguistically, spatially and procedurally clients are dominated within the courtroom. In trying to understand the process through which a profession establishes itself in this position, Fournier (1996) argues that one of the strategies open to the profession is to draw a distinction between itself and the dilettante amateur. This is done in part through education and training, particularly, that which leads to some form of certification or accreditation, in order to establish a superiority of the professional over the amateur. Clearly the more 'exclusive' the training the greater this claim can be validated, Jacques (1996) highlights the role that 'professional schools' in American universities play in 'legitimating the scientific objectivity of the knowledge ... and through controlling access to the profession through the awarding of degrees' (1996:p90). Alvesson's (1998) discussion of image and rhetoric intensity in the context of complex or knowledge intensive work, which was detailed in chapter three above, is also highly relevant to the practice of the professional (also see Grey, 1997) in terms of the presentation of self (Goffman, 1961) as an expert.

Another tactic deployed by professionals is to try and gain legal recognition of their sole right of jurisdiction over a particular area. This form of legitimation, according to Abbot (1988), has proved to be remarkably durable in terms of embedding the saliency of a profession, this has been the case for both lawyers and medical doctors within the UK and the USA. These processes are ways in which professions attempt to lay claim to the right to legislate over a particular jurisdiction, thus as Abbot (1988:p59) argues:

> 'But to perform skilled acts and justify them cognitively is not yet to hold jurisdiction. In claiming jurisdiction, a profession asks society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights; jurisdiction has not only a culture, but also a social structure. These claimed rights may include absolute monopoly of practice and of public payments, rights of self-discipline and of unconstrained employment, control of professional training, of recruitment, and of licencing ...'. (Abbot, 1988:p59).

In some cases such as with law and medicine, a profession is able to claim absolute jurisdiction over a particular domain. This among other things allows the profession to control both the organization of work in and those that are able to practice the profession. As a means of illustration, in the health food chain Holland & Barrett which among other things sells various herbal remedies etc. there is a sign on the tills telling potential customers that the store is unable to give medical advice and that

customers are advised to consult with their physician. Similarly, inscribed in law is the requirement that English and Welsh private limited companies are audited by ICAEW chartered accountants. Professional power is determined to a large degree to the extent to which a profession is able to achieve 'double closure': that is control of a particular jurisdictional domain is achieved through the restriction of admission to the external labour market through the licensure and certification of practitioners. Furthermore, they maintain control inside organizations through informal organization, i.e. through the defence and promotion of the interests of the profession. Bourdieu (1986) has illustrated this process in relation to French academia, describing the 'defence of the corps'. This is something that is taken for granted; yet it contrasts with other groups such as the Institute of Personnel and Development. However, this is a relatively unusual position, more generally there is a contestation between rival professional groups viewing for the right to legislate in a particular domain. As Tinker (1998, pers.comm.) Notes the Certified Public Accountants in the USA have suffered significant encroachment upon their territory by the American legal establishment, for P.Armstrong (1988) this is the result of the competition between capital. Armstrong, working from an English functionlist-marxist perspective, presents an interesting account about how the pressures for capital accumulation lead to acute conflicts between professions; he illustrates this with regard to the problems Personnel Management have faced in terms of securing professional recognition in an age 'of management accountancy'. From this perspective the saliency of a profession rests on its ability to solve problems, or be seen to solve problems, for management. Reed (1996:p587) notes that in recent times there has been an intensification of 'political conflict within and between expert groups, with a more aggressively contested and irreparably fragmented expert domain'.

The basis of expertise for professions is generally derived from the notion of scientific objectivity (in chapter seven I discuss in detail the privileged role that science has enjoyed within western societies). The link with science therefore supposes a link with neutral, detached objectivity; moreover, it presupposes a search for 'the truth'. This was germane to the Webbs' (1917) advocation of a society run by technocratic professionals. Therefore to question the profession is to question reason itself. Science is therefore drawn upon as the provider of a prerogative to legislate by the professional.

5:3 Discourses, Professions and Professionals: A theoretical distinction.

Thus far I have recorded the commentary of theorists of have analysed professions, I have noted that a profession seeks to control a particular domain for its practitioners (professionals). As a consequence the professionals can in many respects be viewed as the physical embodiment of the profession in action, in addition, we have the institutional structures and controls of the profession. As Abbot has argued professionals and professions 'both create their work and are created by it'

(1988:p316). This work and the set of understandings and knowledge that underpin this work constitute a broader discourse, it is this discourse that professions seeks to control by having a relatively powerful subject position, something that will enable them to legislate over a particular domain.

This notion of a subject position from which to speak is a common theme among many theorists working in a broadly post-structural vein (for example, Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, Said 1978). It is evidently of vital importance for the study of professions. It serves to situate our notions of a profession as being within a power/knowledge discourse. For instance, a Chartered Accountant should be viewed as being a subject position within a broader discourse of accounting; or as will be explored later in this chapter, the professional engineer being part of the profession of engineering which in turn is part of a wider discourse of engineering.

It is apparent that some professions are relatively powerful in particular domains, in the sense that they 'own' or at least appear to own domains of knowledge. This relationship between a professional group and knowledge is not a simple dyadic relationship whereby a popperian knowledge of 'reality' is possessed by the profession. The relationship is one of power/knowledge (see Foucault 1980) whereby the professional group define the parameters of knowledge. For instance, Bauman (1987) picks up on this point arguing that:

> 'Power/Knowledge denotes a self-perpetuating mechanism, which at a relatively early stage stops being dependent on the original impetus, as it creates conditions for its own continuous and ever more vigorous operation' Bauman (1987:p11).

Bauman expands on this position and in so doing highlights how a profession is enmeshed within a discourse:

> 'Tools and products ennoble each other, and, once started, reinforce each other's authority and supply reciprocal justification. The result is that both require a degree of independence from the social demand which they invoke as their validity test' Bauman (1987:p14)

This extract demonstrates the way in which professions are embedded into specific contexts. The notion of professions being embedded within a particular context requires further attention. Analysts working within the societal effect framework (ie. Lane 1989, Sorge 1991) have noted that some professions have been more successful in sustaining themselves in some national contexts than others. For instance, engineers are a relatively more powerful professional group within France and Canada (see Lee 1992) than in the UK. Similarly, the legal profession within the UK context has been relatively more powerful than in many neighbouring countries, while other professions have had difficulty in establishing or maintaining themselves (see Clark 1992). In her study of Japanese and British engineers Lam (1997) points out that the knowledge base of professionals differs

between countries. Furthermore, her empirical findings suggest that the knowledge base of professionals alter over time. The corollary of this is that professions are temporally and spatially relative, although the sustained dominance of the legal and medical professions in the Anglo-American contexts strongly suggest that some environments are more hospitable to the longevity of some professions rather than others. It is useful to take note of a comparative perspective for it demonstrates that there are differences in, for instance, what it is to be in an engineer in Canada as compared for instance with the UK. However, the argument advanced to explain this does not differentiate between a relative dominance of a discourse and the role of the profession and its practitioners within it.

Abbott (1988) has suggested that it is possible to understand the differences between the apparent ability of professions to legislate through the form of their jurisdiction. It is worth considering his ideas in more detail. The legitimacy for jurisdiction comes from other actors within the network of different constituencies within which a profession finds itself. Therefore, as Abbott notes, examples might include the public domain (i.e. does public opinion afford a particular profession legitimacy?), the legal domain (i.e. does the law recognise and enforce the right of a professions jurisdiction) and in the domain of the organizational workplace (i.e. is a profession's jurisdiction recognised?). The means through which the legitimacy of a profession is maintained in the public domain can take place through a multitude of different means. Clearly, the mediascape plays an important role (for instance, the views of the public on the legal profession and medical profession in the UK may largely be shaped through television programmes such as Kavanagh QC, Ali MacBeal, ER, Casualty and Silent Witness)[iii]. Abbott identifies six of jurisdiction: full, subordinate, intellectual, divided, advisory and client differentiation. The characteristics of these forms of jurisdiction are summarised in the table below:

Table 5:2   A Typology of Professional Jurisdiction

Form of Jurisdiction	Characteristic
Full	Full dominance over a jurisdictional domain i.e. law and medicine. Right of jurisdiction enshrined in legislation.
Subordinate	A limited jurisdiction but subordinate to another profession i.e. nursing under medicine, Legal secretaries under solicitors. The limited jurisdiction is often enshrined in law.
Intellectual	Profession holds the cognitive jurisdiction over a domain, but it is also practiced by others on a 'more or less unrestricted' basis. For example, psychiatry, counselling and Personnel Management. Intellectual jurisdiction is a precarious mode of organization.
Divided	Two professions working within one jurisdictional area i.e. the interface between tax law and tax accounting, or between architects and engineers on a large construction project.
Advisory	Where one profession passes an interpretation on the judgement of another profession, which is working within its full jurisdiction.
Client Differentiation	One profession divides in order to serve particular client groups. For instance, accountancy in Britain: Public sector accountants, Management accountants, chartered accountants.

Abbott's taxonomy of different forms of jurisdiction is useful in the sense that it provides a means of delineating between the evident differentiated nature of the legislative capacity of professions. The ability of a particular profession to dominate and monopolize a particular vein is variable. A interesting case is that of the subordinate profession which is junior to a more dominant profession, the example given in the table above of nurses is an interesting one, for it has a capacity to explain some of the current discourse on empowerment. A subordinate profession, such as nursing, within the public domain has a clearly delineated definition from the subordinating profession - the medical profession. However in the practicalities of carrying out work in a hospital there are likely to be many instances where the public archetypes become blurred. This would be particularly likely in an environment, such as the British National Health Service, where the organization is short of resources and constantly straining to maintain operational capability. Abbott (1988:p65) argues that this blurring of distinctions leads to 'workplace assimilation', which is the knowledge transfer from professional to subordinate profession/para-professional. Therefore while lacking the theoretical training of the 'full' professional the subordinate professional learns the job tacitly, in the workplace as it were. One of the implications of this is for the distinction between for example medicine and nursing to remain tenable there is the need for there to be a highly exacting form of dividing practices (see Foucault, 1977; Townley, 1994) or what Du Gay refers to as the art of separation. This amounts to the construction of strict boundaries between the professional and the subordinate profession, even if or rather because in the everyday organization of work the boundaries are blurred. The dividing practices can be seen through a range of symbolic means such as different titles, uniforms etc, in addition, means such as arguments such as 'the subordinate professional knows the practice but not the theory' which are used to sustain difference. Workplace assimilation presents a serious challenge to the subordinate profession in terms of maintaining an identity of professionalism.

The preceding discussion has served to introduce arguments surrounding professionalism, insights that in my view are absolutely central to this thesis. I now wish to explore the case of professional engineers in the UK in more detail, this is necessary as engineers form an important constituency group in the electricity supply industry.

5:4   Engineering in Britain

The term 'engineer' is used very loosely in Britain, with it being used to describe a diverse realm of technical activities ranging from semi-skilled manual to highly skilled 'professional' work. 'Professional' engineering has had little success in delineating itself, and preserving the term 'engineer' solely for professionally qualified staff, and as Lee and Smith (1992:7) have noted, 'In Britain, engineers have been unable to differentiate themselves from skilled manual and technical workers ... and are poorly placed within managerial hierarchies'. For instance, within organizations,

the term engineer is often used to describe odd-job people that change the toner on photocopiers and the like. It is not my position to defend as sacred the definition and use of the term engineer, but rather to note that as compared with other professions it has been far less successful in terms of policing definitions. On this note Glover & Kelly (1990:p236) that protected titles for the exclusive use of engineers would be one means through which professionalism can be promoted.

In trying to explain why 'engineering' has not been able to establish itself as a powerful profession, it is useful to consider the profession's historical development. The origins of the professional engineer lie in the 19th century, when Britain was at its zenith as the world's pre-eminent manufacturing nation. Engineering emerged as a 'craft' and soon established formal apprenticeships. There was a brief dalliance between the establishment and engineering, which saw the inclusion of engineering in the syllabus of elite schools such as Eton. Nevertheless engineering was unable to sustain this position, and moreover failed to establish itself as one of the socially constructed 'great professions' such as law, accounting or medicine.

In trying to explain the reasons for this it is useful to consider the establishment's assimilation of the 19th century nouveau riche industrialists and aspirant middle classes, which imbued them with a predilection for careers in the City, the Military, Law and Medicine. Orwell (1941:536) noted that;

> 'After 1832 the old land-owning aristocracy steadily lost power, but instead of disappearing or becoming a fossil they simply intermarried with the merchants, manufacturers and financiers who had replaced them, and soon turned them into accurate copies of themselves'.

The corollary of the failure of engineering to establish itself as a 'great profession' has been to confine the role of engineers to that of technical specialists in organisations, with limited status and restricted opportunities for advancement into the cadre of senior management. According to Smith (1990: p457) this raises of question of engineers as to whether they can be considered as merely 'trusted labour' or as part of the 'service class'. Smith and Whalley (1995) have noted this phenomenon, and argue that engineers who have broken into the cadre of senior management have usually been promoted on the basis of their perceived personal characteristics/managerial ability as opposed to their technical skills.

The engineering institutes have failed to organise engineering into a powerful profession. In contrast to the legal, accounting, and medical professions they have failed to gain legal sanction over their activities. Smith and Whalley (1995) view the relative weakness of the professional institutes as being attributable to the multitude of different engineering bodies, and through the shift of engineering training from the professional bodies to the universities. Macdonald (1995) supports this assertion, suggesting that the professional project attempted by engineering has been seriously undermined by the 'Balkanisation' of the field into numerous specialism governed by distinct

Institutes. Moreover, this fractured state of affairs combined with the move into engineering education by Universities in the post-Robbins era has served to limit the educational role to be played by the professional institutes as 'learned societies' (Smith, 1990: 461).

Lane (1989) using the Elective Affinities Model, which understands societal and cultural institutions as operating in co-determining constellations, argues that the centrality of finance / the City obviates professional engineering from being held in high esteem. In her analysis Lane (1989) contrasts the role of engineers in Britain, France and Germany, concluding that the profession is perceived as being far more central, and important in the latter countries. For instance, engineering plays a key part of the much-vaunted French Grand Ecole system which is pinnacle of the French education programme, likewise Germany places great importance on engineering with it being a prestigious career option. In this sense, where as engineers in both France and Germany can be situated within an understanding of technocracy, barring a brief flowering of such notions in post-war Britain, the discourse has had less purchase within the UK. Smith (1990: 460) has incisively noted that 'management ideology in Britain lacks a technical heart'. As a point of contrast, Noble (1977) in his seminal 'America by Design' has pinpointed the way in which in the United States, scientific management (see Appendix one) and engineering had conflated by 1925. Such a position did not exist within the UK. Smith for instance has noted the way in which within British engineering there remains a strong sense of the 'practical' elements of the job, at the expense of more esoteric, explicit knowledge. The key explanation offered up to account for this, is the carrying forward of the craft traditions of engineering: thus the spirit of Richard Trevithick[1] can be found in contemporary engineers. Whalley (1995) concurs with this point, stating:

> '(In Britain) the line between mental and manual, conception and execution, does not neatly demarcate engineers from craft and production workers' (Whalley, 1995: 67)

The dominant discourse of finance / the City within the British economy has, according to many commentators, played a profound role in shaping contemporary British society through its emphasis on short-term performance, and the promotion of a '*Makler*' polity (Lash and Urry 1987, Keegan 1992). Critics of the role of the City such as Hutton (1995) argue that the City has primacy over industry, being its master rather than its servant. Indeed the dominance of the discourse of the City, with its finance driven nostrums arguably conflict with the values of the engineering profession, as Meiskins (Marques 1993:20) contends, '*profit-making corporations ... are often seen as the least hospitable environment for professional practice*'. Thus in the social construction of 'professions' the discourse of the engineering profession has remained marginal. Moreover such a view is suggestive of an inherent tension between professionalism and profit making. The dominant role of

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[1] Remarkably, Richard Trevithick, the great-great-great grandson of the famous inventor, worked in the case study organization, CoastElectric, as an engineer.

the City leads some writers to argue that, following Marx; a class-based analysis is required in order to analyse the position of engineers. Smith has argued,

> 'It is not really possible to study the social position of engineers without confronting, in some way, the question of class'. (Smith, 1990: p456).

Such an insight captures the essence of numerous studies that have attempted to grapple with the class position of engineers. It is outside of the scope of this thesis to engage with these studies other than to note that much of theorizing rests upon the sense of engineers either being part of an embourgeoisment project 'the new middle class' or alternatively being déclassé and proletarianized. Such tensions of course manifest themselves in the difficulty of a profession establishing its warrant or jurisdiction over a particular area. Yet there are other factors that serve to compound this problem

The relative position of British engineers, as outlined above, is summarised in table 5:3 below:

Table 5:3   The Relative Position of British Engineers

Low status compared to other professions.

Loosely defined Profession.

Unable to gain the sanction of law.

Weak Professional Institutes.

An unlikely route to reach senior management.

It is evident from the summary above, that engineering in the UK has firstly not been a relatively powerful discourse, concomitantly the profession of engineering has been unable to carve out a subject position of legislator within the discourse. I now wish to turn more specifically to examine the discourse of engineering within the electricity supply industry. The reason that I want to focus on the electricity supply industry is to determine to what extent the experience mirrors that of the discourse of engineering within the UK at large. The identification of the importance of sectoral dynamics was one of the key findings from the Aston WORC studies during the 1980s (see Smith et al 1990; Whipp and Clark 1986). For the study of the professions this is a particularly important finding as it suggests that not only is it wise to look at the specific national context. It is also necessary to consider the nature of the sector being researched. This point is made by Smith (1990:p463) who argues that there is likely to be a sectoral effect, he points to gas, electricity mining and construction as areas where professional engineering is better recognised.

5:5   The Electricity Supply Industry: A Sector apart ?

The late 19th Century marked the genesis of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK. Initially its distribution was confined to urban areas, with its patronage being restricted largely to innovative industrialists, and affluent families. The early 20th century saw sporadic growth in electricity distribution, with lines being constructed both by the many privately owned Electrical companies, and the publicly owned Municipal Electricity boards. There were concerns about the adequacies of such an ad-hoc system, and as Morgan (1984:107) reports:

> 'The McGowan Committee in 1936 set out an unassailable case for public ownership on the grounds of efficiency, as a way to integrate the national system and ensure an effective nation-wide distribution of energy from electricity'

When in August 1947, the Electricity Supply Industry was nationalised it did not create the controversy or resistance experienced in other parts of the Labour Government's programme, notably in Bevan's protracted dispute with the British Medical Association during the creation of the NHS. The many small Electricity Supply companies were amalgamated into 12 Regional Electricity Boards that were to be responsible for the Supply and Distribution of electricity. This was an attempt to develop a coherent national energy policy based on universalistic principles. One of these boards was CoastElectric, which will be explored in this thesis.

The electricity industry was designed and planned to be run by technical experts. The rationale for this is neatly summarised by former Prime Minister Harold Wilson (President of the Board of Trade in the Attlee government):

> 'For the commanding heights of British industry to be controlled by men whose only claim is their aristocratic connection or the power of inherited wealth or speculative finance is irrelevant to the 20th Century ... in Science and Technology we are content to remain a nation of gentlemen in a world of player' (Pimlott, 1993)

In the post-war Labour Government there was a belief in the expansion of the state, this expansion was to make use of public sector experts, professionals whom were to act as servants of the state. This objective had been long in formulation within the Labour movement, for instance it can be seen in the writings of the Webbs during the 1st World War[iv]. Such a view was also shared by William Beveridge, the Liberal reformer, who was to play a major role in shaping the blueprint for post-war Britain (see Beveridge, 1944;1945). Therefore the notion of the benevolent professional was born; this took place at a time when there was a belief in the possibilities of science and technology to improve the material conditions of the population. The idea of state financed professionals was novel at the time of nationalisation, among some groups it was regarded as a dangerous intrusion into the rights and freedom of a profession (see Foot, 1972). However, the state

played a vital role in terms of fashioning the electricity supply industry, in recognizing the importance of the discourse of electrical engineering, and, through seeing professional engineers as being the rightful custodians of this discourse. Thus the state presented the electrical engineering profession with the jurisdiction over a domain; they were imbued with the aim of every profession, the ability to legislate. Nationalisation was followed by a huge expansion in the electricity network, which combined with the proliferation of electrical consumer goods led to a massive increase in the demand for electricity. Between 1945 and 1970 demand doubled approximately every 7 years (Coast Electric archive data). This period of expansion clearly created the conditions for the profession to emerge and to sustain its legislatory role. Elsewhere (Carter, 1993) I have argued that the 1950s and 1960s about how professional engineers were the dominant profession within CoastElectric, a point also made by Glendon (1996: pers. comm.). This analysis suggests that the Electricity Supply Industry was a sector apart, a sector that did not conform to the more general findings of Smith and Lee (1992). Therefore, a discourse that is relatively weak in broad national terms may not be so within the context of a specific sector.

5:6   Professions in Travail

The discussion by Smith and Lee (1992) on the archetypal experiences of British engineers serves to highlight many of the difficulties that some professions face, there is a constant battle to preserve the blackbox of expertise and to retain the right to legislate. As Clark (1992:p5) has argued that,

> 'While some occupational groups such as the legal and medical professions may occupy positions of saliency for long periods, other groupings will, as it were, come and go'.

I would concur with this statement, but would like to add that if one accepts that society has and continues to undergo profound change, then this is likely to be the case. For instance, within the UK new professions have emerged that appear to have be encroaching on knowledge territory that was traditionally the preserve of the accounting profession (i.e. Institute of Taxation; Chartered Institute of Insurers). It remains to be seen to what extent such groups will be successful, as many 'professions' will prove to be ephemeral, while others will prove to be more durable. I now wish to explore the argument that professions are in some way under threat, this will commence as a general discussion before focusing more specifically on UK State professionals such as engineers. This brings us back to the title of this chapter 'professions in travail' which suggests in some way that professions are presented with a fundamental challenge in the current epoch; it is of course recognized that individual professions are highly idiosyncratic and therefore the impacts on them will necessarily be uneven.

5:7   Legitimation Crisis

Through the writings of theorists such as Aronowitz (1999), Broadbent et al (1997) there is a general sensibility of the crisis of the professions, Aronowitz (1999) himself at the keynote talk of a recent conference spoke of the twilight of the professions. What was his argument for suggesting that professions are in a state of crisis? His argument was that professions, particularly public sector professions, are undergoing a legitimation crisis: quite simply the values of professions are antithetical to free market capitalism. It is less a problem of cost, although that may be a factor, it is more an issue of the values of professionalism being able to survive in an age where the market to quote Bauman (1987) has become the meta-validating authority. This is a point reflected by Reed (1996:p586), he argues that professionals have found themselves in an 'institutional environment characterised by economic fiscal crises of the state and political ideologies and policies that are highly suspicious if not downright hostile to professional power'.

Aronowitz (1999) then draws a contrast between someone studying to become a professional, incurring massive debt (in the American context), and then being faced with uncertain and not particularly well paid employment, from which the debt has to be serviced. He then contrasts this with the relatively large salaries that graduates can earn in managerial positions following graduation. He sees this process accelerating inexorably, something that in his view renders the future of professions as being inherently problematic. Aronowitz's argument is an interesting one, the financial aspect is significant but disputable, but his argument about a legitimation crisis is an important contribution. There is a general consensus therefore, that as Ackroyd (1996) notes, professions are embattled even, and especially, in their core areas of strength. That said, according to Ackroyd (1996, pp.600-1) ' ... there has not, as yet, been significant impact on entrenched professional power.'

A related argument to Aronowitz (1999) is that new managerialism, as outlined in chapters three and four, poses a fundamental challenge to the professions that it encounters. It is also a question of legitimation, quite simply the values of new managerialism are of delivering their conception of customer service, in order to deliver competitive advantage (a concept which is now applied to non-competitive sectors of the economy). This challenges the very saliency and raison d'etre of professions. Moreover, the new managerialist initiatives that are in part concerned with transparency threaten to prise open the blackbox of professionalism. For instance, let us consider the implications of three new managerialist initiatives. First, Total Quality Management, through its emphasis on empowerment, actively seeks to give non-experts more responsibility; moreover, it seeks to make the organization more transparent through customer-supplier relationships. Second, Business Process ReEngineering argues for a fundamental rethinking of an organization, it argues for the reintegration of tasks to meet the needs of customers and to make costs as low as possible,

this is achieved in part through asking the question why do we do the things we do? Third, Knowledge Management argues that organizations need to be able to codify their tacit knowledge, in order to be able distribute that knowledge throughout the organization. It is strikingly apparent how these three movements can be construed as posing a fundamental threat to the discourse of professionalism.

However, in view of the patchy results recorded on behalf of many of the initiatives, do professions have anything to fear? This is an important question, it is also important to acknowledge that while the claims of the gurus for a number of initiatives have not been realised, moreover, as Arnold & Sikka (1999) note, it is problematic to suggest that organizations are helpless in the face of external pressures. One has to accept their point, although I would argue that it is important to look at the experience of individual organizations, and, within individual organizations to see how the discourse of new managerialism may pose a fundamental threat to the discourse of a particular profession. The injurious impacts a profession could range from creative destruction to the loss of its legislative capacity. For instance, Cooper et al (1996) highlight the way in which the organizational change outlined in their law firm studies at best could be described as 'sedimentation'. Therefore consider the following scenario, a TQM programme establishes a quality system within say a university, it then monitors the teaching quality of members of the faculty; the quality manager uses the data generated from the quality system to rank and to judge the teaching of academics in the faculty. This is perhaps a familiar scenario, but the important point is that professions generally have their own quality control system (see Pollitt, 1993), but in the example outlined, what can be seen is the values from another discourse being used to pass judgement on the profession.

Ackroyd (1996) broadly concurs with this view, he suggests that professions are coming under threat by 'organizational innovation based on entrepreneurialism', which he notes is very similar to events in the late 18th century. He suggests that in profit based organizations, the prognosis for professions to be increasingly marginalised into narrow roles as technical 'experts'.

The scenario above assumes some sort of contestation between discourses, a competition between discourses. It is also of course possible that there is a form of negotiated order, thus parts of the professionals' blackbox being left alone, while the professional accepting some of the discourse of new managerialism. It is this sort of argument that has been advanced by A.Gray (1999), who suggests that professions and other groups 'find a balance', 'they somehow get on'. In my view this is highly questionable and demonstrates to total ignorance of the colonizing effects of new managerialism, instead seeking the comfort of some revamped 1970s notion of negotiated order. That said, Reed (1999) articulates a more sophisticated position, he suggests, on the basis of his current empirical work into new managerialism, that very often new managerialist initiatives get

mediated by the professional implementing them; He argues that a hybrid type of organizing results. This is an interesting argument, it is one that picks up the discussion of the reconstitution of the subject in chapter two; for instance, there is the possibility that a professional completes an MBA course or such like and therefore has a mastery of two discourses, namely, the professional and the new managerialist. This scenario of course makes the assumption that the two discourses can be embodied within one person, which offers the intriguing possibility of an employee code switching between two ostensibly competing discourses. An alternative line of thought, would for a profession at least, be more dystopian, it is this: a new managerialist discourse emerges within an organization, it becomes robust and establishes a violent hierarchy over the discourse of the profession. This then results in the creative destruction - the exnovation - of the professional from the organization, through redundancy or some such means. Similarly, Abbott describes how the 'claiming' of a discourse that was previously under the jurisdiction of a profession can place:

> 'The claimant's domain is assumed to be more **objectively coherent** than the present incumbent's, and this objectivity justifies the jurisdictional transfer' Abbott (1988:p62) emphasis added.

Abbott discusses how competition exists between professions in the sense that they can be 'carnivorous competitors that grow in strength as they engulf jurisdictions' (1988:p87). It is beyond his ambit to discuss the relation between new managerialism and professions, however, it easy to see how his argument could be extended. This is something that Noble (1999) does with regard to the threats that higher education professionals are currently under from new managerialism. He argues, somewhat controversially, that the managerialist notion that education can be commodified and bought and sold is fictive, but, that this view leads to the view that education can be fractured and disintegrated into modules, consisting of course notes, course materials and education syllabi. This can then serve to disestablish the relationship between the academic from the ownership of their own courses, which in turn he argues leads to an intensification of the labour process of academics. This decoupling or disembedding of expertise from a professional and by implication from a profession is something that is clearly of profound importance.

That organizations are increasingly looking to appropriate knowledge in order to become 'expert organizations' in contrast to relying on 'expert humans' is a point discussed by Mueller & Dyerson (1999). They argue that there is a fundamental problematic for organizations: the problem of appropriation. In their studies of the British public sector they demonstrate the attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, in the quest for the organization to control knowledge. The interesting question perhaps is why 'control of knowledge' has now become an object of managerial concern, especially in contexts whereby there was a long-standing tradition of mandating knowledge to professional groups. Equally, Scarbrough (1999) who has argued that there remains a fundamental tension between the social production of knowledge and the economic appropriation of knowledge has addressed this problem. This tension plays out in different ways in different contexts.

Scarbrough (1999) situates his analysis within the broader frame that suggests that there is a fundamental shift in knowledge production taking place in the world economy. This was articulated by Lyotard (1984) is his seminal 'post-modern condition'; where he argued that the age of the grand narrative was over and that the new test for knowledge was in its performativity – that is, its use in the context of practice. Scarbrough (1999) has argued that knowledge work is using (and creating) knowledge in the context of practice, while professional work is drawing upon a sometimes arcane body of knowledge, and then applying it. This is a significant shift, one that, not withstanding its crypto-functionalism, has been articulated by Gibbons et al (1994), in the New Production of Knowledge. Gibbons et al (1994) argue along a similar line, suggesting that Mode One Knowledge is giving away to Mode Two. Mode One is self-referential, peer group evaluated, and is concerned with particular abstract problems (such as structure versus agency). On the other hand, Mode Two, trans-disciplinary and judged by the market performativity of its knowledge.

5:8   A Lament for the lost Professional?

The incursion of new managerialism into the domain of a profession may therefore have many possibilities, but it is important to acknowledge the threat, at least at an abstract level, that it may pose. Thus far I have taken a somewhat aloof stance to these arguments, but it raises the question that Fournier (1997) poses: should we care about the future of professions? After she reminds us that they could be regarded as being profoundly reactionary, conservative bodies. Following the discussion of power in chapter two, they could be regarded as 'structures of domination'. In a similar vein, J. Gray (1998) argued that they could be seen as being a conspiracy against the laity, a means through which the status quo was reproduced. However, both J.Gray and Fournier's descriptions are somewhat at odds with the views of Aronowitz and Beveridge. Therefore should the loss of saliency of a profession be regarded as a source of lament, or, as representing the laity's enlightenment?

In considering, but not answering, this question there is distinction to be made between the view of the profession as *a purely productive organization of experts* possessing technocratic skills and knowledge, and the view of the profession as *the mobilisation of monopoly power to secure power and influence for a privileged minority* within an organization. The latter view identifies the professional project as being a regime of power and as a consequence, a structure of domination (c.f. Chapter 2). For instance, the established professions, such as the legal or accounting profession, could be held to have obtained and then exploited a position of dominance within organizations. This position is thus somewhat less sympathetic to the plight of professionals, seeing them as having profited from the practice of symbolic violence (see chapter two) that has, inter alia, seen the use of exclusionary and demarcationary strategies to reinforce and maintain their position of power within the organization.

Within the engineering profession, for instance, there are two conceptual oppositions that may be brought to bear on the situation of the engineering function. The first, which one might associate with a traditional Labour Process position, draws on the constructed opposition between 'craft' traditions in industry, to one side, and Taylorised, deskilled and degraded work to the other. Since Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974), there has been a theoretical gloss put on this dualism, such that those who would criticise and oppose deskilled and degraded work risk being automatically associated with a defence of the romantic vision of the fulfilled, autonomous and self-reliant craftsperson. From this position, it would be possible to support the defence of professional engineering, as it can be seen as preserving the craft tradition against the ravages of capitalist rationalisation. In such a case, the dilemma here for the theorist is at the same time theoretical and moral: should the reported death of a professional be seen as a cause for mourning or celebration? At once we should be wary of presenting a lament for the lost engineer (what Burrell (1996) has termed a cri de coeur for the salariat); equally, to glibly accept the destruction of the cadre of engineers is to lend support to the discourse of new managerialism. The assault borne by many (former) state professions is such that the issue of the future of the professions is one worthy of important consideration, as are empirical and theoretical explorations of specific instances of professions in travail.

5:9   Fournier's Paradox: We are all professionals now.

Thus far this chapter has highlighted the potential fragility of the organized professions in the wake of the assault upon them by the respective discourses of the new right and new managerialism. While of course the impacts are uneven and acknowledging that to an extent some groups could be argued to have profited from such changes – most notably the new market professionals (c.f. Reed, 1996), there has been a sense of a loss: occupational groups literally having their latourian blackboxes prised open. The net effect of this has been to decouple expertise from professionals.

No discussion of professionalism would be complete without a consideration of the observation that increasing sections of the work population is becoming a part of a profession. For instance, Newell (1992) describes Newell (1992) describes the USA as a professional society, claiming that the American context has proved to be particularly fertile for the emergence of professions and professional associations.

> 'For every topic you can think of there is an association representing it. There are about 30,000 professional associations in the USA, with the majority of people belonging to at least one such society, often more' (1992:p29)

Newell's observation of the American context can be accounted for by the post-war emergence of the service class (see Lash and Urry 1987, Clark 1987) within the American context which, inter alia, was characterised by a functional delineation of occupational groups into different 'professions'. This is a point made a generation earlier by Wilensky (1964) who posited that there was a general sequence of professionalization. In the last twenty years or so, diverse organizations within both the UK and the USA have laid claim to professional status, and, increasingly people describe themselves as 'professionals'. This poses an interesting question for analysts of professional labour, is one to hold the new professions in judgement against an idealised archetype of a traditional profession with full jurisdiction? If one were to proceed with this endeavour, a relatively new body may well fall far short an older profession, this would lead to the argument that it was not a 'real' profession; held against the archetype of an old profession quite clearly this argument would be valid. Therefore descriptions such as para-professionals are used to describe such groups (c.f. Tinker, 1998). However, this misses the interesting question of why it is that people are increasingly describing themselves as professionals? In terms of trying to answer this question one would possibly highlight the changing nature of the economy, which among other things has seen an increase in the service sector at the expense of the traditional primary industries. Further, one might draw a link to the increasing numbers of people whom describe themselves as 'middle class', and as Hanlon (1996) notes in his study of Irish accountants the notion of a profession is synonymous with that of the middle class. Such issues are clearly open to conjecture another interesting question arises as to how do the new professionals actually operate in the workplace?

The new professionals are aspirant to the image, status and jurisdiction of that of the old, liberal professions. However, it is still framed within the dominant discourse of the sequence of becoming a profession. More interestingly, there is the issue of the way in which the term 'profession' has been appropriated, perhaps even hi-jacked, within and by organizations. This is a distinct argument from the more generalized professionalization thesis. Rather the deployment of the term professionalism is used as a discourse that can be used as a control mechanism within organizations. In this sense, rather than an organization relying on standard employment conditions, employers, through invoking the discourse of professionalism, can exact greater commitment to organizational goals through the notion of the employee as professional serving the customer. Professionalism therefore serves up the management utopia of gaining extra commitment while lessening the need for direct control. This is a broadly Foucauldian argument, it hinges upon an employee constituting themselves as a professional. Clearly, the extent to which this may or may not happen will be highly contingent on a wide range of factors, the most important being the extent to which employees are willing to adopt to this new modus operandi. That said, as Fournier (1999) incisively asks, 'Who wants to be thought of as unprofessional'. At a stroke, Fournier demonstrates that by inviting employees to be 'professional' is in effect to open up a binarism, the alternative, if indeed that is

what it is, is to be unprofessional. Fournier (1997) has therefore been pivotal in developing this position: in her study of TelCo workers, who were described as professionals, demonstrates the way in which professionalism is used as a device for the control of workers, this is in the sense that professionalism exerts a disciplinary logic:

> 'The appeal to professionalism ('We are professional') and its articulation in terms of competencies serves to inscribe employees' conduct in the same sort of logic as the one governing the professions ... It serves to inscribe employees' conduct within a chain establishing connections between the customers, Telco's values, competencies, and personal conduct' (Fournier, 1997:p15)

This is an important point for it suggests that the claim on professionalism made by so called new professions or by clerical staff within organizations is not just about the jurisdiction over a particular domain, but that it also extends to the behaviour and conduct of the 'new' professionals. Much as we saw in chapter two, this mode of professionalism operates on a Foucauldian notion of the reconstitution and self-disciplining of the work subject. The overarching contribution of Fournier is to inject a notion of paradox to the extant discussion on professions. While the assault on the organized professions is not in doubt, this has been accompanied by the appropriation of the term 'professional' by organizations. The result is a complex dialectic that is not easily reducible to merely dismissing as ethereal the 'theft' by organizations of the term professional.

5:10   Conclusion

This chapter has explored professionalism, in so doing I have explored the basic notions of professionalism and professionals. It was seen that a number of different conceptions of 'profession' exist, and that rather than constituting from a 'strict' definition to one that far more encompassing. This was then extended to a discussion of engineers in Britain, a group of workers especially relevant to the study, with reference to their relative status and position. This section provided what would appear to be a striking distinction between the low status of engineers generally; as compared with the apparent hegemony of engineers within the electricity supply industry.

The chapter then moved into the current debate about the twilight of the professions, it explored the notion that the professions were under threat from competing discourses such as new managerialism, ideological and financial pressures. The discourse of new managerialism represented a cogent alternative logic of organization to the regime of professionalism. More importantly the regime of new managerialism can be regarded as imperialistic in the sense that it problematizes alternatives ('the old way of doing things'). This is through the establishment of a binary opposite whereby new managerialism is represented as modern, forward looking and the one best way (see Wilson, 1992) of organizing: any alternatives are viewed as inferior and likely to fail. The emergence of a discourse of new managerialism was therefore a regime of knowledge that was

broadly commensurable with the broader message of the New Right. It was noted that the impacts on any given profession, as well as the broader population, is likely to uneven; with this in mind, the prognosis of a number of key analysts of professional work were examined. The views ranged from the declaration of the 'strange death' of the professionals; to a more middle ranging perspective which stressed mediation and co-existence, albeit in different circumstances; finally, that professions may actually welcome the chance to 'romance the market'.

An underlying theme that paralleled questions about the future saliency of existing professions, was recognition of the emergence of the 'knowledge worker' as a distinct category. According to Reed this grouping can be considered to be the winners in the post-1979 epoch, while for Alvesson (1993; 1998), their modus operandi, and how it differs from more traditional professions is of interest. This was juxtaposed with the discussion of the increasing pervasiveness of the professions in the sense that increasing sections of the work population are characterising themselves as 'professional'. The function of this chapter was to recognize the importance of professions and professional labour to this thesis, but also to provide a sense of the mood of uncertainty that currently prevails within the discourse of some professions.

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[i] An interesting example of this was seen in the regulation of the Financial Services Industry in 1986, the City successfully made the case that it should be self-regulatory, this position was sustained even after a number of financial scandals posed serious questions as to the effectiveness of such regulation.

[ii] The theme has been pursued by Prem Sikka, Hugh Willmott and Austin Mitchell in relation to auditing. They argue that the relationship between the large auditing firms and their clients is far too close, as such they question whether the audit is anything more than symbolic.

[iii] At the time of revising this thesis, there was a Guardian newspaper report which suggested that ER, the hospital based television programme, was acting as a role model for practicing medical staff!

[iv] I am indebted to Professor Ray Loveridge for this information. The Webbs articulated a vision of state experts in a New Statesman article, which appeared in 1917.

Chapter 6: Scoping the Thesis

The previous five chapters represent the literatures that frame this thesis: they are ineluctably interrelated. Yet at present they represent something of a 'grand sweep'. This very short chapter seeks to scope the thesis. In particular, I will seek to identify what it is that the thesis aims to investigate. In essence, this thesis is an attempt at a rich, multi-dimensional analysis of organizational change. An attempt at constructing a holistic account of organizational change, necessitates disaggregating holism down into specific themes: I have four.

The Strategic Decision-Making Process within CoastElectric

First, this thesis seeks to address and make sense of the corporate strategic decision making within the organization. As organizational strategies do not appear out of a vacuum, I want to try and unpack why certain strategies were adopted at the opportunity cost of others. In particular, this part of thesis aims to adopt a temporal approach, in order to investigate whether there are changing dynamics within the 'decision space' of the organization. This theme is not to label a strategy 'right' or 'wrong', but rather it is to understand how it was arrived at, and how it came to be regarded as commonsensical. Mindful of the analysis of consumption and management consultants, this part of the thesis will investigate, what, if any, is the impact of management fashions and management consultancy on the decision-makers within Coastelectric.

The Process of Organizational Change

Second, this thesis seeks to understand further the process of organizational change. This part of the thesis seeks to unpack the way in which we are to understand the attempts of a group of modernizers to unpick the pre-existing context in order to transform an organization. The analytical problem is to attempt to prise open the process of organizational change as mediated through the theoretical insights afforded by the underlying and emergent relations of power.

An Immanent Critique of Programmed Change Initiatives

Third, this thesis seeks to conduct an immanent critique of major change initiatives that were undertaken within CoastElectric. This it seeks to address whether on their own terms the initiatives can be considered to be a success. In terms of its pattern of outcomes, did an initiative realize it's objectives? The chapter given over to this question is somewhat less ambitious in scope; nonetheless, it seeks to unpack an important issue.

A Substantive Change?

Fourth, this thesis seeks to assess to what extent, over the period of the study, there had been a substantive change in the organization. This will be investigated not in terms of events, but rather in terms of the underlying regime of knowledge; that is, the interstices of power/knowledge/ discourse and practice.

My four themes are issues that connect directly with the coverage of the theoretical perspectives outlined in chapters 1 to 5. It is my contention given the discussion in the earlier chapters, that my four themes are fundamental to understanding organizational change. Aggregated they provide the means for a holistic understanding of organizational change. The remainder of this thesis will be given over to an investigation of these issues. Firstly, however, it is necessary to situate this thesis in terms of the philosophy of social science; especially in terms of the claims and assumptions behind the 'knowledge' that is being generated by this piece of research. Issues of epistemology are the concern of chapter 7. Chapter 8 will discuss the way in which the themes presented are to be operationalised through fieldwork. Chapter 9 is a final piece of contextualisation: that is, a concise description of privatization and the Electricity Supply industry.

Chapter 7: The philosophy of social science: theorizing method and the practice of generating organizational knowledge

7.1 Tensions in Social Science: The passion of Positivism

The preceding chapters challenge the nostrums of managerialists, cast doubt on orthodox notions of power and point to the deficiencies in many prevailing prescriptions on organizational change. Some, but not all, of this critique amounts to a dissatisfaction with the epistemology that provides the foundations for such views: the philosophy of knowledge that anchors much of this discourse is positivism. Within the modern epoch, the dominant epistemological position has been that of positivism. Moreover, positivism has enjoyed an enduring and pervasive influence within the study of organizations; these factors necessitate an examination of the foundations of positivism and the implications that such an approach has for the generation of knowledge. More recently, at least within organization studies, positivism for some has become something of a term of abuse.

Positivism's genesis can be traced to the philosophies of Descartes and Bacon. Descartes argued that the laws of mathematics were timeless and were best suited to describing the laws of nature; Bacon considered that science necessitated experience, experiment and observation - further, he held that science was the pre-eminent form of knowledge (see Aronowitz, 1988; Hammersly, 1989). Later these views were articulated by Comte; who coined the phrase *positivism*. Comte asserted that knowledge was generated only through empirical evidence; this position is illustrative of the positivist's emphasis on observation. For the positivist there are two valid forms of knowledge: the first, is empirical (*synthetic*) knowledge; the second, is logical (*analytical knowledge*). The latter is a form of logic that is based purely on a system of rules, for instance, to state that $5 + 5 = 10$ is true within the rules of the *sino* number system. In contrast, empirical knowledge is that which is observable i.e. the manager gave a talk. Within the positivist mode of understanding the empirical form of knowledge is held to be pre-eminent, this position of dominance is grounded in the belief that generalizable laws are derived from the accumulation of facts: to observe is to infer is to know.

Positivism's intense attachment to observation assumes that the researcher is able to describe, in a cool and detached manner, reality in a mirror like fashion. This process requires a "neutral observation language" whereby the researcher's description corresponds with truth; it is claimed that such a language is immaculately clean of bias or ideology. The pure status of such a language is crucial in privileging knowledge generated through positivism as being inherently superior to knowledge gained through other means. The neutral observation language is precise and it allows the researcher to infer from generalisations; furthermore, the researcher is in a position to verify hypotheses with a view to establishing relations of causality.

Table 7:1 The Tenets of Positivism (Conway & Crowther, 1999)

Aston University

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The inductive method has been central to the operation of positivism; the approach attempts to understand the world "out there" through establishing generalizable rules from empirical observation, thus: when A happens B will result. J.S. Mill, one of the pioneers of this approach, viewed the world as consisting of uniform laws. The corollary of this was for the researcher to aim to infer from a case in order to be able to make a generalizable statement, this would be then verified through subsequent experimentation. Popper points out that:

> 'Inductivist interpretation which holds that in the natural sciences we proceed systematically from observation to theory by some method of generalisation, and that we can only "verify", or perhaps even prove, our theories by some method of induction'. Popper (1957:p137)

The inductive method was dominant within positivism until the work of Karl Popper. Popper was vehement in his criticism of the verification principle adopted by most positivists, a label he was uncomfortable with. He considered inductive reasoning to be conceptually flawed. The crux of his argument was that he believed that the verification principle failed to demarcate science from pseudo-science. Popper contended that movements such as Marxism and feminism laid claim to being scientific; this proposition was not acceptable to Popper for whom such movements belonged in the realm of the metaphysical i.e. they were philosophical questions. Giddens (1977) highlights the disdain for which positivists have reserved for metaphysics, this antipathy stems from the positivists' view that only logic and empirical knowledge are legitimate knowledge, with other forms of knowledge being inferior (for example, see Popper's exposition of his three knowledge worlds). Popper's endeavour to determine what constitutes "real science" must be understood with reference to the privileging of science inherent in modernity. Thus, if scientific knowledge is the highest form of human reason (Mannheim 1936,1952), it is necessary to delineate between real science and the pretensions of pseudo-science.

Popper posited that the verification principle helped to sustain and legitimate the claims of the pseudo-sciences to constitute 'real' science, he argued that,

> 'For if we are uncritical we shall always find what we want we shall look for, and find, confirmations, and we shall look away from, and not see, whatever might be dangerous to our pet theories. In this way it is only too easy to obtain what appears to be overwhelming evidence in favour of a theory which, if approached critically, would have been refuted'. Popper 1957 p133

This gives an insight into Popper's view in which he establishes the central problem of inductivism, namely, no amount of verification will actually demonstrate the veracity of a particular proposition. seek and ye shall find Popper argued that a further problem with inductivism was its tendency to regard theory as emerging out of empirical observation, something he viewed as naive.

> 'I do not believe that we ever make inductive generalisations in the sense that we start with observations and try to derive our theories from them' Popper 1957.p134

Therefore, Popper considering inductivism to be fatally flawed, advanced an alternative method of testing scientific propositions which he termed 'falsifiability'. Falsifiability, enacted through the method of falsification, was he argued was superior to inductivism; furthermore, he claimed that it amounted to a solving of the problem of induction. The principles of falsifiability amounted to turning inductivism on its head, no longer was a researcher concerned with trying to verify his theory, the aim was now to try and disprove a thesis

> 'We must test them as severely as we can, that is, we must try to find fault with them, we must try to falsify them Only if we cannot falsify them in spite of our best efforts can we say that they have stood up to severe tests. This is the reason why the discovery of instances which confirm a theory means very little if we have not tried, and failed, to discover refutations'. Popper (1957 p133)

The central proposition of falsifiability is that by trying to disprove a hypothesis, it opens up the idea to greater critique than by trying to gain proof through inductivism Popper advanced the view that such a process allows a researcher to distinguish between real science and pseudo-science This is as the latter is unable to conceal its inadequacies when subjected to the rigours of falsification, moreover, it affords a researcher a more secure foundation from which to make authoritative claims on behalf of a theory. Popper took the view that, in terms of epistemology, it is impossible to "prove" a theory to be true, as this involves making countless predictions that can never be tested However, it was possible to prove that a theory was false. Falsification underscores the hypothetical-deductive method that Popper describes as follows:

> "This has sometimes been called the hypothetical-deductive method, or more often the method of hypothesis, for it does not achieve absolute certainty for any

of the scientific statements which it tests; rather, these statements always retain
the character of tentative hypotheses, even though their character of tentativeness
may cease to be obvious after they have passed a great number of severe tests".
(Popper, 1957:p131)

The testing of hypotheses is of paramount importance for Popper, he has no concern in how researchers "found" their theory; a distinction is made between the private, creative process of thinking up conjectures and the subsequent rigorous testing of such conjectures. This process allows for a teleological advancement óf knowledge through the refutation and dismissal of falsified conjectures.

Popper disputed the term positivism. Although as has been seen he was considered by many to be a positivist. His contribution placed a serious set of doubts on the agenda of the philosophy of social science in place for those working in the ardent pursuit of knowledge through inductivism. That said, positivism was still able to maintain an iron grip on approaches to research throughout the social sciences. Its "language of variables" whereby concepts could be reduced to variables has had a profound influence on the conduct of social research, it afforded researchers the capability of depicting relationships between variables in a quantitative manner.

7.2   The Kuhnian Turn

Apparatchiks of induction and falsification have much to disagree on in terms of the derivation and testing of theory. However, they are united in their belief in the incremental progress of knowledge: thus *our* knowledge of the world improves over time. Such a view is a vital cornerstone of the modernist project, whereby the celestial light of knowledge and reason overcomes the intellectual pestilence of superstition and other forms of unreason. The work of Kuhn presented a formidable challenge to this prevailing orthodoxy. He argued that the notion of teleological progress was illusory, in place of linearity he contended that the history of science was characterised by discontinuity and ruptures in knowledge whereby one paradigm was overthrown and superseded by another. Kuhn regarded science as being an epochal phenomenon; a dominant paradigm –a mode of operation and understanding – that accumulated facts and knowledge in a 'state of normal science', would be thrown into crisis and a new scientific paradigm would emerge. Rather than the new paradigm being an extension of previous thinking, an incremental improvement, it actually presented a negation and a refutation of that which was previously held to be 'knowledge'. Kuhn demonstrates this in his classic account of the Copernican revolution which saw the emergence of the helio-centric conception of the world (see Armitage 1980); the argument that Copernicus put forward, once accepted, completely overthrew the previous Ptolemaic understanding the universe. This is an illustration of a paradigm shift whereby the central assumptions of one paradigm seem absurd when viewed from the perspective of another. This incommensurability is a direct challenge to the notions of incremental advances in scientific knowledge that had hitherto been posited by

philosophers of science. Paradigmatic notions of what constitute truth rest on the assumption that there is no transcendentally objective form of knowledge, rather "truth" must be viewed as a culturally defined consensus: truth can (and will) change (sic.) across both time and space. Central to this position is that it is not possible to occupy a position pure of all paradigmatic influence, rather the choices of theoretical schema are determined by the dominant norms within a discipline: to be a scientist is to exist within a community of discourse. Kuhn accepted the commonly held assertion that there had been advances in scientific knowledge, this is a view held by Alvesson (1998) when he states that, in his view, he would rather go to a western hospital than to a witch doctor if requiring treatment. However, Kuhn rejected the idea that science within different paradigmatic periods could be compared, as there are fundamental changes to our ontological comprehension of the world. This notion of paradigm incommensurability is something that achieved prominence in organization studies through the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979). This point is illustrated by Kuhn, when discussing the changes in the study of chemistry following the work of Dalton:

> 'Chemists could not, therefore, simply accept Dalton's theory on the evidence, for much of that was still negative. Instead, even after accepting the theory, **they still had to beat nature into line**, a process which, in the event, took almost another generation. When it was done, even the percentage composition of well-known compounds was different. The data themselves had changed. That is the last of the senses in which we may want to say that after a revolution scientists work in a different world' Kuhn 1970:p135 (emphasis added)

The insights gained from Kuhn demonstrate how the discourse of scientists defines reality rather than the other way around. Within a given scientific discourse there is indexicality (see Wittgenstein), that is actors within the community are able to understand each other through the use of a common language and set of understandings. Burrell and Morgan's point is that people operating from within different paradigms are unable to understand each other for these very reasons. In a refinement, and to a degree in opposition, to this view is Hassard's (1991) thesis that there are analytical openings between paradigms. Hassard through his own work on the fire service demonstrates that analytical openings can exist, however, it must be acknowledged that this was the result of a reflexive researcher interested in prismatic research. His analysis obscures the relations of power, which engender a recursive morphostasis within different academic approaches. This latter point is something that is evident within the realm of organization studies with different journals for different perspectives, and conferences catering to particular interests: organization studies is not a morphos community. Tsoukas (1994) in his critique of Hassard argues that changing paradigm is not simply like changing a shirt! A tradition within a discipline is sustained through the policing of knowledge (see Tinker, 1988) and through indexicality (Clegg 1994). In this sense, it is necessary to look to the role of the nomenclature of a particular academic discipline in particular in their capacity to police what counts as knowledge. Therefore, established conventions has can help to preserve the purity of a particular research discipline, in a way unrivalled by most languages barring perhaps

Icelandic. The rite of passage or socialisation period experienced by novice trainees imbues them with a sense of professional identity, in which they constitute themselves as subjects through the prevailing power/knowledge discourse.

7.3   Anything Goes: Knowledge Claims in a Relative World

Kuhn's work was both influential and (for some) disturbing. It was an essentially a contestation of the cumulative accumulation of knowledge that has been a key feature in modern thought. In a similar vein to that of Kuhn is the work of Lakatos; the key difference is that Lakatos makes an analytical distinction between progressive and degenerative research programmes: a progressive programme being one that results in path-breaking predictions; a degenerative programme is left to absorb. Paul Feyerabend abandoning his early attachment to positivism contributes to our understanding of the philosophy of social science. In common with Kuhn[1], he attacks Popper and his general theory of falsification.

> 'Applied resolutely, Popperian criteria would eliminate science without replacing
> it by anything comparable. They are useless as an aid to science' Feyerabend
> (1981:p160)

In so doing he takes issue with the notion that science is a rational activity; he views scientific method as being inherently "messy" where anything goes in the production of scientific knowledge. His attack went beyond falsification, extending to the foundations of science itself. One of his aims was to challenge the privileged role of science within society, for him, science possessed a church-like hold over the modern polity:

> 'But science is accepted from the criticism. In society at large the judgement of
> the bishop is received with the same reverence as the judgement of bishops and
> cardinals was accepted not too long ago' Feyerabend (1981:p157)

Feyerabend noted how many radical thinkers (he cites, Kropotkir, Marx, Ibsen) were notable for not extending their critique to science. This is a point also made by Aronowitz, who notes:

> 'What we call science and what we call ideology are distinguished in practice by
> the degree to which the acceptance of the ideology of science exempts it from
> being called ideology.'   Aronowitz (1988:p341)

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[1] Feyerabend is highly critical of Kuhn. The basis of his criticisms can be traced to two distinct considerations: one, the artificial representation of science as going through "normal" periods; two, the charlatanism engendered by the Kuhnian movement "Never before has the literature on the philosophy of science been invaded by so many creeps and incompetents. Kuhn encourages people who have no idea why a stone falls to the ground to talk with assurance about scientific method" (1981:p160).

As Benvenuto (1997) notes Feyerabend's project was to liberate societies from the iron grip of the rule of scientific experts through prising open scientific discourse. Feyerabend has been widely regarded as an anarchist, undermining the advances made by science; this may be the case, but his scepticism and refusal to attach himself to the search for a single, better method:

> 'All methodologies have their limitations and the only 'rule' that survives is 'anything goes'' (Feyerabend 1975. P.296)

This view is coupled with his reflexive consideration of the role the way in which science functions in society is clearly important. Feyerabend (1981) outlines his position, making the point that science is an ideology, and like all ideologies:

> 'one must read them like fairytales which have lots of interesting things to say but which also contain wicked lies' (1981:p156).

Feyerabend's position that science constitutes an ideology (see also Foucault. 1970) provoked considerable controversy, for scientists it was a profanity against their practice. In trying to make sense of this it is important to place science in context. Aronowitz (1988) has noted that natural science is the 'dominant paradigm that has come to dominate society'. It is beyond doubt that natural science made astonishing advances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Hobsbawn 1995). Science appeared to offer a mode for attaining knowledge and ultimately truth about the world; with it highlighting other discourses of knowledge as superstitious and as such as being anachronisms - belonging to the pre-modern era, the age of unreason. The logical positivist philosophy movement further elevated the role of science through the claim that the only route to obtaining truth about the world was through scientific method. Science is a central pillar of modernity: the teleological culmination of man's mastery over his environment. A number of commentators all point towards science's central place within the modern project, for instance, Hughes and Sharrock (1997:p16) contend that 'There is a fundamental unity and foundation to all knowledge which is provided by the unity of science'. The power of science rests on observable outcomes and as Alvesson and Willmott (1996:p43) note that 'science is the dominant source of legitimate knowledge because science tends to encourage the view that objective, value-free knowledge is attainable'. The corollary of this view on science, whereby it was viewed as being superior to other forms of knowledge is such that other disciplines need to legitimate themselves by adopting a scientific philosophy. It therefore should come as little surprise that much of twentieth century social science has fully appropriated the epistemology and practice of nature science or at the very least it has attempted to legitimate its knowledge claims with reference to tests of validity and reliability immanent to natural science.

More recently, the emergence of Science Studies has contributed to our understanding of science in action and the claims that can be made on behalf of the findings from research projects. Latour

(1987), for instance, argues that the entire foundations upon which modern claims to truth are made are predicated on the distinction between nature and humanity. This he argues has provided the epistemological basis from which the notion of "western man" can be derived, something which he views as being conceptually flawed; Latour instead concludes that "We have Never Been Modern". A central feature of Latour's position is to integrate technological devices into his analysis, computers, machines and the like, in order to demonstrate that they play an active role in social life, which implodes the distinction between man and nature (see Aramis; Latour 1996 for an example). Law (1998) comments that 'Sacred divisions and distinctions have been tossed into the flames'. Latour and his colleagues at the Ecole Superior in Paris have specialised in a form of study that looks at scientists in action, in order to try and understand the production of knowledge. The foundation of Latour's perspective is that science is inherently social in nature, thus it is impossible to understand it without reference to social processes. Latour and Woolgar (1979) make this point in their seminal piece on scientists working in a laboratory, they argue that the 'pursuit of discovery' actually amounted to scientists inscribing, classifying and coding. By placing the 'social' into science, theorists such as Latour pose a problem for the knowledge claims of science: could it be that knowledge, objectivity and reality are little more than an illusion? More recently Latour (1998) has further developed these ideas. He argues that there are two sciences: the first is the epistemology of science that is broadly resonant with the critique of science conducted above; the second science is what he refers to as the connections between the circulating system of facts. It is this latter perspective which Latour argues avoids the 'weakness' of the former type of science. In exploring his science number two, he argues that it is critical to understand the instruments through which you let the data speak; using primatologists as an example, he argued that it is important to understand how the animal is loaded into discourse. The mediators become vital in terms of understanding how the data is produced. It is through this process that the scientific 'multiplication of confusion' can be understood. Finally, he argues that science is endowed with activity, whereby a bewildering array, a multiplicity of mediators are deployed in the transport of causality. To this, he asks the question, which is a clear challenge to the interlocutors of science, is this more reductionist than collapsing life down to power/discourse?

The importance of understanding the philosophy of science is that is has direct implications for carrying out organization studies. This is the case, because of the profound and pervasive influence that the discourse of science has had within society since the enlightenment. For instance, Feyerabend (1981:p161) argues:

> 'Ideological pressures identical with those today make us listen to science to the exclusion of everything else'.

Building on the counterpositions to science, Serre in a radical critique of science draws a parallel between Carthagian ritual sacrifice and the American Space programme, something which is

probably the exemplar - par excellence - of the elevation of science. His thesis is that there is symmetry between the religion of ancient societies (i.e. the Carthaginians) and modern science.

'The reasoning is more or less symmetrical...We could construct a kind of dictionary that would allow us to translate, word by word, gesture by gesture, event by event, the scene at Cape Canaveral into the Carthaginian rite, and vice versa...the respective cost of the operation, comparable for the two communities, the immense crowd of spectators, the specialists who prepare it and who are apart from the rest, the ignition, the state-of-the-art machinery in both cases, given the technology of the two eras, the organized or fascinated rehearsal of the event, the death of those enclosed in the two statues, whose size dominates the surrounding space, the denial... "No those aren't humans, but cattle," cry even the fathers of the incinerated children in Carthage; "No," we say "it wasn't on purpose, it wasn't a sacrifice, but an accident," inevitable, even calculable, through probabilities....The series of substitutions functions exactly like stitches, like mending a tear, like making a nice tight overcast seam...Each term of the translation passes on a piece of thread, and at the end it may be said that we have followed the missing hyphens between the two worlds. Baal is in the Challenger, and the Challenger is in Baal; religion is in technology; the pagan god is in the rocket; the rocket is in the statue; the rocket on its launching pad is in the ancient idol---and our sophisticated knowledge is in our archaic fascinations.' (159-160)

This is a radical view, but the illuminating feature of Serres' work is that it provides provocative insights into how science can be viewed when compared across time, space and culture. The point of the discussion above is to gain a sense of the essentially contested nature of knowledge, something that to a degree was obscured by the rise and the subsequent hegemony of science. Recent changes that have taken place in society have placed serious questions over the ability of humanity to master its environment and in the possibilities for science. This is evidenced by the resurgence of 'old' diseases such as tuberculosis, the fragility of the environment and a questioning of the certainties of science i.e. the recent controversy concerning genetically modified foods (see Beck, 1992).

In terms of taking a position on science and positivism, I would take issue with the claims of neutrality, objectivity, generalisability and truth that are central to the science project. Such concepts are in my view deeply problematic, they are also submitting to a preoccupation of trying to make the world certain and knowable. However, such a position opens up questions of what this research project is trying to do and what are the claims on knowledge that this thesis is trying to advance? In this sense, I would argue that although I am sceptical about both the project of science and of positivism, it is clear that they can offer self-referential modes of understanding for making sense of the world. For instance, Latour (1998) sketches out science as being conducted through a number of perceptual filters and of framing devices (i.e. microsopes etc.), these filters then create a reality which is no less valid than other interpretations. In summary, my position is to cast doubt over the claims of science; science is one possibility but not one that should enjoy hegemony over other traditions. Moreover, the epistemological assumption that the world is *out there* is

fundamentally problematic. This research acknowledges that there can be alternative interpretations of events, however, it hopes to be able to provide a thought provoking analysis of the dynamics of organizational change.

7.4   Methodenstreit: Theoretical connections between philosophy and method in the context of a Business School.

In this section I will explore the connections between epistemology and method, this is something that clearly has important implications for the execution of this thesis. In the section above, we saw that one the main preoccupations of positivism is observation. This is accompanied by a commitment to 'neutrally' representing the natural world. The corollary of this has been for the tradition of positivism to rely largely on the use of quantitative data in order to 'discover those regular and invariant properties of the phenomena of the world and the relationships between them' (Hughes and Sharrock 1997:p47). Positivism has been pervasive in social research; this is highlighted by the use of investigative tools that, inter alia, include the survey, the questionnaire and the use of statistics.

As we saw in the section above positivists understand knowledge as being derived from the accumulation of "facts", which are generated through the observation of natural and social phenomena. This presumes that the way in which such results are codified and expressed is an inherently neutral process, whereby objective language is used. Indeed, there is a distinct silence from positivists on their own role in generating knowledge. Furthermore, this explains the lure of statistics to positivists. It constitutes a means of expression that encapsulates the twin requirements of one, cool and neutral detachment; and two, the ability to generalise. The use of quantitative data has traditionally afforded researchers a 'strong' claim for their knowledge (see discussion by Hammersly, 1989 on Weber), while qualitative research has been viewed as in some way inferior.

There are clear-cut distinctions between the disciplines of economics, psychology, social anthropology and sociology. These disciplines are relevant for they provide the theoretical foundation for organization studies, moreover, they all have their distinctive orientations to epistemology and theory. In economics and psychology the traditions of numerical positivism have been dominant; for instance, economists feel that economies are measurable and knowable (see Keynes 1937). In social anthropology, following the early work of Malinowski, there has been a commitment to rich description (see Geertz, 1973) through the use of ethnography. Finally, sociology has seen a long running dispute between quantitative and qualitative methods; the genesis of the dispute can be traced back to the position taken by the Chicago school in the 1930s. The case for quantitative methods is the case for positivism while more often than not qualitative methods have constituted a search for meaning. This is of course an oversimplification, it would be a folly to

conflate qualitative research with an interpretative approach to epistemology; similarly, the use of qualitative data is made by positivists in addition to interpretivists/ radical functionalists (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Clearly, there is some overlap between different techniques. For instance, the case study lends itself to a variety of research traditions. However, the claims made on behalf of the knowledge produced are different. For instance, Prof. David Knights (and colleagues) attaches a caveat to his use of case studies:

> 'We do not claim to be providing empirical facts to generalise for a wider population of organizations, but theoretical insights that can be applied in a range of contexts' Knights and Murray (1992)

> 'The purpose of the case study is to provide qualitative insights regarding a certain set of analytical features that are constituted in the research setting. The researcher then is not the proverbial fly on the wall but an active participant in a reality that she or he produces, albeit not in circumstances of (our) choosing. The objective is to deploy empirical data to stimulate reflection on a theoretical problem... Knights (1992:p3).

The position presented by Knights is wholly consistent with his post-structural theoretical stance. Functional positivists (Porter, 1990) would be more likely, after exhaustive data collection, to make more generalised truth claims, and in so doing they would construct a grand narrative (cf. The Competitive Advantage of Nations). The point to be made here is that a research technique does not constitute a research method. However, with that qualification it is certainly the case that there is a divide within organization studies research between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The study of organizations exhibits a strong attachment to empiricism, which is an important source of management studies legitimation. As Crowther, Duty and Carter (1997:p2) note,

> 'Thus management research aims to test and modify its theoretical base within real world situations (Chambers 1973) and a considerable body of research is devoted to that end (eg Coates, Davis, Longden, Stacey & Emmanuel (1993), Fitzgerald, Johnston, Brignall & Silvestro (1991), Jones (1985) and Taylor (1989)). Equally management research seeks to demonstrate its practical relevance to management in improving performance (Porter 1985). Management science therefore seeks its legitimation both within the academic community and within the business / management community and this necessitates a research and theoretical tradition which differs from the rest of academe'.

The bifurcation I am suggesting was visibly evident at the 1996 British Academy of Management conference; Lex Donaldson, one of the key speakers, attacked the linguistic/post-modern turn in his address. His criticism was genuine; it was grounded in the belief that the move away from positivism by many within Business Schools was an abandonment of a commitment to a scholarly tradition. In turn, an article by Hardy and Clegg (1996) accused the positivism of the original Aston studies as being overly deterministic and amounting to analytical formaldehyde because the voices of interview respondents were silenced and reduced to anodyne algorithms.

Numerous epistemological positions compete for a researcher's attention (see Burrell and Morgan 1979, Hassard 1991, Hardy and Clegg 1996); a researcher's orientation to knowledge will have implications for their management of a research project. It will frame the research and the techniques of data collection to be employed. It is with this in mind that led Lincoln and Denzin (1994:p12) to declare:

'The age of value-free inquiry for the human disciplines is over'.

I subscribe, as can be seen in sections above, to the critique of positivism, further, I identify with interpretivism. However, pace positivism, I would concur with the view of Hughes and Sharrock(1997) in that positivism is neither unintelligent nor monolithic. The use of questionnaires which generate data in order to test hypotheses, from which correlations are derived, are the stock in trade of a positivist methodology. Given my rejection of positivism it is no surprise about the research methods that will be used in this thesis, the case study constructed primarily through interviews, documentary analysis and observation will be employed.

7.5   The reflexive Bricoleur: Knowledge claims, Knowledge Limits

There is a tendency within contemporary Organization Studies to deploy a range of different methods on one study. At one level, this can be seen as a way of triangulating the data. Whereby the *validity* of a position is tested through other means. Another interpretation of this is by viewing the researcher as bricoleur constructing a bricolage. That is, recognizing that there is no absolute truth, but building a picture that incorporates a number of different types of data. The concept of a bricoleur is useful, this is because it is a reminder to us that research is a messy, highly contingent process in which the researcher attempts to generate data by whatever means possible. It also offers the opportunity to escape what Janesick (1994:p214) describes as methodolatry that she views as:

'A preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told. Methodolatry is the slavish attachment and devotion to method that so often overtakes the discourse in the education and human fields'.

In a similar vein, Morse (1994:p223) states,

'A good researcher is not confined methodologically by being trained in-and limited to - a single strategy. (For instance, "I only do ethnography). Such a restriction limits the types of question the researcher may ask and the types of results he or she can obtain, and restricts the strength of the research'

In a recent presentation, Hardy and Philips (1998) described their research strategy as:

'hanging around, listening and seeing what is going on'

While Swan (1998) described the IKON approach to data collection as 'drilling', using any method that could be used in order to get the data required. Such views would be an anathema to many quantitative positivists. However, it is worth reminding ourselves that as the latter code their questionnaires, input their data, and derive their correlations that they are "positivists in action": they socially construct knowledge according to the norms of their discipline (see Latour 1987). As Law and Callon (1991) argue:

> 'The idea that there is a special scientific method, a medium where truth prospers in the absence of power, is a myth'

In summary, the epistemological understanding of the world of the researcher is likely to have a profound influence on the type of research that they then engage in. For instance, an occupational psychologist may claim to be able to measure personality, while a critical social psychologist could well deny the category of personality. The corollary of these insights are that it is <u>vital</u> to pay careful attention to what it is to be studied and the implications this will have for both the techniques- to be used- and the access- to be gained.

It is important to be clear about the type of empirical data required for a particular study. For instance, Hickson et al's (1986) Top Decisions research looked at decision making in 150 companies, while recent work by Mats Alvesson (1998) relies on access to one management meeting. WORC researchers Richard Whipp and Peter Clark (1987) studies into Rover drew on corporate archives from 1896-1982. Similarly, Margaret Grieco's (1987) study in Social Networks takes a temporal perspective that draws upon three generations of working class people within three localities. All of these studies can be considered to be in-depth, yet they are all different. Moreover, they all placed different demands on the researcher in terms of generating and using the data.

The sections above highlight the tensions within social science research, in terms of my own position, I share the reservations about science and positivism - the two of course are distinct- held by post-structuralists; the *will to truth* immanent to these positions is in my view illusory. However, pace Popper, it does not follow from this that I view the work of positivists as being irrelevant, far from it. Rather in my view it is important to be reflexive about the research process in order to be able acknowledge the limits of the claims that are being made by and for the research. Reflexivity is an important consideration in any research project, it is a project of self-analysis (see Bourdieu, 1984). In research terms the concern of reflexivity is for researchers to analyse themselves as researchers i.e. what is driving the research? what are the assumptions? it is also to analyse their research: for whom does it speak? What interests does it represent? (see Steier, 1991 for a more

detailed coverage) Whom do you wish to interest with your research (Latour, 1998)? Brown (1992:p222) identifies that reflexivity:

> 'Would make it evident that objects, persons and events are inseparable from the process of representation by which they are formed'

This is an important issue; the ontology of a researcher is inextricably linked to the research process. This is a point made by Foucault (1984); it was also one of the themes pursued by Edward Said in the Reith Lectures. Said (1993) argued that academics are subject to pressures from their professional positions, their academic disciplines and their employing institutions, the corollary of such pressures being to render the notion of a free thinking, transcendental academic subject as a mere fiction. By posing the question whether such a state can exist, Said offers the researcher an opportunity to engage in some reflexive self-analysis. This is clearly relevant to all disciplines, but particularly so in the case of Business School research. My argument is that in Business Schools, in the UK at least, there is the implicit expectation that knowledge generated will have performativity i.e. that it will be usable, that it will be relevant (see Johnson's British Academy of Management address), and that it will serve the interests of business. This line of reasoning will be familiar to everyone within a Business School. There are difficulties with this perspective; are researchers to transmogrify themselves into management newshounds? Are they to strive to develop state-of-the-art management theory to contribute to UK plc? Such pressures are clearly in existence, this therefore heightens the need for reflexivity (see Hardy and Clegg, 1996).

Reflexivity extends beyond the content of the research to the research findings themselves. For instance, particular methods may well have limitations and it is important to acknowledge those limitations. Furthermore, it is necessary to have a sense of the status that is being claimed for the knowledge generated; this issue has not been a difficulty for positivists, as they were mirroring the world itself. However, for those working in other paradigms the question becomes more difficult. As has been seen above, all knowledge claims are essentially contestable, however, does this mean that organizational theory retreats into a position whereby there are a cacophony of competing voices, none of which can be deemed superior in relation to another? This is a possibility of a 'hard' form of post-modern relativism (see Chia, 1995), whereby the promotion of competing voices iterates to the nth degree. Jakobson and Jacques (1997) refer to the 'truth trap' that is taking the position that one position is true while another is untrue. This position could be read as complementing what Chia (1995) has termed hard relativism, and in my view it is mistaken. An advocation that knowledge is socially constructed does not mean that the producer of knowledge is disabled from making claims about the research over and above other research. Rather it is the appreciation that what is being offered is an interpretation. In this sense I concur with Bauman (1987) who postulates that the traditional role of a researcher was to act in a legislative capacity,

this he argues is giving way to the role of the interpreter. As the title suggests the position of interpreter is to do just that, an academic's 'new' function is to:

> 'Read meaning properly and for somebody to vouch for the rules which guided the reading of the meaning and thus made the interpretation valid or authoritative; somebody who would sieve good interpretations from bad ones' (1987:p197).

Therefore, the 'truth trap' is only a problem if a researcher loses sense that their findings are an interpretation. It does not mean, pace Jakobson (1993) and Jacques (1996), that some interpretations might not seem more plausible than others, or that some interpretations may demonstrate greater rigour in the application of a particular research technique. Such issues are the Achilles heel of social construction: to use the phrase of Denzin and Lincoln (1994) they amount to a legitimation crisis. In summary, it is important to recognise that 'truth' is constructed and may well change over time and space, yet within a given community there will be shared understandings as to whether a particular interpretation is valid nor not.

The issues surrounding reflexivity ask important questions of the researcher. In a sense they turn the gaze onto the researcher, refusing to treat the researcher as a neutral observer of reality. As Kerfoot and Knights (1992:p8) argue 'a social scientist is not a neutral mediator between truth and the external world but an active participant in its construction'. In addition, a concern for reflexivity is also a concern for those researched as research is a 'collaborative product' (Hardy and Clegg, 1996:9:14) between 'the research subject, researcher, and the protocols that comprise the research process both embody and obscure power'. Hardy and Clegg's (1996) concern for lost voices, be they construction workers (see Clegg, 1975) or managers silenced through the series of translations that were the Aston studies (1996) is resonant with Grieco's (1996) work which places emphasis on giving people voice. The corollary of this position is that voicing calls for representational devices in the research that allow the views and perspective of the researched to be given space to come to the fore.

7.6   Exploring Qualitative Research Techniques:

This section will explore the key techniques associated with qualitative research; the section will provide a theoretical overview of the techniques that will be used to generate data within this thesis. The section will commence by introducing the case study; this will be followed by a discussion into the nature of the research interview. In addition, there will be short sections covering non-participant observation and documentary analysis.

7.7   Case Studies: An Introduction

Case studies, often loosely characterised (Hammersly 1992:p183), have their genesis in the Chicago School of sociology in the 1920s and 1930s which developed the qualitative case study in contrast to statistical methods. Case studies are a common feature of qualitative research and they are used frequently within organization studies (see Smith et al 1990; Pettigrew 1985; Whipp and Clark 1987; Leavy and Wilson 1994). The chief attraction of the case study is that it places an organization and events in that organization into a specific temporal and spatial context. The importance of context is paramount to the case study, as it is a study of the particular rather than the general. This is a point that Hammersly (1992) makes when comparing the case study with surveys and experiments. It is generally held that an advantage of a case study is that it is likely to contain greater detail and accuracy than other methods (see Ball, 1990; Hammersly 1992, Yin 1989) through a rich description (see Geertz, 1973).

However, among advocates of the case study method there is a fundamental disagreement as to the generalisability of the findings from the case study. One line of thought, as represented by Miles and Huberman (1984) or Yin (1989) seek to use case studies to extrapolate out to larger populations; the question borne in mind by the researcher is how representative is this case? Has it been 'properly' selected? This perspective can be seen within organization studies, for instance, Robertson et al (1996) argue for the need to compare like with like:

> 'There would be inherent problems of comparability if the research did not acknowledge a requirement to compare manufacturing firms with similar profiles' (1996:p9).

In opposition to this view is the broadly post-structural perspective, which sees the extrapolation out to a broader population as being inherently problematic. For instance, Kerfoot and Knights (1992) make the point that the efficacy of a single case study is not to make generalizable conclusions to a broader population, rather it is to use the empirical data as insight with which to reflect upon analytical questions. The aim of this process is to provoke theoretical reflection on a particular theme, the 'test being whether it makes sense to a reader rather than subjecting it "to some spurious notion of objectivity". In more recent work Knights heightens his critique by arguing that his 'research cannot and does not claim to be representative of the larger population from which the case is drawn'. (Knights and Macabe 1998 p8), claiming that 'random sampling in order to attempt to mirror larger populations' is a futile enterprise and that such an endeavour is 'absurd'. Instead, Knights and Macabe (1997:p7) highlight that their use of case studies is because they offer a:

> 'Means of exploring more deeply certain theoretical insights concerning organizational life'.

I would concur with this view, with the qualification that the empirics produced by a case study can be of use in themselves, this is in their role as a document, not of a transcendental reality, but as a subjective history of the present (see Foucault, 1983). Therefore, despite all the reservations outlined above as to the validity of knowledge, empirical work, in my view, still has a vitally important role to play within organization studies, one that extends beyond the realm of plasticine for analytical insights. Case studies in themselves need not be comparative: a singular, stand alone case study can tell us a great deal about the organizational world. My thesis is an in-depth case study of one organization, CoastElectric, a privatised Regional Electricity Company.

7.8   Research Techniques: Conceptualising the Research Interview:

Among the panoply of devices deployed to amass qualitative data, the interview is one of the most frequently used (see Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Kvale 1996; Silverman 1993). Indeed, as a technique it is virtually ubiquitous within organization studies qualitative research. The pervasive quality of the 'interview' is long established, however, this is not to suggest that there is a consensus among practitioners of the research interview as to its role within the research process. Arguably the dominant view, to date, on the research interview, is to regard it as a means of eliciting information on an organization, situation or such like through tapping into the interviewee who is seen as a mine of knowledge (see Holstein and Gubrium 1997). Fundamental to this perspective, is the notion that meaning is embodied within the interviewee and as such simply requires teasing out through skilful interview practice (Lee 1994).

The orthodox view on interviews places emphasis on technique in order for the data generated to be valid. This is clearly resonant with the concerns of positivism or of critical realism: there is a transcendental truth, the researcher's task is therefore to access it. In this spirit, researchers are cautioned against leading questions and other means of creating bias, which will taint the purity of the data. Discursive practices such as, establishing eye-contact with the interviewee; asking non-controversial questions at the outset of the interview; being attentive to the interviewees body language are all encouraged (Lee 1994). As Baker (1997:p130 notes),

> 'The interviewer attempts to position herself or himself as colleague, friend or
> confessor in order that the respondent speaks openly, authentically or truthfully, to
> produce valid reporting on some interior or exterior state of affairs'

The nostrums of best practice resonate with similar ideas widely propagated within recruitment and selection circles (see Shackleton 1989). Such views ignore the possibility that an interview in itself is a dynamic, knowledge-creating event. Kvale (1996) takes issue with this perspective and argues that "an interview is in fact an inter view": an event at which knowledge is created. Similarly, relational theorist Gergen notes that,

'Constructionism replaces the individual with the relationship as the locus of knowledge' (Gergen, 1994, p. x).

Clearly, such a view problematizes the representation of the interviewee as being a passive source of knowledge. In many of my interviews, comments such as: "I have never really thought about it before", "The only time that I sit and reflect on these issues is when I talk to you" illustrate this point that the interview is a dynamic in which knowledge is created. These experiences make the research interview resemble Rogerian counselling or a confessional (see Foucault 1977) in the sense that the respondent uses the interviewer to talk about their doubts and deep feelings about the organization. The corollary of this perspective is such that it downplays the importance of many of the preoccupations outlined above. Moreover, it rebuts the attempt to create 'scientific' conditions, instead viewing such conditions as playing a part of the dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee.

The different stances presented thus far clearly have far-reaching consequences for the approach to take vis a vis interviews. This is particularly the case with regards to the structure and format of the interview. For instance, in my study of CoastElectric, when in the East region, interviews with staff took place in a Human Resources interview room: this was a space usually reserved for appraisals, recruitment interviews and disciplinary proceedings. Yet, from a positivistic perspective, everyone being interviewed within the same room would have constituted an admirable attempt at creating laboratory conditions. Yet in my view the space introduced an extra dynamic (see Lefebvre, 1991), something which in some cases may have been intimidating for the interviewee.

The view of the research interview as a participative, dynamic event in which meaning is created is substantively different from other approaches. However, this does not mean that the researcher abandons discernment or an attempt to get at the story, rather it is an acknowledgement that an interview is an interactive event (an inter-view; Kvale 1997). A further factor to note, when considering the role of the interview, is the centrality of the medium to contemporary western culture. This is a point made by Silverman (1993) when he refers to living in an Interview Society, whereby the interview plays a special function in creating and recreating reality. Moreover, through the prominence of interviews in the media, people are comfortable with the medium and are able to participate skilfully. In my fieldwork, staff in CoastElectric were comfortable with the notion of being interviewed, culturally they appeared to associate it with research. Gubrium and Holstein (1997:p126) reflect this when they argue:

'With the development of the interview society, and the increasing deprivatisation of personal experience, the interview is becoming more and more commonplace, also making it a "naturally occurring" occasion for articulating experience'.

This insight which suggests that, inter alia, news programmes, popular day time television (i.e. Oprah) and specialist "celebrity" interviews (such as those conducted by Martin Bashir) are manifestations of the "interview society", a phenomenon that has elevated the interview to occupying a pre-eminent position as a technique for generating data. As Silverman (1993) notes, a characteristic of contemporary society is the important, cultural role that the interview plays within society. Celebrated interviews such as those conducted between Martin Bashir and both Louise Woodward and Princess Diana are emblematic of the "Interview Society". Such observations highlight that people within British society are likely to have a highly developed, implicit understanding of what an interview is as well as behaviours that might be exhibited within interviews. The prominence of the interview and the interviewer in society, be it Michael Parkinson, David Frost or Jeremy Paxman, has, I think, significant implications for the research process: for interviews are culturally significant events.

The 'interview society' thesis was borne out in the data collection that I undertook in CoastElectric; respondents had a very clear idea of what it was to be interviewed. It would be naive to think that this was not influenced by their experiences of interviews within the media at large. Kvale (1996:p84) argues that 'the very virtue of qualitative interviews is their openness'; it is worth considering a range of the responses to 'the interview' as an event. For the convenience of discussion I have organized them into a number of category headings, which are meant as guides and not as absolutes, they are based on my experience in the field. In addition, there were interviews that were outside of these categories and would fall into the more conventional 'information gathering' mode of data generation. These different experiences of the interview are resonant with Kvale's contention that (1996:p66):

'In conclusion, the interview is neither an objective nor a subjective method-its essence is intersubjective interaction'

I will now expand on the interview as one of four types: confessional; expose; gladiatorial challenge; meaning creation:

7.9   Interview as Confessional

I have made mention of this form of interview, I came across it with a number of respondents in CoastElectric. This type of interview took place with respondents who occupied very senior positions. I came to be regarded as a confidant from outside of the organization, who understood the organization but was not directly involved in the organization. The assurances of confidentiality meant that in many cases senior executives were able to express doubts and anxieties about the organization. Another feature of this type of interview was that the interviewee generally did virtually all of the talking, in fact, in going through the interview tapes or the written notes these

interviews were remarkable for how little I had actually said. On one such occasion, an hour scheduled interview with a senior manager at CoastElectric turned into a three and half hour soliloquy, whereby he poured out of all of his views on the organization and what was going on.

7.10   Interview as Expose

For many respondents, particularly for those that regarded the organizational changes in a generally negative manner, the interview amounted to an opportunity to expose aspects of the organization to me. This probably took place in the context of the interview as there were few fora whereby an employee could speak openly and at times contentiously about the organization; furthermore, knowing that the contents of the interview would end up in a PhD thesis it was an opportunity for them not only to air their views but also to have them recorded. These interviews were useful in themselves; they were also invaluable in terms of opening up avenues of investigation.

7.11   Interview as Gladiatorial Contest

Many of the interviews that took place resembled the investigative, searching interview of the kind found on the BBC Today programme. The reason that the interview took this form was that some of the senior executives interviewed were obfuscatory, and prone to making bullish assertions that were represented to be fact. Examples included: 'We're overmanned'; 'The eastern region are crap'; 'With TQM we can cut staff and improve quality at the same time'. An interview is dyadic and when confronted with such statements, I found myself challenging them.

7.12   Interview as Meaning Creation

The interview as a way of creating meaning was highly iterative, whereby a respondent would talk through an event and what had happened; this would be followed by going back to the same event and trying to make sense of it. The differences in epistemological comprehension of the status of the research interview are clear, although the concentration on difference obscures some consensual factors that exist between the different categories. For most writers on research methods, the ethics of the interview is paramount. For instance, Kvale (1996) provides an ethical checklist that is firmly grounded within a humanist tradition. There are a number of points to note, first, it is clearly important for a researcher to be aware that one's work can have impacts on the organization and how it could potentially effect employees. As Kvale (1996) points out interviews constitute,

> 'A moral enterprise: The personal interaction in the interview affects the interviewee, and the knowledge produced by the interview affects our understanding of the human situation'.

Clearly, one's integrity and professional identity should demand that the highest levels of confidentiality are maintained throughout. While a constructionist approach allows for far more fluidity in terms of how the interview is used, in terms of ethics, anything does not go and it is as exacting as post-Milgram positivism. At numerous points in my research I was confronted with difficult issues, i.e. being privy to managerial knowledge which was not yet publicly available and that had serious implications for the labour force; being told of illegal practice in the organization. Such issues arose and whatever I thought about them, I had to keep my confidences. This is because an act of organizational research requires the goodwill and trust of different parties - it was not my intention to become active within the organizational context. Confidentiality was a key requirement of my research; it had to be the overriding ethical concern, and protecting confidentiality was of central importance. At the level of the organization, I gave informal confidentiality guarantees i.e. that I would use a pseudonym – CoastElectric – for the organization and actors within the organization. At the level of the individual respondent, at the start of an interview I commenced by telling them about the project and by giving them a confidentiality agreement that I would sign in front of them. Clearly, this action was largely symbolic, but it was to give them a document that they were able to take away with them. I requested that the interview be taped but pointed out that if they were uncomfortable with that then I would stop the tape. Within CoastElectric, particularly at around the time of the take-over, people were reluctant to be taped; Richard Preston, the regional manager, ingeniously told me that were I to tape him I might not get the fullness of the message! In some interviews, at certain points, I was asked to switch off the tape machine. That said, the vast majority of interviewees, were convivial and there were few problems. On only one occasion, at CoastElectric, was there a problem, on telling a respondent about the confidential nature of the interview, he told me that if he ever found out that I divulged anything from the interview, he would 'do me'.

7.13   Documents and Observation

Interviews should not have a monopoly on our attention; they are but one means of generating data on a particular organization and its environment. In my organizational case studies, interviews were the prime method of enquiry, which is not unusual within qualitative research (see Kvale 1996). However, other methods that will play supplementary yet important roles are those of documentary analysis and the observation of organizational events. The rationale behind the use of these two sources of data collection are that in the first instance the opportunities were available, secondly, that they would assist in building a rich picture of CoastElectric. The use of documents would add an extra dimension in the attempt to construct 'what the organization was like', they would also acts as registers of organizational action in the period studied. Likewise, the observation of organizational events would enhance my opportunities to generate data on the organization.

7.14   Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the analytical traditions associated with the social sciences. In so doing I have outlined my position as a constructionist, in the sense that the account I will provide will be an interpretation of CoastElectric, an organization that is undergoing a programme of organizational change. This will be operationalised by using interview techniques, observation and company records. In this sense, I am viewing myself, the researcher, as a bricoleur constructing a bricolage. That is recognizing that there is no absolute truth, but building a picture that incorporates a number of different types of data. A commitment of this research is to give 'voice' to the experiences of those within the organization.

Chapter 8: _____ Social Science in Action: Operationalising Research into Organizational Change

> 'Doing successful organizational research is difficult. Doing the same in
> difficult circumstances proves worthy of discussion' George and Clegg 1997.

In the preceding chapters, through my coverage of the theoretical perspectives of organizations in the midst of change, I have clearly located this project as being within the contextualist/constructionist tradition. Contextualism is clearly necessary for a project that seeks to study processes and the relations of power. This chapter will deal with how the project was operationalised: in so doing, it will address abstract epistemological issues as well as the practical implications of conducting research into organizational change. A further feature of the analysis will be in its attempt to consider reflexively the process of 'doing research'. This approach is taken in view of my experiences whilst carrying out the fieldwork.

8:1 The Politics of Access: The Management of meaning and Faustian pacts

January 1994: Quiet Beginnings

In January 1994, I took the decision that I would like to read for a PhD degree. Like most prospective PhD students I had little idea of what doing a PhD actually meant: I had enjoyed a four month Masters Degree project, which investigated organizational change within a Regional Electricity Company, and decided that I would like to expand this into something larger. It is to this point that my first thoughts on how to get access to organizations for the purposes of PhD research can be traced. These thoughts were triggered by a discussion immediately after my MSc viva:

> Dr Roger Lumley (examiner): 'Whilst it is important to be critical in the social sciences I would be wary of giving CoastElectric a copy of this project in its current form'

> Dr Chris Smith (M.Sc. supervisor): 'If you want to do a Ph.D. you want them (CoastElectric) to let you back in, so I think you need to edit some of your criticisms'

I took this advice seriously and re-read the thesis in order to sanitise more critical elements of the work, this process was aided by the thesis being read by a family member who was, at the time, an employee of the said organization. The thesis was then distributed to CoastElectric where it was eventually discussed at Board level, as well as being widely circulated throughout the organization. At this point, I took a break from the UK in order to travel, hoping to secure some research funding for the next academic year. On my return, I was very pleased to secure a three year funded studentship with Professor David Wilson at Aston University that I accepted without hesitation. I was also somewhat surprised to be offered a job as an organizational analyst at CoastElectric, the organization that I had critiqued a few months earlier.

I politely turned down CoastElectric's offer, although I met with one of the senior managers in order to try and secure access for research.

> 'It is foolish for the researcher to put too much work into a study that must be conducted in one particular setting unless he or she can be assured that access will not be denied' (Morse, 1994:p222)

It was agreed that I could have access to the organization, this access was obtained on the sole condition that I either used a pseudonym for the organization or alternatively I sought their permission prior to publishing any materials which mentioned the organization or personnel by name. I chose to use a pseudonym: CoastElectric. It is worthwhile considering the issues involved in such a confidentiality agreement. At one level, an undertaking not to name an organization unless the information to be disseminated is first policed by the organization offers to considerable barrier to intellectual freedom. However, this must be countered by two related points: one theoretical, and the other practical. At the theoretical level, the loss of name, although denying the immediate recognition of previous Aston case studies such as Cadburys (Smith et al 1990) and Rover (Whipp and Clark 1987) it does not act as a significant decontextualizing factor. At a practical level, I was simply not in a negotiating position from which I could set conditions of research transparency.

With access established in CoastElectric, I had to resist the temptation not to rush immediately into fieldwork. On the advice of my PhD supervisor I decided to spend the 1st year of the thesis concentrating primarily on the exploration of theoretical perspectives. At the end of this period I decided to commence investigating organizational change in CoastElectric.

8:2   constructing an Identity: An award, a Business Card and Sartorial Advice

To my surprise, in May 1995, the Institute of Management Consultants awarded me a prize for research; the prize was awarded annually to a Midlands University Doctoral candidate. Whilst flattering in itself, the award was significant in two major respects. First, it served to legitimate my research with external organizations; second, it forced my to think carefully about my 'image' as a researcher. This was a crucial consideration in the research process, I needed to be seen as a 'credible' researcher in order to be able to generate the data which was necessary for this project.

In terms of establishing myself as a 'credible' researcher, my aim was to be able to access the organization at different levels of the hierarchy. In addition, I wanted to be permitted to spend considerable amounts of time in the organization in order to be able to observe activities and to become fully immersed in the organization. In this sense, my notion of conducting contextualist research extended beyond spending a week in the Head Office of the organization under

examination Such an approach clearly necessitated managing the relations with the organizations in order to create the conditions that would enable me to gain the access to the organizations that I required

In theoretical terms I was attempting to construct an identity that would establish my credentials to conduct research which would require a considerable amount of input from the organization particularly in terms of employees time To use a concept from Foucault's oeuvre, I was establishing the authority to speak in a particular context, in particular I was establishing my warrant to conduct an informed analysis of organizations undergoing organizational change From my MSc studies at Aston University, I had already seen the name of the institution and the image associated with that name could have a considerable impact on gaining access to organizations In terms of making sense of this situation, Bourdieu's (1984) discussion on the nature of symbolic capital suggests that various cultural signs project identity and image Bourdieu identifies three constituent and interconnecting features of symbolic capital cultural capital, social capital and economic capital Being a doctoral student at Aston was to imbue me with symbolic capital

In order to gain the level of access that the research required I played heavily on the cultural signs associated with Aston Business School This process was facilitated by the Aston Doctoral programme who were generous in their provision of various facilities such as headed letter paper and brochures publicizing the Business School, which could be used when accessing organizations In addition to this formal provision of cultural signs, an entrepreneurial member of the cohort of Doctoral students produced Business cards, an example of which is shown in exhibit 8 1 below

Aston Business School Birmingham B4 7ET UK.
Tel 0121 359 3611 Ext. 4902. Telex 336997 UNIAST G
Fax: 0121 333 5620 E Mail cartecjg@aston ac.uk
Web http.//www aston ac.uk/~cartecjg/

Chris Carter MSc.
Researcher
Organisation Studies Group

ASTON UNIVERSITY

Whilst undoubtedly such cultural signs play an important role in opening up opportunities for access, the whole process is clearly more complex than merely presenting the signs of a relatively prestigious Business School to an organization This was particularly evident in the mythology present among the Doctoral community at Aston that suggested that it was very difficult to obtain access to organizations Ferlie and Pettigrew (1996) note that access is a particular problem in organizations undergoing change as

'Negotiating access to organizations engaged in such a high-level restructuring can be tricky indeed, as managerial and consultant careers and reputations maybe on the line'

Hornsby-Smith (p55) points out further reasons as to why senior executives may be unwilling to grant access

'Broadly speaking, elites and powerful people and institutions are frequently able to deny access because they do not wish themselves or their decision-making processes to be studied, it is inconvenient, they are busy and wish to assert their rights to privacy, and so on'

Greiner (1985) highlights the more general difficulties involved in the process of obtaining access

'Academic researchers rarely seek or receive open access to organizations, hence, how can they discover what is really going on? Most of us do not even get a five-minute tour through the executive suite Instead, we dip our rusty fishing hooks in backwater streams and hope to get a nibble' (Greiner, L 1985 251)

This was something that was reinforced during the Doctoral Methods Research classes, a programme which provided some formal research training (Lee 1995), in which it was stressed that the organizations, by providing access, are doing the researcher a favour Such a view is problematic, for it can engender a sense of obsequiousness within the researcher something that further amplifies the pre-existing disparity in power relations between the doctoral researcher and the organization to be researched However, despite the difficulties in gaining high quality research, Pettigrew and McNulty (1998 p848) offer a glimmer of hope

'Access difficulties have been and remain a source of constraint on studies of higher reaches of business But access problems are not insurmountable Direct access to key figures and important processes is negotiable'

It was clear that the research I was planning to undertake would require a considerable amount of liaising and communicating with the organizations under study This led me to organize my office at Aston in a way in which I would be able to carry out the research in as professional a manner as possible Among other things, this led to acquiring a filing cabinet and investing in a telephone answering machine

As I have mentioned above, in 1995 I was awarded a prize for research by the Institute of Management Consultants, I was invited to the IMC's annual general meeting, an event held at the Bass Brewery in Burton on Trent, to receive the reward My partner was insistent that I purchased a new suit in order to attend the meeting, her argument was

'Your suit is awful, you look like a teenage bank clerk in it, you will not be credible if you go dressed like that'

This comment led to a trip to Rackhams, a well-known department store in Birmingham, where my partner selected a 'stylish' look for me The contents of the image are listed below

---

Dress Code for an Organization Studies Researcher

Yves St Laurent Shirts

Red tie

blue linen suit

Samsonite briefcase
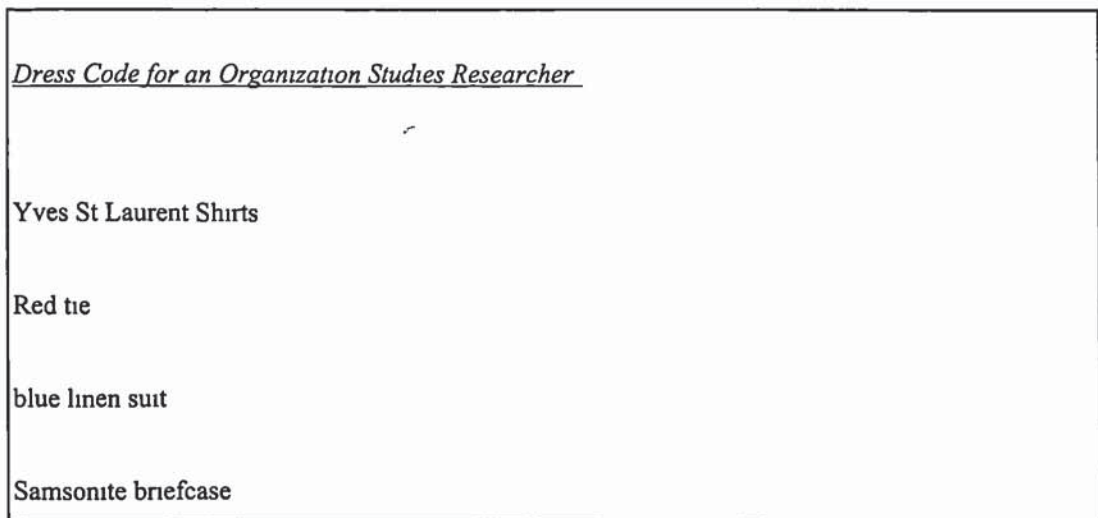
The image aimed at being smart, stylish but not corporate On my partner's advice I adopted a more casual look, which was a way of emphasizing my difference to the organizational actors being studied This is resonant with Morse's position (1994 p223),

> 'It is best for the researcher to dress somewhat ambiguously-for example, to wear a uniform of a different color   as a signal to staff that he or she does not really belong in that setting and is there to collect data, and not to act as an employee'

I was now ready to engage with the organizational world, which I will explore in the section below

8:3   Accessing Organizations

In this section, I will examine my considerations for obtaining access to organizations for the purposes of my research This will comprise of three sections first, there will be a broad consideration of the data requirements of the study, second, access to CoastElectric will be discussed, third, the process of obtaining access to Chamberlain Light will detailed This will then be followed by an in-depth consideration of the data sample Throughout this section, it must be borne in mind that the data collection period of the study is best viewed as a process that required careful management

8:4   Data Requirements: Power, Process and Change.

The preceding chapters have outlined the theoretical areas germane to the thesis. The key areas of interest being (i) managerialist change initiatives, (ii) the process of change, (iii) the employee relations and (iv) the relations of power. Prior to embarking on the study, I clearly needed to consider carefully the type of data I might require in order to carry out the study. As Field and Morse (1991; in Morse 1994:p222) note,

'The research strategy is driven by the nature of the research question'

In terms of studying the managerialist change initiatives, this required an investigation of issues such as the reasons for the adoption of a particular initiative; the translation of the initiative into the organizational context; the role the initiative played in the organization; the apparent effects of the initiative. In terms of analysing the processes of change, this was an attempt to prise open the dynamics of the organization over time. As such, this necessitated an examination of the following issues: An attempt to reconstruct the pre-configured institutional structures within the organization; The agentic actions of key organizational players in mobilising for or against organizational change and key turning points within the organization's history. The relations of power experienced by different occupational groups over time; Constitution of subjects within the work place; the exercise of power within the workplace.

8:5   The Importance of Temporality

An important anchor point in this thesis is the importance of temporality to the reserach process. In part, the thesis amounts to a historical reconstruction based on, (I) oral accounts derived from interviews (see Pettigrew, 1985), (ii) watching organizational events unfold over the study period. The latter instances of watching organizational events unfold as they happened gave a particular sense of the importance of temporality to issues of process and change. This is a point made by Isabella who argues: 'to randomly arranged pieces of a puzzle for which people possess neither a final picture as a construction guide nor a specific indication of whether the final picture will contain some, all, or none of the pieces' (Isabella, 1990, p16).

In terms of the historical reconstruction, I was reconstructing the general historical context of the two organizations i.e. Nationalisation and the creation of the electricity boards; I was also recreating the immediate past i.e. the privatised epoch - 1992 onwards. This was matched by an attempt to report on the present, to watch change unfolding as it happened. Therefore, the research strategy in terms in temporality is shown in the table below:

Type of Data	Temporal Period
Founding and past of the organization	1948 - 1990
Period of Privatisation	1990 - 1995
Change Unfolding	1995 - 1996

In a section above, I have already discussed the links that I had made with access. In June 1995, I went to CoastElectric in order to hold a number of preliminary interviews with, in the first instance, key organizational actors. At this stage, my prime concern was to open up links with as many key actors as possible in order to facilitate the research. At this point, I had two main concerns: First, to be able to gain access to senior executives within CoastElectric. An integral part of my study aimed to gain an appreciation of the role that was played by executives within the organizational change process. For this, I felt that it was imperative to gain close contact with the cadre of executives. To be able to *legitimately* spend time in the organization, in order to be able to talk to managers and · employees. Secondly, to complement the legitimate, officially sanctioned access, with independent openings that were not subject to managerial control. This idea was derived from Hardy (1983) in her study of the power and politics at play within Canadian universities: the rationale being that independence from management allows the researcher a greater scope for analytical freedom. This notion is also resonant with Douglas' (1976) discussion of covert, investigative research

8:6   A Managerialist Subject?

The research took place in 1995 and 1996, during this period CoastElectric were in the midst of a huge import of managerial ideas, a factor that made the organization such an interesting one to study. This factor has, I believe, an important bearing on the 'quality' of the access I was able to obtain for the project. It was the presumption by key actors in the organization was that coming from a Business School I would be able to give them sound advice on 'how they were getting on'. The timing of my research was fortuitous as it was at a point where the Regional Electricity Companies were emerging from their nationalised past. In chapter four, I discussed in some detail the role of Business Schools in the discourse of new managerialism. Some schools, or at least some departments within schools, see their mission as being to assist organizations through the creation of *applicable knowledge*; this is counterposed by departments that take a far more critical view of the role of Business Schools. Burrell (1997) in his critique of MBAs offers the latter view, while Saunders (1998) and Johnson (1998) see Business Schools in the former respect.

As a researcher, I was fully aware of the advantages of being from a well-known Business School, compared with, for example, a radical sociology department, in terms of gaining access. Thus, for some of the decision making elites within the organization, I was probably viewed as being a new

managerialist subject - someone that shared their agenda, someone that was pro-change and pro-managerialism. This was of course useful, but it was also a danger, a danger of succumbing to the new managerialist embrace. For instance, in the first half of the twentieth century, many Labour Party politicians were said to have been mesmerised by the establishment, they were held to have been caught in the 'aristocratic embrace' (see Marquand, 1986). This process, quite simply, amounts to people converging in the face of the underlying relations of power. This is a risk for a young researcher when spending time with senior executives, who appear to be omnipotent in their given organizations (see also Burrell's (1997) chronicling of the Stockholm Syndrome). As Hellgren and Macdonald (1996:3.24) note:

> 'Those who interview are commonly keen to talk to the most senior people in the organisation, and are commonly triumphant when they succeed. They explain that the more senior the individual, the more the individual will know about the organisation'.

This captures a tendency within the study of organizations to privilege the views of those occupying senior positions while being silent on other perspectives (see Mueller, 1991). In terms of gaining access Tosuka (1995), commenting specifically on researching Labour relations in Japanese transplant factories, identifies five approaches for gaining access:

(1) The front door approach.

(2) Off premises interviews

(3) Collaboration with Trade Union activists

(4) Participant Observation

(5) Research on cases that have reached the public domain through industrial tribunals and the like.

8:7   Takeover: Access Fragility

Radio 4: Today Programme (16/9/1995):

John Humphreys: 'Today, it was confirmed that FedCo, an American utility, have had their offer for CoastElectric, a Regional Electricity Company, accepted. This is one of the first takeovers of a regional electricity company, at 8.10 we will be talking to the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine to discuss the implications...'

The confirmation of the take-over of CoastElectric was the culmination of a month's media coverage of the corporate wrangling between CoastElectric's incumbent directors and a FedCo acquisition team. In this sense, it was hardly a surprise that CoastElectric had been taken over, moreover, given the view of the then President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang, it was highly improbable that any such outcome would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I began to consider the implications of the take-over for my research; my immediate worry was that my access would be abruptly discontinued, which would leave me unable to undertake the thesis that I had planned. This was a very real concern, something that clearly I had to avoid. This fear was compounded by the immediate difficulties I had in obtaining access to key actors, all of whom had to date been pivotal in my understanding of the operations of senior management. Many of the key actors were unavailable, which led me to think the worst about my future prospects for continuing access to the organization.

My response to this situation needed to be swift; I cancelled a vacation and headed into the field. In order to maintain access, I decided to re-enter the organization through my informal access points. I spent time in the far west of CoastElectric's geographical area: talking to managers, talking to staff and on occasion to management consultants. I spent the time gathering as much information as I could on the process of the take-over. At this stage, I spent around three weeks, with a borrowed car, careering around various outposts of the CoastElectric area, finding out what was going on. At this time, I was unable to tape record discussions, interviews etc., this was because of the fear and uncertainty that prevailed at the time. The corollary of this was that each evening was spent writing up interview notes. Whilst this process was both exciting and worthwhile in terms of the information I was collecting, it still led me no closer to finding out what was going on at the senior management level.

After a great deal of persistence, I was able to arrange a day at CoastElectric meeting with senior managers, I scheduled eight interviews with a variety of key players, the meetings were held on the condition that everything was confidential and that tape recording was prohibited. The atmosphere within the organization at the time was highly charged and many people were understandably very nervous. However, this was coupled with a propensity for people within the organization to be very willing to divulge their own experiences of the new owners: I very quickly learnt, for instance, who had sworn at whom and why; I was also privy to conspiracy theories about the take-over. This whole period was one of confusion within the organization; it was also one, which provided a unique glimpse of a take-over situation. At this point, the counselling or confessional role that I felt I had been playing to various key respondents was particularly apparent. Senior Managers, some of whom could have reasonably expected to have been shortlisted for directorships within a short while, were having to face the prospect that they might be leaving the organization in the near future. This portending sonority placed me in a position whereby as a *'neutral subject'* senior managers discussed with me their fears about the future, but also what they felt had been mistakes, either theirs or those of the organization, in the past. The stripping away of this veil of politic expediency afforded me more detail on the recent past than I had hitherto expected.

This process was not restricted to Senior Managers, my discussion of key respondents above illustrates that the terms are not nessarily interchangeable, although they were notable in their tendency to elaborate and provide greater insight than had previously been the case. One such instance was where a middle manager key respondent took me out for a long pub lunch where he gave me insights into his fears, for himself, but also for his department. Significantly, the relationship I enjoyed with these key respondents changed after this initial period of uncertainty. Thereafter, I was to be privy to confidential and sensitive material without any prior checks or warnings about the nature, this was never articulated, it just happened. From this point, I regularly received telephone calls at home from key respondents who were explaining what was going on in the organization; I was sometimes sent anonymous documents.

There are a number of observations to make about this process. First, clearly this greatly facilitated the generation of case study data; it did so in such a way that it allowed me to check previous accounts, but it also provided the opportunity to gain an *'on the ground'* understanding of a take-over situation. Second, it placed me in a position of considerable ethical responsibility, the identity that I had constructed for myself, and the identity that I was being constructed as, had the effect of my having to be extra careful in the preservation of both anonymity and confidentiality of all my information. In terms of trying to explain this process, I think it is important to note that I placed in this position through the repeated exchange that I had experienced with a number of key respondents. This is a point made by Grieco (1996) in her study of working class organization in the east end of London: the premise behind repeated exchange is that through greater interaction with people, a higher level of trust is built up.

There was however another dynamic at play, the uncertainty created by the take-over was such that it loosened the relational ties that linked the gatekeepers, most particularly the relatively powerful key respondents to their identities. Law (1998) describes this process in an imaginary piece, which demonstrates the relational nature of power:

> 'And in my dream there is a deconstructive fairy. She is a fairy who will come and take away the bits and pieces of power. The bits and pieces of the powerful manager'.

The interviews took on a new quality, to the extent that they were now more akin to confessionals (Foucault, 1977) or counselling interviews (see Rogers, 1983). Over the period that I had been linked with CoastElectric, I had always been able to access the organization through personal links. The robust style and fast paced change that was being enacted by the new American owners made me increasingly sensitive to the precarious nature of this access. This feeling was reinforced when I was called by Peter Marsh, the Total Quality Manager and one of my key contacts, to be told that he was leaving the organization. On leaving the organization, I spent a day with him in his final week,

where he reflected that 'it had been good being interviewed by you, it has really made me think about things that we do, why we do them...' At this point, I was very concerned about the continuity of access, realising that the case was of great interest to an organizational analyst. After considerable thought I decided that I would attempt to secure access continuity through agreeing to conduct a consultancy project. I approached Annabel Smith, the Training and Development Manager, with the objective of conducting a piece of research in return for officially sanctioned access. Smith agreed to this and suggested a piece of work on the changing psychological contract within CoastElectric following the take-over.

I realised that this consultancy would take up a considerable amount of time but reasoned that in the circumstances I had little option given that I wanted to maintain access at all levels throughout the organization. The theme of the consultancy project was important, this was because it allowed me to retain my role of external observer, another project may have turned me into - in the eyes of staff - a managerial newshound. To have been considered as such would have course constituted a blunder in the fieldwork as described by Malinowski (1935:pp324-330). It is unusual to study different groups (i.e. senior executives, middle managers and operational staff) at one time: the characteristic of this research project was that such an undertaking required careful thought in terms of maintaining a stance of 'neutrality'. Details of the project were to investigate ways in which relations between CoastElectric and their employees may be improved. It was couched within a Handyesque style view of organizations: potentially progressive but latently conservative (see Burrell 1997).

By agreeing to conduct this piece of research for the organization, I was unilaterally giving up my conditions of unconditional access; I was now entering into a relationship of conditional access. Lee (1993) 'conditional access' in Lee's terms (Lee, 1993). There are, according to Lee, three major kinds of conditional access: '(a) restrictions on the methodology used by the researcher; (b) the completion of a piece for the gatekeeper in return for access; and (c) the right of the gatekeeper to examine, modify or censor published material arising from the study' (1993: p. 125).

8:8   Retirements: Voicing Departing Discourse: 1996

In the year following the FedCo take-over of CoastElectric, 25% of the staff left the organization, the departures were all voluntary redundancies or early retirements. As a consequence, I was able to interview many of my respondents again prior to their departure from the organization. This was useful, particularly among senior managers as they gave more indication about the politics of the organization and the take-over than they had previously been prepared to.

8:9   Restructuring in Action

After the initial upheaval caused by the take-over, the long awaited implementation of Job Redesign took place. During this period, I regularly visited both the Head Office and the regions to observe and talk to people about what was going on. This was an attempt to try and understand process, viewing it first hand. It was during this period, that I first got to know and have an association with Richard Preston newly promoted to regional manager. I was also seeing a reasonable amount of Kevin Watkins, the progenitor of the Job Redesign programme. It was clear that the two were locked in bitter rivalry whereby they were trying to demonstrate that their respective ways of managing constituted the 'best way'. For the consultancy project, Watkins found out that Preston was co-operating fully, on hearing this, he rang me to tell me that as a consequence his region would no longer be taking part. Similarly, on the first occasion I met Richard Preston, I mentioned that I was doing a project for Annabel Smith; his response was to tell me that *'she is crap and has no credibility'*. No methodology book had prepared me for such instances!

From January to October 1996, I visited CoastElectric regularly, undertaking a series of interviews and conducting the consultancy project. Both formal and informal access channels remained open. I submitted the consultancy report in April 1997, whereby I made a presentation and talked through the findings with senior managers. One of the conditions I had attached to the production of the report was that the findings would also be disseminated to staff; this condition was met. Following the production of the report, I was encouraged to apply for a position within CoastElectric as an organizational strategist. I declined this offer but requested that I would like to research the organization in the future. In April 1998, one of my key respondents also a former senior executive within CoastElectric gave an address on 'Organizational Change in CoastElectric' to MBA students at Warwick Business School.

The generation of the data within CoastElectric had come at considerable cost; I had to constantly manage the politics of the situation, which was ultimately to prove stressful and exhausting. Yet, were I not to have gone through this process it is inconceivable that I would have been able to gain the data that is presented in this thesis. Was agreeing to conduct a piece of consultancy a step too far for this research project? For clearly it was likely, as proved to be the case, to be a highly time consuming endeavour. This is of course the drawback of such an approach, however, as Clark (1972:p22) argued of action research, it is a way of gaining 'privileged access to data and situations that are not normally accessible to the basic researcher. There it can make important contributions to theory'. It is a dilemma that faces every organization studies researcher: to engage with organization, is to be subject to the vicissitudes and capriciousness of organizing.

From the sections above, it is clear that I spent a considerable amount of time within CoastElectric researching something that I would theorize as organizational change. It is necessary to chronicle the details of the sample; this is the case, as it will provide a sense of how much contact was had with the respective organizations. The data collection techniques used in both cases yielded a tremendous amount of data: 100 interviews, numerous observational reports and volumes of organizational documents. The data was both rich and overwhelming! It could be argued that I fell into the trap identified by Kvale: what do you do with 1,000 pages of transcripts[1]. Early in the analysis, at a point when I was transcribing every interview tape (at the rate of about an interview a day verbatim having, at times, to decipher some very strong regional accents). I realised that I would have to be more pragmatic in terms of listening and recording what I determined to be important rather than recording everything. As we have seen the mechanics of the research consisted of interviews with senior managers, middle managers and operational staff. Moreover, whenever possible external actors were interviewed such as management consultants and Trade Union The data derived the interviews, the documentary evidence, and observations were analysed in order to determine events and the interpretation of events. The data was analysed using qualitative analysis concentrating on interviewees' descriptions of events. An integral part of the data collection and analysis process included a reconstruction of CoastElectric' from its conception to the present. This rationale for this strategy was in order to try and place CoastElectric engineers into a broader historical context. The next stage of the research process was to construct a narrative of CoastElectric that would be presented as a platform from which to conduct data analysis. The use of narratives in this way is rather unusual but has been used notably by Czarniawska (1997), who has produced two important contributions on the use of narratives. The attraction of such a method is that it allows the reader to see a narrative, a story, a thick description of the organization that is based on the data collected. This allows, as far as is possible, numerous different voices to be heard within the narrative; it also allows a sense of temporality to be 'felt'. Obviously, I have chosen, selected, and filtered what is contained in both of the narratives that follow but it opens me up to a critique from those that read the narratives and then go onto read my analysis (or visa versa). Therefore, the narrative should be viewed as a crafted story; it contains detail at various levels of analysis and in as far as is possible they represent the organization and its actors in their own words. The narratives could stand alone in their own right as reports on the respective organizations. In terms of the distinction between a narrative and a case study, I would contend that a case study is likely to be more of a polished, authored product whereas a narrative is less so. Constructing the narrative through first translating the field work into raw data, followed by coding, sorting and organizing this data was a very time consuming process. It made me absurdly familiar with the data, the people and the events.

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[1] This is despite the prescient warnings of my supervisor who advised me that while data collection was interesting in itself it was important not to get embroiled in the coding and analysis of too much data.

8.10   Modes of Data Analysis: Qualitative and Discourse Analysis

Following the production of the narratives the next stage was to conduct the analysis (see Miles and Huberman, 1984). This is of course overly linear, as with Silverman (1994); I had been encouraged by my supervisor to engage in analysis from the beginning of the research process. Thus corridor discussions with doctoral colleagues and members of staff, I was attempting to make sense of what I was seeing in the two organizations. The questions and comments during this period were absolutely vital in terms of coming to my own position. Furthermore, the encouragement by my supervisor to write for conferences gave further impetus to analysing whilst I proceeded through the project.

The analysis of the data was conducted through trying to make *sense* of the narratives. This analysis was of course integrated with the themes and the insights identified earlier in the thesis. The analysis was conducted in two prime ways: (1) qualitative interpretation, and (2) discourse analysis. The sections below will expand on the analysis of the data.

8.11   Qualitative Interpretation

The construction of the narrative involved sorting vast amounts of data, it involved writing about different aspects of the organization as events happened against the background of the everyday routines of the organization. This time consuming process set up a data set which could be analysed in order to look for different themes: for instance, how did senior managers make decisions within the organization? What were the apparent consequences of the programmed change initiatives in both organizations? The use of qualitative interpretation is widespread with the area of organization studies (see Leavy and Wilson 1994, Whipp and Clark 1987, Smith et al 1990, Pettigrew 1973, 1985). It takes and explores the data with regard to the analytical insights that are being explored by the thesis.

An interesting feature of this analysis is in terms of discerning how operational performance was impacted upon by the changes to the two organizations. In the section above, I argued against the use of ethnography, viewing it as being unnecessary, instead viewing data on performance as being obtainable from triangulated interviews and documentary sources i.e. what were the apparent impacts on performance of the electricity network of a particular initiative: were CoastElectric still carrying out repairs? Was CoastElectric able to respond to an emergency? The qualitative analysis is necessary within this thesis as it provides the means of casting light on the practical considerations of organizing, whereas the discourse analysis, as discussed below, provides the means to analyse the organization at a more abstract level.

8:12   Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a contemporary theme within organization studies, having been transported from the disciplines of linguistics (see Coulthard, 1990) and critical social psychology (Parker, 1992; Potter & Wetherall, 1987). It has received a particular prominence as a means of analysing qualitative data given the increased appreciation, or at least the social constructionist assumption, that it is language that frames reality rather than language mirroring reality. Moreover, given that the 'medium of the interview is language' (Kvale, 1997:p43), this perspective demands that an analysis of the narratives of CoastElectric requires a form of linguistic analysis.

There is an awesome array of competing perspectives on discourse analysis; it is beyond the scope of the thesis to explore them. Instead, I will introduce one such means of analysing discourse, drawn from the broadly post-structural movement in social psychology and subsequently applied to critical organization studies (see Ball and Wilson, 1997). The discourse analysis used is a combination of that which is advanced by Potter and Wetherell (1987; 1992)[2] that subjects are understood to have normalised and internalised them. with that of Fairclough (1992). The foundation of both approaches is to deconstruct texts (see Derrida, 1978) in order to identify the 'interpretative repertoires' used by of individuals in their talk, which takes place in a particular contextual domain; 'interpretative repertoires' can be drawn on flexibly by people, they should not be regarded as monolithic. (In view of the discussion earlier in thesis on organizational repertoires, I would like to refer to interpretative repertoires as 'interpretative tropes', this will, I hope, avoid any confusion).

> 'The building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena. Any particular repertoire [linguistic trope] is constituted out of a restricted range of terms used in a specific stylistic and grammatical fashion. Commonly these terms are derived from one or more key metaphors and the presence of a interpretative trope will often be signalled by certain figures of speech' Potter and Wetherall, 1988:p172.

The argument for deconstructing texts in order to draw out linguistic tropes is that this approach will give us a sense of how individuals and corporations draw on different discourses in order to make sense of the world. Potter and Wetherall (1987), Ball and Wilson (1997) explain that the metaphor of construction is key to linguistic tropes in the sense that it presumes that discourses constructs both objects and subjects. Discourse therefore frames and constructs reality in such a way that that are so familiar to respondents, this is particularly the case as language appears to be transparent. The corollary of this position is that discourse analysis holds that texts and talk are organised in specific ways that make reality appear solid, factual and stable.

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[2] Ball and Carter (1998) note that Potter and Wetherell do not expressly attempt to operationalise Foucault.

The linguistic tropes amount to cultural resources that are drawn upon in order to legitimate particular views and to construct particular narratives around events. Therefore, from this perspective, it is anticipated that people draw on particular linguistic tropes in particular situations. The linguistic tropes are cultural resources, and therefore while used by individuals they also exist at a supra-individual, societal level. Indeed, Marsall and Raabe (1994:p49) argue that it is important that the focus 'of discourse analytic research is on regularities in the construction and function of linguistic resources and a move away from the individual as the unit of analysis'.

This approach is adopted because of the central role of 'discourse in the constitution of social subjects' (Fairclough: 1992: p44). For instance, Wetherall and Potter (1992) demonstrate how the discourse of racism is manifested in talk, and how particular groups are characterised within this discourse. Therefore, discourse analysis can tell us a great deal about people make sense of the world, it also gives us insights into how discourses are sustained, reinforced and circulate in organizational contexts. Through the deconstruction of texts it is possible to problematise statements which appear to be reportage of fact. For instance, Trew (1979a: 94) demonstrates the way in which newspaper headlines such as 'Rioting Blacks Shot Dead by Police as ANC Leaders Meet' through the use of language minimises the impact of the police action, which was justifiable given the rioting. Through the analysis of texts, in the case of this thesis, through the analysis of the narratives it is possible, through discourse analysis, to gain greater insights into the operation and relations of power: language is not neutral, far from it, it constitutes and reproduces the relations of power.

> '...utterances are acts, and [that] language is functional all the time -
> not simply on atypical special occasions. The meaning of an utterance is
> not a straightforward matter of external reference but depends on the local
> and broader discursive systems in which the utterance is embedded.' (Potter
> and Wetherell 1988: 169)

Fairclough (1992) demonstrates how different discourses are played out in a medical setting, how different linguistic tropes are drawn upon in the interplay between doctor and patient. Fairclough also demonstrates the importance of the relative relations of power and the context of the conversation.

The discussion above seeks to legitimate why discourse analysis is an important technique in the preparation of this thesis. Put simply, my contention is that discourses (manifested through speech, action, institutions and people) are central to organizations, as such it necessary to analyse the · discourses. Clearly, discourse analysis is not the only means of analysis to be used in this thesis, but it is an important one, particularly in terms of trying to deconstruct the way in which arguments were made by for and against change within the two organizations. However, it is vital to

acknowledge that this thesis is not a piece of linguistic analysis, rather it is bringing some of the concepts and practice of discourse analysis to organization studies (see Ball and Wilson, 1999).

The discussion above has outlined the rationale for drawing upon discourse analysis in order to analyse the data in the narratives. Ball (1998) argues that 'It is generally up to the analyst to decide which technique to employ depending on what they want to achieve when analysing the data'. In this spirit and in the absence of a recipe book style guide (see Burr, 1995), I will now describe the mechanics of how I actually conducted discourse analysis in this thesis. The main aims of the discourse analysis are to be able to identify: one, the discourses in operation in the organizations; and two, the linguistic tropes that constitute a discourse and the elective affinities within a discourse. In so doing the discourse analysis will reveal how discourses emerge and work within organizations, it will also reveal the relations between discourses in terms of intertextuality (see Kristeva, 1973) and binarism (see Derrida, 1978).

For this thesis, discourse analysis was conducted on the two narratives. I began the process by picking out the key events and tracing the argumentation and talk that surrounded these events. This took place in the context of looking at the introduction of managerialism into organizations that had previously been characterised as professional bureaucracies. I the deconstructed the narratives, spending a great deal of time looking through the different accounts of action in the organization. In this endeavour, there were a number of issues that I was looking for:

1. The use of rhetoric Billig (1990:P51): Speakers and writers attempt to present their discourse as reasonable by giving justifications for their position and by countering objections with criticisms'. Ball and Carter (1998) argue that 'In other words, it takes the focus of the study away from questions of how an individual's language reflects some 'external reality' and instead looks at how the individual's version is designed to construct a viable alternative to socially constructed accounts of 'reality''. This is especially in terms of the representation of self and the other. Potter and Wetherall ask how is the talk constructed? And what does it achieve?

2.The Will to truth: How certain claims, certain statements are taken to be true and are taken to be common sense. The question is where these understandings come from; what broader systems of meaning or regimes of truth are they immanent to.

The discourse analysis was time consuming and extremely labour intensive, it involved reading and rereading the narratives in order to try and identify the recurrent themes. It was through this process that interpretative tropes were identified. Further, the analysis extended to analysing particular events within the organization and how they were represented by different discourses. In terms of conducting discourse analysis Potter and Wetherall (1988) have likened it to a craft skill, in

opposition to the science implied in statistical analyses. The notion of discourse analysis as a craft skill sits uncomfortably with the increasing use that is being made of computer packages in order to analyse discourse; The most prominent of these packages is NUDIST (see Richards and Richards, 1994). On the Aston doctoral programme there was a good deal of discussion as to whether to use NUDIST or not. Opposition to NUDIST arose from the apparent ease that people were now describing themselves as discourse analysts, taking the view that the computer 'sorted things out'. Clearly such a view is problematic; however, this is probably becoming a minority view as people become less mesmerised with the technology. I chose not to use NUDIST, partly out of the commitment to discourse analysis being a craft process, but more importantly because I did not have a machine powerful enough to use the package. Whatever the shortcomings of a technological package may be, the facility it offers in terms of being able to store, retrieve and code data must be of interest to discourse analysts.

In terms of using discourse analysis as part of the analytical strategy of this thesis it is important to acknowledge some of the criticisms associated with the approach. In the first instance, I think there is a danger of privileging talk at the expense of broader institutional structures. This is a problem with more ethereal forms of discourse analysis, which in my view fail to ground themselves in broader institutional structures that are recognised through a bounded inter-subjectivity. Some commentators (D.Smith 1997) have questioned whether discourse analysis is anything more than just rhetoric and as such relatively unimportant in terms of trying to make sense of the organizational world. This view can I think be levelled at some forms of discourse analysis which fail to acknowledge that discourse extends beyond talk to institutions, people and action. Parker and Burman (1992), advocates of discourse analysis, chronicle 'thirty-two problems with discourse analysis', it is not my intention to review them but rather to concur with their view that discourse analysis has a great deal to offer as an analytical tool as long as it is used reflexively.

8:13   Reflexive Data analytics

The twin strategies for analysing my data as outlined above provide the analysis in the chapters that follow. In accordance with my commitment to reflexive research I wanted to talk through my analysis with the people that had participated in the research. In CoastElectric my experience was such that throughout my association with them I was able to discuss my analysis with people at all levels within the organization. People within the organization reported that they liked reading my analyses, among the reasons were cited were (1) It reads like a novel, (2) It is good to get an outside view, (3) It makes me think about us, (4) Its useful for the MBA that I am studying. It was refreshing to be able to present critiques of management to management and employees alike. In one case, I gave a number of current and employees within CoastElectric a copy of a paper that was to be presented at the 1997 Labour process Conference, they all got back to me with supportive

comments. This role of the dissemination and discussion of research is one that I should like to pursue in the future, as it is useful to hear the responses of those researched on texts produced from that research.

In addition to presenting my research findings to people that had participated in the generation of the data; I also sought to use my data in the classroom. In 1997, I composed a case study for teaching purposes; the case was based on the experiences of CoastElectric. My aim was to see how MBA students pursuing organization studies and managing change modules would interpret the data. The case was used on two MBA courses: the executive MBA in procurement management at the university of Birmingham, and the MBA at the University of North London. In both cases it was useful to see the respective cohorts of students grappling with the data and seeing their responses to various problems that were set in class. On more than one occasion there were students that worked for regional electricity companies, one of whom insisted that CoastElectric was his employer - it was not but it was interesting to hear of the parallels between the two cases. Moreover, the use of the CoastElectric case for pedagogic purposes enabled me to engage with the data in a different way to the analysis for the purposes of writing this thesis and academic papers.

The third form of data reflexivity was through discussing the data and my ideas, either formally at conferences (see appendix ... for details of the conferences at which I have presented some of my work) or informally - invariably in a hostelry, with fellow doctoral candidates and Senior Academics. The insights and ideas I gained through these discussions, be they friendly or critical, were absolutely invaluable in terms of developing my ideas and my analysis.

8:14   Concluding remarks on the research process:

The period spent researching this thesis (1995-96) was one of immense interest in both organizations: they had both been through significant change processes and were embarking upon further change programmes. Within a sector that had seen little change in its history, this was clearly an extraordinary opportunity to view the dynamics of organizational change at work. During this period, there was much that was unexpected and there was much that was exciting. Clearly, the take-over of CoastElectric was a serendipitous turn- for me- as was the high quality of the access that was achieved in both studies. CoastElectric threw up interesting questions and serious dilemmas. It is illustrative to consider my experiences, which give an insight into many of the considerations and difficulties that may be encountered by a researcher.

The opportunity to generate detailed information in a case study was vital to the analysis that follows, although it is important to register that such data came at considerable cost: to do detailed organizational research can be difficult, stressful and time-consuming. This was something that is

illustrative of the very political nature of gaining and of maintaining access. These experiences, while perhaps not providing lessons for other apprentice researchers, highlight important insights into the research process (Carter 1999). Moreover, they demonstrate that the process of conducting research is about far more than the generation of knowledge: it is to manage, to talk, to struggle and to negotiate. These ineluctable features of doctoral research require far greater discussion and dissemination, something that is lamentably absent from contemporary canons on research methodology. This lacuna in the conceptualisation of the research process is in series need of revision.

In highlighting the importance of the research process in doctoral work. I think this chapter highlights the under theorised nature of access to organizations. By drawing analytical insights from my own experiences, I think it is important for the doctoral student to consider the following issues: the use of existing contacts where possible; the decision as to when a researcher is ready to engage with an organization; that access is not just getting in the door, but is a relationship that requires careful management; careful attention and thought needs to be paid to issues of identity as an organizational researcher; As many cultural signs as are available should be deployed; organizational repertoires for managing the project should be in place; the possibility of gaining informal as well as formal access should be explored; Changes in organizational circumstances may have dramatic effects upon access; Changed circumstances demands extra sensitivity; Unexpected circumstances can open up new possibilities for data collection; Careful thought needs to be given in order to decide what lengths the researcher is prepared to go too in order to gain access.

In terms of looking to the future, it seems clear that the rapid developments in information technology will have considerable implications for Doctoral research. For instance, the wide provision of Email throughout the corporate world will open new possibilities for the generation of high-density research. In a similar vein, the use of [anonymous] Email chat rooms could spell a new era for the generation of information. Moreover, in the process of preparing this thesis approaches such as discourse analysis have become far more prominent within the subject field of Organization Studies. This section on 'methodology' or research in action as I prefer to call it, will have hopefully outlined the foundations of the social sciences, which were based on the central tenets of positivism. Criticisms to this mode of research were presented; alternative epistemological conceptualisations were introduced. Epistemology has a bearing on methodology; this was explored in relation to the claims made for knowledge and the techniques through which 'data' could be generated. Inevitably issues of methodology and the process of conducting research itself generate more questions than one could ever hope to answer. This chapter acknowledges this position, instead it seeks to explain what was done, the reasons why this action was carried out and what I have learned in the process.

Chapter 9: The Context of Privatisation

9:1 Introduction

This short chapter aims to introduce and situate privatisation. This history will be written, in part through looking at the broad sweep of changes since world war two. More specifically, it will attempt to draw links between privatisation and the more general agenda of the New Right. The chapter then turns its attention to the specifics of the regulatory framework for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. It should be noted that this chapter is not an attempt at an exhaustive account of the New Right or privatisation; rather, it is an entrée into researching CoastElectric, a newly privatised utility.

9:2 Antecedents

In the aftermath of World War Two British society underwent profound changes, notably through the creation, by the Attlee Government, of the welfare state, which was coupled with the policy objective of full employment. Through the implementation of the Beveridge report, and the adoption of the central tenets of Keynes' General theory, British polity was transformed from its pre-war state: Keynesian economic principles allied with a social democratic Government ensured that state intervention was regarded as a legitimate part of governing. The 1945-1951 Attlee led Labour Government, which has been described as a great reforming government, embarked upon a programme of nationalisation, bringing areas of the economy under state control for the first time. For instance, in 1947 the coal industry was nationalised, while in 1948 the Electricity Supply Industry was nationalised. While some of the Government's interventions were controversial, for instance, and as I have mentioned in chapter five above, Nye Bevan's, Minister for Health, battle with the British Medical Association over the creation of a National Health Service, this was not the case with the Electricity Supply Industry. Nationalisation was advocated as a means of transforming a disparate, ad-hoc system that had emerged sporadically, having been constructed by both municipal authorities and private companies alike, into a modern integrated power network.

The nationalisation programme pursued by the Labour Party was for some the 1st stage of the creation of a democratic socialist state (see Foot 1973; Fabian essays 1951). This is was argued would be followed by the gradual transfer of ownership to the state of all large private enterprise - something first advocated by the Webbs and famously enshrined as Clause Four in the Labour Party's constitution. Within the Labour cabinet, however, there were concerns about further nationalisation, with right-wingers such as Morrison and Bevin fearing that such policies were electorally unpopular. This view was further confirmed when Trade Minister, Wilson, lifted many trading restrictions, which had been retained from wartime, in a 'bonfire of controls' (Pimlott,

1993), a move that was greatly popular at the time. In the 1951 General Election, the Labour Government was defeated, in spite of winning more votes, thus bringing to an end the social democratic experiment.

Despite their defeat, the Labour party had transformed the political landscape, with the other major political force, the Conservative Party, now subscribing to the new post-war consensus of full employment and a comprehensive welfare state. This as Critchley (1997) has noted was a far cry from the laissez-faire Toryism of Baldwin and Chamberlain in the 1930s. During the 1950s the degree of consensus between the Conservative and Labour party official policies was interpreted to be so great on a whole raft of issues that the term 'Butskellism' gained common currency[i]. Whilst acknowledging that there was a good deal of common ground between the two political parties, it is also pertinent to recognise that there still existed a good deal of difference, this was particularly in terms of class and social issues.

The changes to society in the post-war period led Crosland (1956) to argue in the highly regarded 'The Future of Socialism' that capitalism per se no longer existed in an unadulterated form in the UK. The implication of this, he argued, was that 'ownership' of industry was no longer an issue of great importance, rather, industries should be judged on their end results (See Carter, 1999, for a discussion of the political philosophy of Antony Crosland). One of the defining features of the post-war epoch became the mixed economy. As such, the nationalisation policy became far less prominent (the Wilson Governments of the 1960s sole nationalisation was British Steel, this took place in the early days of the administration; The Heath Government nationalised Rolls Royce in 1970 when it was experiencing severe financial difficulties). The period spanning from the 1950s to the early 1970s has been described by many economic commentators (Hutton, 1995;Keegan, 1994) as the 'Golden Age of Capitalism'; whereby the period was characterised by economic growth combined with a comprehensive social security system, full employment and rising living standards.

Numerous commentators of the British economy in the late 1960s saw that there were potential difficulties ahead, for instance, Crosland (1956) argued that economic growth has been sacrificed to maintain an overvalued currency. This concern was matched by the view that in the late 1960s the adversarial nature of British industrial relations was a cause of problems for the UK. For others, the emergence of the 'permissive society' was a cause of great angst. The Conservative Government of 1970-1974 commenced by implementing its 'Selsden'[ii] programme, a mix of early monetarism with an attempt to reform industrial relations. The Heath years saw a volte face on his Selsden programme, he led his Government to defeat at the 1974, which was fought on the issue of 'Who Governs?': prompted by a confrontation with the National Union of Miners. The economic pulsation's became more acute during the 1970s, the incoming Labour administration had to attempt to manage the inherited, ill fated Barber boom (see Dell, 1993), as well as the periodic 'oil shocks',

which came about as a result of the formation of OPEC. These issues together with the increasing globalisation of finance, which throughout the period was gathering momentum, were to have profound implications for nation state Governments. For instance, Schwengel (1991:p144) highlights the new constraints that this now placed upon Governments, a factor that was to problematise the position of leftist social democratic Governments. For instance, this is illustrated by the Labour Government's public sector cuts in 1976 which deemed as necessary in order to meet the terms of an International Monetary Fund loan (see Callaghan, 1987; S.Crosland, 1983; Healey, 1989 for detailed accounts of this episode).

The considerable difficulties faced by the British economy in the 1970s led to a crisis in the 'intellectual legitimacy of social democracy, or as Schwengel (1991:p143) argues:

> 'Social democracy began to lose its cultural plausibility and intellectual leadership both against the libertarian populism of the right, which emphasised the freedom of consumption and of choosing one's own way in insurance, housing and career building; and also against the left-libertarian populism, which emphasized the freedom to create new relations'

As Schwengel notes, in the extract above the centrist social democratic position came under attack from both the left and the right. On the left a form of Marxism had been resurrected, this argued for greater state ownership, greater public spending and state import controls. On the right, which ultimately was to be of more significance, there was the emergence of monetarism. Margaret Thatcher, the new leader of the Conservative Party, was quickly abandoning post-war Toryism, with its emphasis on 'one nation' policies, preferring instead monetarism; something she was to dub as 'wet'. Monetarism in essence constitutes a return to classical economic theory, which saw a Government's responsibility as being limited to the control of inflation, and the creation and maintenance of the conditions that allow for the free play of markets; monetarism eschewed the notion of State intervention. Thatcher's interest in monetarism has been encouraged by her Svengali figure, Sir Keith Joseph. Joseph contended that the post-war period had been characterised by a gradual shift to the left, with the Labour Party setting the agenda. He termed this as the 'ratchet effect', something which in his view needed to be reversed. His means to achieve this reversal was through seizing the initiative by championing a bold right-wing policy.

The appropriation of monetarism by the Conservative Party leadership did not take place in a vacuum, far from it, for monetarism was gaining currency throughout the world, with it being represented as being the economic model for the future, or as was later to be said 'there is no alternative'. Drawing on the work on Von Hayek, the Chicago School of economists, headed by Milton Friedman, acted as a great tribune for monetarism. While it is apparent that the first Thatcher Government pursued monetarism; some commentators have argued that the genesis of monetarism in action were initiated the preceding Labour Government. Evidence that lends support to this thesis

includes the public sector spending reductions enacted by the Labour government and by the speech made by Prime Minister James Callaghan made at London's Guildhall, where he claimed that:

'It is no longer possible to spend your way out of trouble'.

Imaginatively Labour Chancellor, Denis Healey, argued that his economic policies owed little to theories of Keynes or Friedman, instead, he argued that they owed more to the work of Karl Popper. The fall of the Labour Government in 1979 has since been viewed as a watershed, as marking the end of the post-war consensus based around a welfare state and full employment.

9:3 The Great Monetarist Experiment

The first Thatcher Government had been elected on a manifesto that had the policy objectives of 'rolling back the frontiers of the state', increasing individual freedom, and constructing a strong economy that was to be achieved by concentrating on reducing inflation. Keegan (1985) chronicles the implementation of monetarism in the UK. He provides a critical analysis of its effects, regarding it as being largely responsible for plunging Britain into a deep recession which inter alia saw a massive rise in unemployment, as well as the closures of a huge swathe of British manufacturing industry. The Thatcher Government was at the time deeply unpopular, however a largely impotent political opposition was unable to provide an effective opposition in terms of articulating an alternative political discourse. This ineffectiveness was exacerbated when the Labour Party fissured with the formation of the Social Democratic Party, which aimed to 'break the mould' of British politics. The Falkland war of 1982 dramatically restored Thatcher's reputation, indeed her popularity among crucial sections of the electorate soaring, thus the conflict in the South Atlantic provided something that substantially increased her political capital through what has been termed the 'Falklands factor'.

This instance was arguably an important moment in British politics, an example of chance within Porter's (1990) framework, something that led Thatcher to a famous victory at the next General Election. It was this second term of office, which Pollitt (1993) claims was 'crucial'. It was during this second term, that two of the enduring themes of her Government's emerged, the first, was the policy of privatisation, the second, was the emergence of Thatcherism as a corpus of ideas. I will now deal with them in turn; this is more for the sake of convenience rather than them being analytically distinct.

9:4   Privatisation

As I have suggested the origins of UK privatisation should perhaps be traced to the sale of Government stocks in various companies in the late 1970s by the Labour Government, the sale being in accordance with the terms set out by the Internal Monetary Fund. The 1979 election victory for the Conservative Party marked a watershed in British politics, in that it effectively ended the post-war settlement which had been founded upon the notions of consensus, full employment and government intervention. The new order was a mix of monetarist economic policy, and vague rhetoric about the need to 'Roll Back the frontiers of the state' (Thatcher 1979:1). The new order saw Government as having a minimal role in the economy, with its prime objective being to control inflation, thus philosophically adopting 'Von Hayek's suggestion that the logics of the interventionist State, were subversive of the very freedoms, democracies and liberties they sought to enhance' (Rose 1996:50).

Privatisation did not figure in the Conservative election manifesto. It began in a tentative, unstructured way with the sale of State held shares (a policy initiated by the 1974-79 Labour Administration). As the Government looked for ways of raising revenue in an economy in free fall as a consequence of what, former Labour Chancellor, Denis Healey described at the time as 'sado-monetarism' (Healey 1989: 491). The then Chancellor Geoffrey Howe explained in a speech in 1980:

> 'It is only since the election (1979) that the issue of privatisation has moved to the very forefront of politics. Our experience since we have been in government has convinced us ... that the need for privatisation, competition or, at least, private sector financial disciplines in the nationalised industries is even greater than we imagined in opposition' (Howe 1994:255).

Whilst Thatcher argued that:

> 'The two great problems of the British economy are the monopoly nationalised industries, and The Trade Union' (quoted in Young, 1990:207)

The privatisation policy gradually gained momentum, the sale of Telecom in November 1984 was the first major sale of a public utility, and was 'regarded as a success because 2 million (people) bought shares' (from Davies 1995:294) in what was to become celebrated as the shareowning democracy. Privatisation proved to be financially and ideologically desirable to the Conservative Party. Right-wing MP John Redwood explained the attractions:

> 'Privatisation was something all wings of the Conservative Party could agree on, left and right, as it made available more money for the spending programmes and tax cuts close to the hearts of both sections of the party' (from Davies 1995:294)

Privatisation chiefly stems from the New Right idea that the free market is inherently superior to state controlled industry. Nationalised industries were portrayed in New-Right discourse as being inefficient, bureaucratic organisations who needed to be subject to private ownership to operate efficiently. Privatisation thus became a central pillar of the Thatcherite project, becoming as Rose (1996:50) argues 'rationalised within a coherent mentality of government that, came to be termed neo-liberalism'. It became a part of the so-called economic miracle which the New Right frequently proclaimed, which is well encapsulated by Thatcher's claim that;

> 'We have ceased to be a nation in retreat ... we have instead a new confidence'
> (quoted in Healey 1989:539).

The privatisation programme raised for the successive Conservative governments an estimated £90 billion (Davies 1995:294). It has also proved to be, as Keegan (1994) points out, a policy that has been exported throughout the world (not least to the former Soviet Bloc). I want to argue there is a semiotic, set of structuring oppositions within New Right discourse, as set out below in table 9:1 below, which serves to obfuscate the complexity of organisational performance. The corollary of this suppression of complexity, and the concomitant branding of 'nationalised industries' as being inherently inferior to those in the private sector, was that this began to emerge as the dominant, accepted world-view.

Table 9:1 Semiotic Opposition between Private and Public Ownership

Private Ownership	Public Ownership
Good	Bad
Efficient	Inefficient
Effective	Ineffective
Well Managed	Badly managed
Competitive	Monopolistic
Profit Making	Loss making
Moral	Immoral
Innovative	Ossified
flexible	Bureaucratic
Quality product service	Mediocre product service
Liberating	Stifling

The corollary of this suppression of complexity, and the concomitant branding of 'nationalised industries' as being inherently inferior to those in the private sector, was that this began to emerge as the dominant, accepted world-view.

The element of this policy that has arguably attracted the most attention has been the privatisation of the utilities: industries that are considered to contain elements that are natural monopolies. Foster (1994) defines this as when an industry is most efficient when supplied by a single organisation. Before the utilities were privatised the government undertook some steps towards liberalising the related markets. However, it was clear that the extent of marketisation in the newly privatised industries was extremely limited, the result being that companies would still enjoy considerable market power, due to a lack of competition. To date, in spite of considerable verbiage, the 'market' has played a minimal role in most of the privatised utilities.

9:5 Thatcherism

The privatisation process described in the section above was a central and defining feature of Thatcherism, as I have shown it attempted to subject organizations to the gaze of the market. However, in addition to specific economic policies there was a good deal more to Thatcherism. For as a movement it cherished the dream of restoring British greatness, which was generally used as a watchword for a return to some romanticised notion of Victorian values of enterprise, individualism and thrift. In this vein Thatcher (in) famously declared that 'there is no such thing as society', she also claimed of her intentions:

'Economics are the method, the object is to change the soul' (Thatcher, 1988b).

This discourse was accompanied by the deification of Homo Economicus. This triumphing of the values of the market, or as the 1980s expression went, 'Greed is good'. The promotion of such values is reflected by Lord Young (1991), an acolyte of Thatcher, who argued,

'Twentieth Century culture elevated the administrator and downgraded the businessman. The prime culprit is education, ivory tower blocks were a major industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.

What is striking from this quote is that the extent to which some values are triumphed necessarily has as its corollary the negating of others.

9:6   Electricity Privatisation

The Conservatives electoral successes since 1979 have ensured the continuation of privatisation and in November 1990, after a year's postponement, the Electricity Supply Industry was privatised. The aim was to create a quasi-competitive sector consisting of 12 Regional Electricity Companies (RECs) under the control of a Regulator which it was argued in the Government White paper would be,

> 'designed to provide each company in the industry with incentives to operate more efficiently and to ensure that the benefits are shared with consumers' (cited Froud et al 1996:6).

The privatisation was criticised at the time by the then Shadow Energy spokesman Tony Blair, who described it as:

> 'Born out of dogma, reared on deceit, this privatisation is now exposed for what it is and always had been, private prejudice masquerading as public policy' (Sopel 1995:104)

On privatisation the level of competition which the RECs were subject to was at best spurious, as they still enjoyed monopolies over the distribution and supply of electricity. Indeed critics pointed out that the privatisation had merely transferred a monopoly from the public to the private sector. The monopoly over the distribution of electricity is to remain, whilst the supply of electricity will become a 'free market' in 1998, in which consumers will be able to choose from whom they purchase their electricity. The Regulator's (OFFER) task was to establish a competitive market in the distribution of electricity, and to make the RECs more efficient. This was to be achieved by the setting of price / cost formulae, and through the monitoring of customer standards. The 'free market' implication was evident in that the 'Best RECs' would emerge victorious delivering benefits to all. Evidently the Regulator's decisions would play a crucial role in the futures of the respective RECs.

Upon privatisation the RECs were listed on the stock exchange, and consequently were of great interest to the institutions of the City of London. The RECs were now owned by shareholders, with the expectation that they would maximise earnings for their new owners. It remained to be seen whether the discourse of engineering that had been dominant within the industry for forty years, and which had established and sustained the notion of the 'professional engineer' would retain its supremacy. More, particularly it remained to be seen to what extent there would be pressures for organizational change within CoastElectric.

Ogden and Anderson (1995) argue that privatisation has proved to be one of the most important and controversial government policies of recent times (see Crowther et al 1998). The privatisation

project in the UK amounted to more than an economic rationale; it amounted to a backlash against the British social democratic, post-war settlement. The market was celebrated (see Du Gay 1996, Morris and Heelas 1995) as offering a panacea to Britain's relative decline in international competitiveness. Schwengel (1994) argues that it is a mistake to see privatisation as merely an economic or business issue, instead, it is important to regard it as an inherently political process. Keat and Abercrombie (1990) view privatisation as being an integral part of the enterprise culture, which was championed by the successive Conservative Governments (1979-1997) for whom 'private is good, public is bad' (see Hutton, 1995). Leading Austrian School economist, Professor Littlechild (later to become the Director General of Offer, the electricity regulator), who had spent the 1970s conducting econometric analyses into Daffodil bulb prices, in 1983 (prior to the first utility privatisation of British Telecom in 1984) recommended a price cap method of regulation. This is now commonly recognised by the formula RPI - X. This method was preferred as it was felt to give the strongest efficiency motives. Certainly rate of return regulation (which along with sliding scale regulation are the other most widely used methods of regulation) has been criticised (Averch and Johnson, 1962; Price, 1994) as resulting in a cost plus mentality instead of incentives to efficiency. It is argued that under rate of return regulation the incentives are for the companies to invest in capital rather than improve performance.

Beesley and Littlechild (1983) favoured price cap regulation due to the incentive to improve efficiency it gives to the privatised companies. Their nostrums reinforced the thatcherite mantra that told of the inherent inefficiency of the public sector. Beesley and Littlechild (1983) viewed price cap regulation as a mechanism to 'hold the fort' for the consumer until competition arrives. The idea was that there would be a regulatory review every three to four years, something that was to constitute a mechanism to allow for some flexibility in the regulatory process. Furthermore, the promotion of the culture of the customer (Du Gay, Lash and Urry 1994) is a common theme within contemporary social theory, whereby consumerism takes primacy over other identities Our representation of the regulatory review presents a clear challenge to the market rationality view presented by Austrian School economists. The certainties produced within the comfy confines of a redbrick economics department implode when subject to a semiotic analysis. The Regulatory framework was such that it would be likely to play an important role, especially in terms of triggering organizational change within utilities such as CoastElectric.

9:7   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined details of the context surrounding privatisation. In so doing it has demonstrated the discursive appeal of privatisation, and that in addition to its money generating qualities, it was accompanied by an ideological zeal that was in binary opposition to the pre-existing nationalised, professional culture. The chapter then proceeded to sketch out some of the detail of the

regulatory framework that was proposed for the Electricity Supply Industry. This chapter has served the function therefore of introducing and situating privatisation within a particular time and space.

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[i] Butskellism was a term derived combining the names of Rab Butler, Conservative party moderniser who served as the chancellor of the exchequor, and Hugh Gaitskill, Labour party revisionist, who served as chancellor of the exchequer and later as the leader of the Labour party.

[ii] The Selsden programme draw its name from the hotel in which senior Conservatives met in order to discuss an electoral programme prior to the 1970 General Election.

Chapter 10:   Making Sense of Strategic Decision-Making.

'Strategy must rank as one of the most prominent, influential, and costly stories
told in organisations.' (Barry & Elmes, 1997, p.430)

10: 1 Introduction

The advent of privatisation heralded a new epoch for each of the twelve Regional Electricity
Companies. This was evidenced in the practicalities of having to establish new organizational
functions, such as investor relations, that had hitherto been unnecessary. This is a point encapsulated
by the Director of Corporate Development in CoastElectric:

'All of a sudden we needed a treasury function, we needed investor relations. We
were now in the top 500 companies in Europe...'

In legal terms therefore, the status of the former electricity boards had changed. The question to be
asked is whether this was matched by any substantive change in their approach to management: in
organizations that were once memorably described by Butler and Wilson (1982) as 'paralytic' (see
also, Hickson et al, 1986). This was on account of the emasculation as a result of the limits placed
by Government on their ability to make strategic decisions. Such questions underpin the discussion
in this chapter, where I shall analyse decisions made by senior management in relation to the future
of CoastElectric. The research is of particular interest, as it constitutes one of the only accounts of
the strategizing of an independent UK REC, prior to its take-over in September 1995. I will
commence by examining the key decision episodes in each organization. I shall examine each in
turn, paying particular attention to the role played by different actors both within (executives) and
outside (consultants) the organization. Each decision episode will be analysed in relation to the
content of the decision, especially in relation to broader managerial fashions; the organizational and
institutional context; the relative cultural capital of the decision-makers and the involvement, if any,
of management consultants. The chapter will close with an analysis of the insights gained from the
CoastElectric case in relation to how one can understand strategizing in a rapidly changing context.

10.2   Strategic Decision Making in CoastElectric

An analysis of the narrative of CoastElectric produces, in my view, twelve major decisions set in
three discrete episodes, these are shown in table one below. They are defined as major in that they
mark a significant strategic or structural change to the organization. It goes without saying that this
is not an exhaustive account of all the decisions taken in the organization, rather it is an attempt to
highlight the major decisions. Mindful, of the limitations of space it will not be possible to enter into
a detailed deconstruction of each decision. It should be noted that the analysis in this chapter is

restricted to the decision itself, while the processes of implementation are covered in detail in chapter 13 and 14, respectively.

Table 10:1 Strategic Decisions in CoastElectric

Decision Episode	Date of Decision
Company Mission	1992
Strategic Direction	1992
Functional Structure	1992
TQM	1992
New Industrial Relations Agreement	1994
Divestment	1995
Trident Strategy	1995
Job Rethink	1995
Decision not to fight takeover	1995
TQM axed	1995
Job Rethink Retained and Implemented	1995
Redundancy Programme	1995

It is useful to consider these decision episodes in turn for they give us an insight into the workings of decision making within CoastElectric in a given period. In particular this approach provides an opportunity to analyse the key determining factors in any one episode in so far that it gives an indication as to the legitimating rationale for a particular decision. This section will seek to make sense of why a particular decision was made and the actors involved in the decision making. Thus mindful of the discussions in chapters 1,2,3,4 and 5 above, it is useful to gain a sense of the interstices of objectivism and subjectivism that are brought to bear on making a particular decision appear commonsensical.

In terms of the implications of privatisation, the main point to highlight here is that the organizational effects were not confined to the change in corporate governance. In particular, privatisation itself was only the starting-point for a far-reaching change in the composition and practice of management. This was initially signalled by structural additions, such as the establishment of an investor relations function, that had hitherto been unnecessary. A more important development, however, can be related to the emergence of the discourse of strategy

within the new organization. Regional electricity companies had defined themselves primarily as engineering organizations charged with the maintenance of a distribution network. For senior management at Coast Electric the emergence of strategy seems to have been part of the process of normalizing to the gaze of new stakeholder groups and in particular shareholders and City institutions. It brought with it heightened expectations of change and a need to adapt the latest private sector management thinking. Thus, in the first throes of privatisation the organization adopted a strategic intent, 'to be regarded as the best utility in the region and as the best Regional Electricity Company in the country by 1996'. Significantly, the development of this strategic intent also signalled the close involvement of management consultants at the highest level of strategy making. This conversion to strategy seems to have inspired in top management a confident belief in their ability to master their environment.

10.3   First Moves: Romancing the Market in the pursuit of Quality

This section will address and attempt to situate analytically the major decisions made within the first major decision episode. I will commence with a discussion of the company mission statement. The company mission, or the strategic intent, 'to be regarded as the best utility in the region and as the best Regional Electricity Company in the country by 1996' was decided upon by the Board of Directors and a group of management consultants. The content of the strategic intent is at one level unremarkable, for as was seen in chapters one and four: the watchwords of customer service, employee empowerment and excellent financial results have been de rigueur in 1990s organizations. However, what is a little more surprising is the stated objective of being regarded as, (i) the best public utility in the region, and, (ii) the best REC in the country by 1996. This signifies an almost untramelled belief in the possibilities open to and achievable by CoastElectric, the implication being that of a limitless strategic choice combined with a confidence of the decision making elite in their ability to master their environment. One internal analyst commented to me:

> 'You've got to remember the egos of the board, all the RECs are in competition
> with each other, they all think they can come out on top'.

The content of the mission denotes a successful mid-term future, a message to be communicated to the respective stakeholders. As Wilson (1992) notes, no self-respecting organization in the 1990s would be without a mission statement. It was therefore an essential artifact, part of the deportment of a modern organization. The form was therefore carefully stylised, to have a mission was hardly novel, yet it marked a significant change for the organization. In considering, the content of their three success factors, it can be seen that each one communicates to a different constituency i.e. customer service to the industry regulator and the general public; employee empowerment to the employees; and, financial results to the City. Significantly, the aims of the organization were

defined by the senior management in conjunction with consultants, Advicecorp: experts in managerialist discourse.

A senior manager explained that while the ideas were those of CoastElectric, the management consultants were a 'useful sounding board', and invaluable in terms of introducing 'tools and techniques'. The content of the mission statement is suggestive that each constituency was satisficed, without any broader discussion as to the possible tensions between the different objectives, or to which objectives had greater emphasis placed upon them. This satisficing was deemed necessary for a number of reasons: firstly, the establishment of a regulatory body, OFFER, which as has been seen was established with the express aim of boosting the efficiency of RECs and improving their levels of customer service. It was therefore necessary for CoastElectric to articulate their commitment to fulfilling the expectations of the Regulator. Secondly, given the extant employment contracts, the role of the Trade Unions in CoastElectric and the general negotiated order within the organization, it was important for the mission statement to assuage the potential criticism that employees were being overlooked in the 'mission' for the future. Given the commentary on the links between new managerialism, downsizing and the like, it is perhaps important to temper such claims with the observation of the Orwellian 'news-speak'/'double-think' qualities that prevail in the lexicon of HRM. The releasing of employees' potential dimension of extraordinary empowerment can of course be read in many ways as can the significance of the very silence of the commitment to technical engineering; thirdly, the transfer of CoastElectric to the private sector created a new constituency, that of the stock exchange. The rhetoric of the popular capitalism of privatisation needs to be tempered against the observation that within months of privatisation over 51% of CoastElectric shares were in the hands of institutional investors, that is pension funds and investment trusts. This is highly significant, as for management to be able to manage and develop a medium term strategy, the support of these investors is everything. In short, communicating to this group was viewed by senior management to be of vital importance. In short, the form and the content of the mission statement were hardly surprising, moreover, couched in new managerialist terms; it is sufficiently ambiguous not to alarm any constituency group.

10.4   Strategic Direction

For the entirety of CoastElectric's history, there had been little need for a strategic direction, indeed, in view of the paralytic nature of the organization - or perhaps the total absence of a strategy given the limits placed by Government - there should be little surprise that there was no strategy. This position of having no strategy is resonant with the argument put forward by Knights, that strategy should be regarded as a discursive concept within an epistemological space i.e. that the whole notion of having an articulated corporate strategy is located within contemporary understandings of management. The lack of a strategic direction, which some CoastElectric senior managers took to

be 'what business are we in? Where are we going to be in five years time?' was viewed as something that had to be addressed. In conjunction with Advicecorp, a firm of management consultants, a strategy was devised which sought to maximise the organization's activities outside the jurisdiction of the regulator.

In a very early interview with the Corporate Development manager, he explained that he was looking for a concept like 'telecoms' but for energy which could explain a generic product, such as 'energist'. The idea was that, rather than just (sic) being an electricity company, CoastElectric was far more. The expansion out of regulated areas included plans for a joint venture into telecoms, using fibre optic cables along the electricity distribution network, gas and a printing business. Such proposals were, of course, conceived as radical within the organization, moreover, they were seen as a sign of an expanding and diversified future. The notion of the planned diversification imbued what were seen as being stuffy organizations with a sense of dynamism. It is significant that this market-based conception of the future was envisioned through the mediating tool of a SWOT analysis. Corresponding with McKiernan's (1993) perceptive account of the decontextualisation of the Boston Box. The opportunities and threats produced an overly static view of the organization, stressed that anything is possible, that the strategic choice was open. However, it also highlighted the danger posed by the Regulator scrutinising and in effect setting prices for the industry. Presciently, given the events that were to follow, the SWOT analysis did indicate the spectre of a potential takeover.

Table 10:2   The Composition and Relative levels of Cultural Capital of the Senior Management Team.

Name	Position	Time Spent With Company	Management Experience	Managerial Qualification(s)	Other Qualification(s)	Position on Organizational Change	Relative levels of New Managerialist Cultural Capital
Barry Reed	Chief Executive	4 years	30 years in the Electricity Supply Industry. Previously an executive at another company.	None	Chartered Engineer	Viewed as a moderniser. Eager to turn CoastElectric into a leading utility.	Low
William Sarson	Director of Operations	5 years	30 years in the Electricity Supply Industry	None	PhD Electrical Engineering Chartered Engineer	Change necessary, in terms of the employment conditions of staff.	Low
Andrew Whitlam	Director of Finance	1 year	Formerly finance director of a large UK plc.	Chartered Accountant. MBA	None	Change necessary A moderniser	High
Bill Jameson	Chairman	5 years	30 years in the Electricity	None	BA	Unsure	Low

			Supply Industry.		Chartered Engineer.		
Robert Lane	Director of Corporate Development	25 years	Extensive range of senior appointments.	None	Chartered Engineer.	Change necessary especially through diversifica-Tion	Low
Humphre y Davis	Director of Human Resources	30 years	Worked way through administration.	Fellow of the IPM (now IPD)	BA	Change necessary.	Low

The above table illustrates a number of points: first, the board is notable for the predominance of electricity industry experience. With the exception of the recently appointed finance director, senior management experience has been gained exclusively within the electricity supply industry. It is clear that in terms of cultural capital relating to new managerial discourses, the senior management team were relatively weak. The cadre of senior executives were therefore in a position that was summed up by the Director of Corporate Development:

> 'We were all [the directors] agreed on the need to change, we just had to decide what to change'.

This view was informed by the expectations of City analysts, which were confirmed by various consulting reports that had been commissioned by CoastElectric, all of which prognosticated the need for change. The implication was that CoastElectric, in its current state, was an anachronism. This notion i.e. that key actors within the organization actually regarded the organization as anachronistic is of importance for it demonstrates that those in the organization appropriated and constituted themselves through the definitions placed upon them by the wider environment, by virtue of them having being a regional electricity company. This assertion of power is demonstrative of the capacity of the discourse of new managerialism to be able to categorise and to define organizations. To question the suggestion that the need to change is necessary is to open up analytical possibilities for the organization that are different from the discourse of new managerialism. For instance, imagine the decision making elite within CoastElectric turning to the outside world and stating that CoastElectric was a technical company and as such it needed to be staffed and run by engineering experts. Within the confines of the boardroom there was uncertainty about TQM. The decision was delayed to await the findings of a project team formed to examine the claims for and against TQM in more detail. The content of this group is significant for it comprised of six management consultants, from the large consulting firm Advicecorp, and six senior executives at CoastElectric. Significantly, the organization's first major venture into new managerial practices was prompted by the one member with private sector experience: the finance director. The latter persuaded the Board of the virtues of TQM. Another Director commented, 'He came from a TQM Background and told of us of the benefits it had brought his previous company'.

TQM was highly fashionable at this point and had been widely diffused in manufacturing industry (see Wilson, 1992; Wilkinson & Willmott, 1995).

Having agreed to explore the possibility of TQM, the Board felt it necessary to commission a study from external consultants. This seems partly to have reflected the lack of understanding about the content of a TQM programme. Senior managers were relatively uninformed about this concept, except that it constituted something 'new' or was a 'Japanese' way of working. Within the confines of the boardroom there was uncertainty about TQM. The decision was delayed to await the findings of a project team formed to examine the claims for and against TQM in more detail. The content of this group is significant for it was comprised of six management consultants, from the large consulting firm Advicecorp, and six senior executives at CoastElectric. In terms of the consultants, it is worth considering why they formed part of the group. A senior executive recalled:

> 'We looked at 50 companies and decided to adopt TQM as that was the key to being successful ...We (the Directors) established a research group consisting of Senior Managers and some Management Consultants, who had experience of TQM, that looked at successful and unsuccessful companies and the distinction between them. They found that the difference was focusing on customer need. It was decided therefore that we must therefore focus on customer need'.

The study itself took only a fortnight to complete. It is impossible to know what form the research into TQM took - although it is possible to conjecture that, in view of the relative speed with which the report was produced, given the number of organizations researched, that it was relatively superficial. This report throws up an interesting example of the validation of a preference held by some of the senior management team, especially Barry Reed and the finance manager. The framing of the study around an investigation of the impacts of TQM undoubtedly shaped the findings. For instance, in 1992, what consultancy would not have recommended TQM as a route to corporate success? The promulgation of TQM as a policy option through the research project is significant, as it is a demonstration of how external legitimation is provided for the policy preference of a small cadre of senior managers. The work of Pettigrew (1973), and that of Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) on the role of the external authority or experts to legitimate a particular position is salient, as is the insights on the authority to speak, as postulated by Foucault (1972). Similarly, the control of alternatives is also highly relevant, by just reporting on TQM there was a mobilisation of bias (Schnattscheider, 1973) for TQM. The recommendation of TQM as a policy to adopt also serves, in so far as TQM can be regarded as a discourse which through the intensity of its promotion and packaging asserts that there is a one best way (see Wilson, 1992). The corollary of the promotion of a superior form of organizing is that it problematizes the existing organization, in a way for instance that the decision to adopt a functional structure did not. But, its credibility seems to have been greatly enhanced by the credentialled and specialist knowledge of the consultancy firm. Unsurprisingly, the study backed the adoption of TQM. The latter's new found centrality to Coast

Electric's future development was reflected in a declaration from the chief executive, which claimed that: 'TQM is a new way of working that will enable us to cut staffing levels and costs while improving customer service'

In this case, the consultants certainly seem to have played the role of cultural intermediary. QuestCo consulting were specialist quality consultants and therefore can be considered to be rich in new managerialist cultural capital. As such, they were able to understand and reproduce the discourse of TQM in an image and rhetoric intensive manner. In short, the consultants had a mastery of the TQM discourse. The decision to implement TQM saw the appointment of a management consultancy, which was hired to devise and implement CoastElectric's TQM programme. Their brief extended to playing a major role in constructing and operationalising the programme in conjunction with a CoastElectric executive. The senior executive, Peter Marsh, explained that,

> 'We hired Quest [consulting] because they knew about TQM, so they could help guide us through the process ... to be honest, we were hoping for knowledge transfer and that did not really happen'.

The TQM programme's results were somewhat mixed, which is not unusual in itself (see the Wilkinson and Willmott 1995 edited collection), although the Chief Executive, claimed in the annual report that,

> 'TQM was a new way of working, which enables us to cut staff numbers and improve customer service'

TQM was represented by many managers as possessing special powers, some senior managers later noted that they had expected the employees to change the whole way in which they approached work. For instance, one manager commented,

> 'We expected the workers to be like the Japanese, come in the door early, start work, come up with a few suggestions for improvements ... this didn't happen'

Such great expectations were not realised, but for the cultural sign retained its capital, this is arguably because TQM was represented, within CoastElectric, as being a 'journey' which would see the organization increasingly become a 'TQM' company, with the sign gradually being embedded. What is clear from the case of CoastElectric is that TQM was seen as a means of fundamentally transforming the organization in a way in which the key decision-makers viewed as being positive. The basis for this position seemed to rely on the consultant guided research project. It can be argued that the consultants pointed to a particular 'sign' possessed by 'successful' companies; thus a sign rich in its endowment of cultural capital. The sign was devoid of sectoral and cultural imprinting, and by implication, with the assistance of consultants it was available to CoastElectric. In this sense, it is our interpretation that the consultants were acting as a cultural intermediary, and through their

possession of cultural capital were able to dictate 'fashion' to CoastElectric. The subsequent problems with TQM were viewed not as a difficulty with TQM per se but rather with the employees' inability to change.

The importance of cultural signs in the corporate landscape cannot be underestimated. Thus, for example, when Cadbury Schweppes[1] announced that in future they were to be managed on the basis of shareholder value creation the mere insertion of this cultural sign into the corporate landscape was sufficient to effect a two-thirds increase in their share price without any need to provide any backing to the cultural sign by implementing the management technique concerned. Whilst nationalised CoastElectric was notable for its hermeticism, whereby the organization was dominated by engineers who did not embrace the managerial ideas of the day; they did not need to, for their world was a Ptolemaic world which centred on maintaining the electricity distribution network. The corollary was the dominance of the discourse of engineering. On privatisation, the directors, who remained the same, began to show greater interest in packaged managerial ideas. · This was to lead to the extensive use of consultants, who were seen as having the wherewithal to 'bring CoastElectric up to date ... when we were privatised we were 20 years behind, now we are at the leading edge'.

10.5   Industrial Relations Agreement

These extracts are interesting for they identify a number of properties that were imputed to the consultants. The first property is that they were regarded as having expertise by virtue of their previous experience, this at once marks them down as being possessors of high levels of cultural capital in matters associated with 'business success'. This acknowledgment and indeed the very inclusion of consultants in the group is establishing the consultants up as having authority of delimitation over a particular domain: in this case it was over what path CoastElectric should take in order to fulfill its strategic intent (after of course having defined that the organization in the first place required a strategic intent). A further representation of consultants was one in which they were used in the group as they could provide 'neutral, objective advice'. This emphasis on neutrality was important particularly for the senior executive group that was promoting TQM. The consultants involved worked for Advicecorp, a large consulting firm that had been heavily involved in promoting TQM packages. This in itself calls into question the degree to which 'neutrality' or 'objectivity' could be seen to exist. In this sense I would argue that the consultants are better viewed as cultural intermediaries for the discourse of new managerialism. From the perspective of the senior executives in favour of TQM, the use of consultants was beneficial in terms of creating the impression of objectivity and neutrality. Moreover, it also served to legitimate the preference of those in favour of TQM through consultants offering external support. This concurs with the work

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[1] David Crowther brought the case of Cadbury Schweppes to my attention.

of Pettigrew (1973) and that of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), both studies demonstrate the way in which decisions can be legitimated through an external party that possesses, or perhaps more importantly, is seen to possess cultural capital.

CoastElectric was situated within a broader, national industrial relations system. This among other things meant that CoastElectric had a relatively small influence in the collective bargaining process. This relative emasculation was encapsulated by the Employee Relations manager, who commented:

> 'Before the changes, our job [employee relations within CoastElectric] was just
> about interpreting the detail of national agreements'

The condition also applied to shop stewards, who played a negligible role in the negotiation process. The decision was made by senior executives that the organization should shift to localised bargaining. This decision was made with apparent consensus among the senior managers; the pre-existing mechanism was largely viewed as an anachronism and inappropriate to the organization's new environment. The shift to local bargaining had been widely mooted in the press prior to privatisation, and it was no surprise when CoastElectric signalled their intent to move to local bargaining. The decision was represented as being a 'rational', 'forward thinking' step. The new industrial relations mechanism, which was relabelled as Employee Relations, consisted of single table bargaining within the Electricity Business Forum, a body that was to comprise of representatives from CoastElectric and the five Trade Unions. There was consensus around the decision. It was agreed to be a generally necessary step among the senior management. Difficulties with the decision centred on discussions in the boardroom as to how acceptable it would be to the Trade Unions, the fear being that it might precipitate some form of industrial action. The rationale for the decision was then not in doubt, the urgency of the need for change was emphasized by Humana, an HRM consultancy, who suggested that the existing pay structure which consisted of five different agreements and 147 pay points on a pay spine was an anachronism.

10.6   The System of Objects

In addition to the large scale, organizational level changes, other initiatives directed at individual managers were employed. In CoastElectric the adoption of new managerial packages mirrored the arrival of new, in vogue managerial ideas. For instance, in 1994, a small, American boutique consultancy was, at the time, providing 'Partner Coaching' to senior executives in order to enable them to, 'envision the future'. There was interest in CoastElectric in anything that was viewed as being at the cutting edge of management theory; the claims made on behalf of initiatives were often to prove irresistible to CoastElectric's decision-makers. Thus this whole situation levered open tremendous space for consultants to operate, as a number of managerial packages were imported to

support the BPR process. The managerial packages consumed by CoastElectric included, inter alia, the following:

Top level negotiating skills for senior executives. This was run by a specialist consultancy. One senior executive explained, *'I was specially trained by an American negotiating expert who had worked as a Middle East peace negotiator. He trained me in a new technique whereby the approach is based on, 'Ethics and Integrity and creating win/win situations'.*

Explorations into Investors in People. The Board of Directors were committed to the attainment of the Investors in People standard, although after the take-over this commitment was abandoned. Human Resources consultants acted as advisers.

Retention of the CharterMark. The CharterMark was an innovation from the early years of the Major Administration, with it being awarded to organizations reaching particular standards in customer service.

Assessment Centres. An Assessment Centre was developed in-house by the training and development manager, it was run by the training and development department and management consultants.

Specialist Human Resource consultants were brought in to devise new organizational structures, job descriptions and reward systems.

What is striking about the above list, is the way in which consultants pervaded the change process. In each case they were bringing 'managerial packages' into the organization, each of which relied on modern, fashionable styling which was paralleled by their representation as being at the vanguard of management theory. Of course, these packages, when implemented, had profound impacts on people working within CoastElectric; for some it led to a termination of their employment, for others it meant an intensification of their labour process. The lack of a sensitisation to such issues has been a criticism that has been levelled at Baudrillard, who has been lambasted for his negation or apparent lack of attention to the 'effects' on people of particular courses of action (see for instance, the furore caused by his is pronouncement that the 'Gulf War Did Not Happen').

From the perspective of this thesis, it is important for me to attempt to understand the reasons behind the organization's use of management consultants, not to mention their predilection towards 'management consultancy packages'. The illustrations above, I believe, provide evidence that management consultants act as cultural intermediaries, proffering opinion and delivering nostrums on what is required of the organization in order for it to be considered as a success, in order to

surmount any desiderata in order to become the 'Marks and Spencer'[i] (Kerfoot and Knights 1995) of their industry. The consultants, however, not only advised on managerial fashion, but through careful packaging and skilful commodification were able to act as purveyors of fashion. This process bears a striking similarity with the description of department stores by Nava (1997). Thus, senior executives construct an identity for themselves and the organization through the appropriation of 'cultural signs' from the repertoire of contemporary new managerialism for which may consultants act as a cultural intermediary.

10.7   Summary of Episode One

The first period consisted of a strategy that emphasised expansion and diversification. The rationale for this strategy was that given the regulation of the prices and costs pertaining to the supply and distribution of electricity, by OFFER the industry regulator, the organization needed to move outside of regulated activities in order to enhance its opportunities for growth. This combined with an identity project, whereby senior executives, most of whom had spent their careers within the electricity supply industry, sought to prove their virility as corporate leaders, especially in relation to the boards of the other Regional Electricity Companies. For instance, in 1992, the organization, with extensive assistance from management consultants delivered a strategic intent that aimed to 'be recognised as the leading REC, and the leading utility in the region, by 1996'. Clearly, it is illusory to ascribe too much importance to the significance of corporate missions, constituting, as they do, highly stylised means of communication that possess a synchronic quality, by virtue of signifying a successful future for an organization.

It is important to note however, that this was the first such mission ever to be articulated by CoastElectric. Moreover, such a device can act as a sign to signify the particular direction to be embarked upon by an organization. For CoastElectric, in their metaphorical golden spring of the immediate post-privatisation period, opportunity, outside of the regulated core of the business seemed limitless. The overarching discourse was that of 'romancing the market' (c.f. Clark, 1999). To fulfill this expansionist strategy, its network of retail shops was doubled through the acquisition of a neighbouring REC's retail concern. Plans were made to enter the gas, telecoms and cable TV businesses. The discourses surrounding such initiatives were, not surprisingly, unmistakably expansionary. In terms of situating such a strategy within extant theorisation, the strategy can be broadly understood as market focused. The social construction of CoastElectric's environment identified a situation of great opportunity for CoastElectric. There was little sense of there being any constraints placed upon the organization's ability to realise successfully such as strategy.

10.8   Episode Two: Job Rethink

Two years after the initial TQM episode, CoastElectric once again embarked upon a series of strategic initiatives. At this point, it is relevant to question the reason why new directions were being sought. 1994, therefore, saw the second iteration of strategy making within CoastElectric. It was remarkable to the extent to which it marked a volte face on the previous strategy The corporate mission adopted by CoastElectric in 1992, which aimed to be the best U.K. REC in terms of Customer Service, Financial performance, and employee empowerment by 1996, was abandoned in favour of the Trident Strategy. Barry Reed, the chief executive, and a team of staff and consultants formulated the Trident strategy. One senior manager explained,

> 'We now have a new strategic intent 'The Trident Strategy'. We reviewed our
> original strategic intent which was to become the 'Best REC by 1996', the aim of
> the Trident Strategy is for CoastElectric to become recognised as a leading
> company. CoastElectric should be recognised as a leading company by customers,
> staff and financial institutions'.

This is of course a much-diluted version of the earlier objective of being the best utility by 1996. Vitally, however, the definition of whether CoastElectric had made these objectives was to be determined by the organization itself. Of greater significance was the content of the strategy: the outward looking, market approach was displaced by a far more internally based approach to strategy. This saw a divestment of the retail business, which had been assembled at considerable cost, and sales of stakes in the cable and telecoms business. A Senior Manager contended:

> 'With regards to the organisation this means we must: Run the core distribution
> business as effectively and at a low cost as possible, Be utility related, try and
> develop the telecom, gas and rates, using the electricity billing service to bill for
> other services. However, CoastElectric have got to be realistic. Through
> RedFlame Gas we entered the Gas market two years ago. It was really profitable,
> there were only a few players, now there are over one hundred and we are making
> a loss on gas'.

The corporate bravura of a few years before had disappeared. This was superseded by a realisation that the organization was relatively constrained in its ability to enter new businesses. Moreover, CoastElectric now had a sense of itself that possessed core capabilities, such as: selling electricity, maintaining a distribution network, reading meters, billing customers, designing electricity systems:

> 'Our focus is currently on 1998, when the supply to domestic customers is
> liberalised. There will undoubtedly be predatory activity for customers, how much
> off you electricity bill would you have to save to change supplier' [My response
> about 10%] 'That's what we think 10%. We have seen the effect of predatory
> activity in the gas market where the bottom had dropped out of the market. We are

being very cautious about the electricity market. We are not in an expanding market situation in our region; we have to look for economy savings. The supply business is pretty vital, without it we would get gobbled up for the assets of the network. Staff don't appreciate that they are in a rapidly changing market place'.

The internal focus extended to the creation of 'internal subsidiaries' of activities such as metering and contract electrical repairs. This move highlighted the retrenchment that was being enacted; something that was largely a consequence of the fear of being taken-over from 1994, when the Government Golden share was released. Within the financial media, there had been a great deal of speculation that the RECs, by virtue of their high profits and stable markets, would be subject to corporate take-overs. As one of the smallest, and therefore least expensive RECs, CoastElectric was held to be particularly at risk. The rationale for the creation of internal subsidiaries was that non-core activities could, if necessary, be sold off as part of any bid defence. The siege mentality that was increasingly apparent, was symbolised when the organization 'asset stripped' itself. This involved selling off old real estate, as a means to appear 'leaner' and 'more efficient'. This was in order to defend itself from a UK based asset stripper such as Hanson; in this sense this was the foundation of a pre-formulated Bid Defence strategy, being based on the scenario of a non-utility being the predator. The conditions prevailing in the sector, i.e. the shared outlook on the sector (see Child & Smith, 1987) could be held to have changed. This was especially in the sense that the business environment was no longer held to be one of untramelled opportunity: unlimited strategic choice was replaced by an attitude of 'defend and survive'.

10.9   The Divestment

An integral part of CoastElectric had been its retail network of stores. The retail stores had been added to soon after privatisation with the acquisition of the retail branches of another REC - SWALEC. This was as part of the strategy of diversifying out of the core business. One year after this acquisition the terms and conditions of employees were changed substantively with a 30% pay cut being instituted. A year later the decision was taken to divest, the chain of stores was sold to another REC which was looking to build a national network of retail outlets. This decision is significant for two main reasons. One, it marks the first act of dislocation - creative destruction - in CoastElectric in that it amounts to a removal of a set of practices from the organizational repertoire. In a second and related point, it signifies a volte-face on an earlier strategy, the divestment marking a retreat rather than an expansion on non-regulated activities. This decision saw a split among the board of directors. The incoming finance director and the chief executive were in favour, the argument being made on economic grounds and on the related grounds of cross-subsidy, something that was expressly ruled out by OFFER. This was explained by Peter Marsh, who argued:

'We were cross-subsiding the retail business to the tune of £2m a month, if the regulator found out he would have cut our balls off'

Contrary to this position was the argument made by the Director of Corporate Development for whom the network of retail stores represented a means of delivering quality through a high street presence.

'People like to be able to go and pay their bills, go and see Mr. CoastElectric'.

It was the cross subsidy argument that prevailed, mindful of the dangers of continuing to flout the rules set down by OFFER. The decision came at a time when leading High street retailers were beginning to question, in the media, how electricity outlets were able to:

(I) Pay higher than market rates, and, two
(II) Be competitive on prices. A further factor was that without an investment into the retail chain, the possibilities for modernisation/expansion were severely restricted.

The earlier plans to enter the gas and telecoms market were also abandoned. In particular, there appeared to be a new realism as to the opportunities that were open to the organization. Gone was the 'market' is open style thinking, this had been displaced by a strategic viewpoint which placed emphasis on what CoastElectric was actually able to do - what were its' internal capabilities? This view of course, being far closer to the resource based theory of the firm (see Grant, 1990). Diversification as a policy was replaced by divestment, the organization was now to concentrate on its core capabilities of supplying and distributing electricity. This strategic volte-face was informed by two factors: firstly, issues of short-term expediency; second, reports from management consultants advising the organization to concentrate on its 'core competencies'. The consultant advice stressed the impending dangers extant within CoastElectric's environment - in the form of a predatory takeover. Whereas in the expansionist iteration of corporate strategy, as seen in 1992, the possibility of CoastElectric was now seen as very much a possibility. The strong financial performances of the RECs, combined with the Government waiver of the Golden Share, led to CoastElectric seriously countenance the possibility of a corporate takeover. CoastElectric, among the twelve RECs, felt particularly vulnerable, as it was one of the smallest RECs. A new (part-time) chairman was appointed; the role of the chair within CoastElectric was to liaise with the external environment. The choice of chairman ... was the head of a large corporation, which had successfully defended itself against takeover. The decision on divestment included the step of asset stripping the organization.

The emergence of a need for new decisions was also predicated on the grounds that, quite simply, TQM had failed to live up to the very high expectations that had been invested in it. This is of course hardly surprising (see Wilson, 1992), for while TQM projects did produce innovations that

were held to produce cost savings and improvements in customer service, it was unable to match the dizzy aspirations it had aroused a few years earlier. The unintended consequences of TQM were such that rather than freeing the organization from the emasculatory chains of bureaucracy, instead, and in a highly recursive manner, it actually served to create further layers of bureaucracy. This was a concomitant part of the committees; targets and form filling that were immanent to TQM.

TQM had therefore seen the rise of a new group of 25 modernising senior managers, who were now heavily involved in the decision-making processes of the organization. Therefore, while TQM in itself had failed to realise its expectations, it had nonetheless provided a symbolic impetus of those that were for 'organizational change'. The end of 1994 also saw the appointment of a new chairman, Robert Lane, working part-time, while presiding over a large UK plc. The rationale behind the choice of the new chairman was his experience in successfully defending his organization from takeover. Turning our attention to the specifics of cultural capital, it can be seen that the composition of the senior executive team was somewhat different from two years before. This is outlined in table 2 below:

Table 10:3   Senior Executive Team: January 1995

Name	Position	Time Spent with Company	Management Experience	Managerial Qualification (s)	Other Qualification (s)	Position on Organization-al Change	Relative levels of New Managerialist Cultural Capital
Barry Reed	Chief Executive	7 years	30 years in the Electricity Supply Industry. Previously an executive at another company.	none	Chartered Engineer	Viewed as a moderniser. Eager to turn CoastElectric into a leading utility.	Medium. Risen as a consequence of experiences as Chief Executive.
William Sarson	Director of Operations	7 years	30 years in the Electricity Supply Industry. Previously an executive at another company.	none	PhD in Electrical Engineering	Viewed as an obstacle to organizatio-nal change	Low.
Robert Lane	Part-time Chairman	Less than one year.	Extensive management experience. Having held various directorships and also the present chairman of a large FTSE100 organization.	Chartered Accountant by training. MBA	BA	Recruited for his perceived ability to manage change and defend against takeovers.	High

Andrew Whitlam	Director of Finance	4 years	Formerly finance director of a large UK plc.	Chartered Accountant. MBA	None	Change necessary A moderniser	High
Humphrey Davis	Director of HRM	33 years	Experience of attempting to make HRM more strategic	Fellow of the IPM (now IPD)	BA	Change necessary 'middle of the road'	Low
Dave Garrett	Senior Employee Relations Manager	15 years	Responsible for creating the local bargaining agreement. Chief negotiator	MA Industrial Relations Fellow of the IPM (now IPD)	BA	Change fundamental to the survival of the organization	High - Asked to address conferences on 'New Industrial Relations'
Peter Marsh	TQM Manager (reporting directly to the chief executive)	30 years	TQM project manager. Previously a senior manager in the organization.		Chartered Engineer.	Change fundamental to the survival of the organization.	High - Asked to advise other companies on TQM - For many, the embodiment of organizatio-nal change in CoastElectric
Imogen Smith	Training and Development Manager	4 years	Previously a middle manager in a large UK organization, prior to joining CoastElectric .	Fellow of the IPM (now IPD)	BA Psychology	Change fundamental to the survival of the organization.	High - On the editorial board of an influential practitioner magazine. - On a DTI advisory panel on training and development.
Guy Thornley	Network Design Manager	4 years	The youngest senior manager in the organiza-tion's history	None	Chartered Engineer	Change fundamental to the survival of the organization.	Medium
Vic Rimmer	Major Projects Manager	25 years	Series of promotion from operational engineering. An acolyte of Kevin Watkins	None	Chartered Engineer	Change fundamental to the organization	Medium
Kevin Watkins	Network Services Manager, East	30 years	Long standing senior manager	MBA	Chartered Engineer 1st Class Honours Degree	The architect of Job Rethink and Rule Based Engineering.	Very High
Bob Peters	Network Services Manager, West	30 years	Long standing senior manager	None	Chartered Engineer	Collaborator with Kevin Watkins in constructing Rule Based Engineering.	Medium
Richard	Network	20 years	Numerous	None	Chartered	Convinced of	Low

Preston	Services Manager, West		appointments prior to a surprise promotion.		Engineer	the need for radical change. Not through the use of 'theory' but through action.	
Mike Clark	CoastMeter Chief Executive (subsidiary of Coast Electric)	30 years	Numerous appointments prior to becoming the executive of a newly created subsidiary.	Fellow of the IPM (now IPD).	None	Convinced of the need for radical, cost driven change.	Medium
Douglas Radice	Public Relations Manager	7 years	Close associate of Barry Reed, part of his old team from a previous organization.	None	Chartered Engineer	Convinced of the need to employ modern marketing and public relations techniques in the organization.	Medium
John Baldwin	Corporate Development Manager	5 years	Former strategy executive in the oil industry.	MA in Economics	BA	Convinced of the need for radical change.	Medium

The detail of this table suggests an important shift in the cultural capital of the top management group. Examining this detail in terms of new management discourse, the relevant questions here are 'what is' and 'how does one acquire' cultural capital of the discourse. In our terms, to be rich in new managerialist cultural capital is to be able to place into context different new managerial approaches such as TQM, BPR and more recently KM. All of these approaches possess a broad rationale and specific prescriptions. They also possess a number of practical tools and techniques that claim to assist in the successful implementation of a particular initiative. To be rich in new managerialist cultural capital is not necessarily to share the worldview or to place particular faith in the claims of the techniques. It may equally empower a critique that comes through an understanding of the technique (see Knights & Willmott, 2000;Wilson, 1992; Egan, 1995; McKiernan, 1993; Grey & Mitev, 1995; Grint, 1994). In that sense, we need to separate possession of cultural capital from the individual constituting him or herself in terms of a particular discourse. Indeed, for Bourdieu (1984) the crucial point is that the managerial subject is one who is in sympathy with the new management discourse, that is they are an apparatchik (Bourdieu, 1981:p18).

In broad terms, Table 2 suggests that the relative levels of the directors' managerialist cultural capital had risen considerably. This can be accounted for through two prime mechanisms: the first, the entry of new personnel into the inner decision making elite of CoastElectric; the second, the acquisition of cultural capital by existing members of that elite. In terms of the former, it was highly significant that a number of business focused employees were now privy to organizational decision

making. For instance, Clark, Watkins, Smith and Garrett all embodied a high level of mastery of the discourse of new managerialism through certification and social capital. At the same time, through workplace assimilation, Marsh had developed a deep understanding of TQM and had become viewed as the very embodiment of organizational change. Both Smith & Garrett's cultural capital was enhanced by their being able to point to external legitimacy, afforded them by their extensive social networks in the corporate world. For instance, Smith sat on the editorial board of a prestigious practitioner journal and was a member of a Department of Trade and Industry advisory panel. Garrett, holder of an MA in Industrial Relations from Cardiff University, was increasingly being asked to speak on the new industrial relations at seminars. A colleague commented on the new situation: 'We went from being twenty years behind the times to being at the cutting edge [of employee relations]'

Perhaps foremost of those rich in cultural capital was Kevin Watkins, Network Services Manager. Watkins had spent his entire career, following his first class honours degree in Electrical Engineering, in CoastElectric. Yet his career had taken a number of turns, he had been training manager, he had completed a MBA during the 1980s and was known within the organization for his 'deep reading' of management books; in interviews he was able to demonstrate an esoteric level of new managerialist knowledge.

The cadre of senior executives was therefore bolstered by an influx of new managerialist cultural capital. In addition to this, there was as we have noted above an expansion of existing levels of cultural capital. This took place through four main interaction spaces:

1.   **Partner Coaching.** All of the senior management team took part in an initiative termed 'partner coaching', whereby they were coached in how to be 'better managers'. Partner Coaching was introduced as *'there is no business drive in this company Partner Coaching is a way of gaining commitment and personal responsibility to results'*. The Partner Coaching programme had been introduced in response to *'the speed we are moving at'*. The programme literature bore the legend *'coaching is the oil on the wheels of change'*. The 'Partner Coaching' programme reflected the general rise in the notion of the *'hero manager'* (see Clegg and Palmer 1996). This took the form of one-to-one coaching with an American consultant, the manager being encouraged to reflect on their own discursive practice, 'owning' up to misdeeds and being counselled on 'how best' to approach things in future. Managers were also encouraged to 'envision' the future, in particular, in respect of how they intended to make their part of CoastElectric more effective. Elsewhere (see Carter & Crowther, 2000) it has been argued that this process can be read as a confessional, that is managers are encouraged to confess their wrongdoing, which in turn

are absolved by the consultant. This process of repentance presumes a transcendental 'right way' of being, which in this case is the discourse of new managerialism.

2. **Business School**. A number of the senior management team was seconded to an executive course at a prestigious UK management school where they were taught over four weeks in an intensive 'master class'.

3. **Workshops**. Senior management staff regularly attended externally organized workshops on a variety of contemporary 'management issues'.

4. **Workplace assimilation**. An inevitable part of the change process at Coast Electric was the repeated exchange between management consultants and managers. The corollary of this physical adjacency was workplace assimilation (see Abbott, 1988) i.e. 'learning' the discursive practice of the consultant.

At this point it is important to add the caveat that it would of course be nonsensical to suggest that the managers were in some way 'docile bodies' or empty vessels for cultural capital. Nonetheless, it seems clear that by the time of our second analytic episode the hermeticism that characterised the organization in the earlier period had been eroded and the organization was now more open to its wider social environment. This greater openness to the emerging business environment was signalled within the cadre of senior executives by a heightened mastery of new management discourse. In short, the decision-making elite of CoastElectric was now somewhat richer in this form of cultural capital. This shift in cultural capital quickly manifested itself visibly in the changing tenor of consultancy relationships. This can be demonstrated by focusing on one of the key strategic initiatives of this period – 'Job Rethink'.

Kevin Watkins, in conjunction with Bob Peters the other Network Services Manager, developed a new blueprint for the work organization. The blueprint titled 'Job Rethink' comprised of three pillars: Firstly, it consisted of delayering the organizational structure; Secondly, it marked a shift to teamworking; Thirdly, it was to deploy a system of 'Rule Based Engineering', which was an attempt to codify the embodied tacit knowledge of the professional engineers which had hitherto dominated the organization. In terms of deconstructing Job Rethink, what is striking is how closely it resembled fashionable ideas of the time (1994). The proposals removing layers of the organizational structure were of course a central plank of both BPR (Business Process Reengineering) and the downsizing movement (c.f. Grey & Mitev, 1995; Scarbrough & Burrell, 1996). Moreover, the concern with 'processes' was also an ineluctable part of the discourse of BPR. Teamworking which formed the second element of Job Rethink also enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, a considerable cachet within managerialist discourse (see Mueller, 1994). The third element

of Job Rethink drew from both BPR and the emerging knowledge management discourse. The proposal was to remove the professional engineers from CoastElectric and replace them by semi-autonomous teams. To be able to carry this out effectively, the practice of the engineers needed to be codified and blackboxed within an information system.

In terms of cultural saliency, Job Rethink is highly indicative of the shifting cultural capital within Coast Electric. This programme drew extensively on ideas that were fashionable within the broader corporate world yet was designed internally, primarily by Watkins, yet it drew. This pastiche was constructed without the support of management consultants and marked a shift away from reliance on such groups. Rather its content and credibility, involving a fundamental recasting of the organization of work within the company, were derived from cultural capital of a few key managers. Watkins, for instance, described how the ideas came from managerial texts and from observations of other organizations. Teamworking was a typical example:

> 'Teamworking is an innate concept, I just put a framework around it. Teamwork is just a natural way of operating. We started to describe it better, and to describe it more fully in the CoastElectric context, what it meant. We needed to understand teamworking more fully, by talking to people who had done it, and by reading about it. We spoke to Rolls Royce, Xerox and the Automobile Association. At the same time we were looking at Business Process Re-Engineering and we were able to build that onto what we are doing'

All of these initiatives, of course, could have been recommended by management consultants, but the crucial point is that in this episode at CoastElectric they were not. Rather they came from senior executives' own interaction with the new management discourse, and their exposure to other organizations. One senior manager explained: 'In empowerment and customer care situations we have allowed people to roam the markets and to see what results other companies have had'.

Ironically, though consultants were not involved, the Job Rethink episode has important implications for our analysis of the consultancy relationship. It usefully highlights a kind of counterfactual experience to the many studies that have focused on consultancy projects. Here we find a group of managers independently developing their own 'solutions' to managerial problems. Their ability to do so seems to be closely tied to the cultural capital that has been accumulated in new management discourse. Business school courses, management texts, previous interactions with consultants all seem to have played a part in empowering a newly acquired mastery of the linguistic codes and conventions of new management discourse. It is also significant that a particularly important part seems to have been played by interaction with other organizations. It was precisely this kind of inter-organizational network which Coast Electric lacked previously, but which seems to have been an important source of inspiration and legitimacy for the Job Rethink approach. Interestingly, this bears comparison with evidence on the development of 'industry recipes' in other sectors (Spender, 1989; Child and Smith, 1987). Overall, the impact of these accretions of cultural

capital was not only to legitimate 'internal' formulations of management discourse, but also to reduce reliance on external consultants. Access to the wider circuit of managerial knowledge production seems to have significantly reduced the scope for consulting firms to play the role of 'cultural intermediary' to Coast Electric. Other roles and services, of course, remained available, but these involved a more transactional relationship. The opportunity to act as the missionary carriers of new management thinking seems to have been severely eroded.

10:10   CoastElectric (t3): The Eagle has Landed.

In September 1995, CoastElectric was taken over by FedCo a large American Utility. Prior to the takeover in part of the sparring that had taken place within the media, FedCo had planted stories in the press about launching the takeover because CoastElectric was badly run and could be radically improved. Such rhetoric is to be expected in any predatory takeover. Yet, there were a number of significant factors on taking over the organization. Firstly, the existing board, with the exception of the Human Resources Director, was not retained. Secondly, the TQM initiative was abandoned. Thirdly, the Job Rethink programme was embraced, although the plan was to implement it in three months rather than over the three years originally planned. Before we explore these issues, it is necessary to comment on the relative levels of cultural capital possessed by the incoming Board. The new Board consisted of the triumvirate of Tex Nicholls (Chief Executive), Adam Petersen (Operations) and Mark Howard (Finance). Their respective individual new managerialist cultural capital was high, each of whom had higher degrees in finance, management or as in the case of Tex Nicholls, in mass communications.

10:11   Who Killed TQM?

> *'For years I have been talking about customer service, the need for empowerment, putting the customer first. That is what I was doing with TQM. Now they have abandoned it, I just don't understand, they came in talking about the need for customer service. I asked for a meeting with Tex Nicholls [the Chief Executive], now that meeting has never happened.'* Peter Marsh, TQM manager, CoastElectric.

In addition to their impressive personal credentials, also of importance is their membership of FedCo, an aggressive self-confident organization that did things 'the FedCo way'. It appeared that the FedCo way had little time for TQM, which is of course interesting, given the high profile of the initiative a few years before. Yet interestingly Tex Nicholls, the new chief executive, argued that, *'We are going to make CoastElectric a world class company, we are going to do it by providing extraordinary customer service'*. FedCo's publicly stated objectives included, inter alia, the promotion of customer service, something that had underscored the CoastElectric programme. This, of course, poses the question, as raised by Marsh above, why abandon the programme? This is

particularly pertinent given that TQM is usually represented as being synonymous with customer service. In one of their subsidiaries FedCo had experimented with TQM and had less than impressive results, more generally TQM's status within the discourse of new managerialism was increasingly becoming demode with it being displaced by initiatives such as BPR. In this sense it can be of little surprise that TQM was discontinued. So what are we to make of the discontinuance of TQM? Was its ablation an act of corporate caprice? Certainly, this is a possibility, yet does it stand up to scrutiny? In the first instance, it is important to be sensitised to the broader conceptions of corporate fashion: in September 1995, TQM was looking decidedly tired. It was a falling star in the corporate skies, being eclipsed by other initiatives, most notably BPR. In this sense, this process can be said to have already to have already commenced in CoastElectric, for as has been noted, the Job Rethink programme was remarkable in its parallels with BPR and nascent elements of KM. The distinction was of course that within the organization TQM/Job Rethink were regarded as being contiguous and mutually supportive. In this sense, this can be borne out in that they were both supported by techno-managerialists committed to changing the organization according to templates of 'best practice'. The consultative approach, a central theme of TQM, was carried forward into CoastElectric's Job Rethink. They were viewed as being part of the 'journey'.

Whatever the arguments made for a natural contiguity and symbiosis between TQM and Job Rethink, there was nonetheless the sharp reality that TQM had patently failed to live up to its expectations: it had not refashioned the organization. The overriding consequence of the under-whelming results of TQM was that while Barry Reed and his acolytes were at the helm of the organization, TQM had to be constructed as a success. Given the store they had placed in TQM, a volte-face would have been to question fundamentally their legitimacy as a management team. Such conditions of course no longer existed when the organization was taken over by FedCo. Tough, uncompromising, not concerned with external consecration, and certain of the veracity of the 'FedCo way'. This combined with their symbolically violent critique of the CoastElectric prior to the takeover, it was a convenient means of drawing a line with the past: it was a way of cutting the Gordian knot with Barry Reed and his interlocutors. The rationale given that the philosophy if not the tools and techniques of TQM was integral to the FedCo way and as such there was no place for an adjunct TQM operation; indeed, in their subsidiary Cubana Light, FedCo had experienced serious difficulties with TQM. With the removal of Barry Reed and Peter Marsh there was no need to construct TQM as a success, rather it could now be represented as a failure. The conflation between Reed and TQM, with it being his 'personal' programme gave further reason, was perhaps the prime reason why TQM was to meet its demise. Such an assertion elevates issues of symbolic violence by FedCo, in addition to the undoubted a policing of CoastElectric's 'system of objects'. In summary then, whilst for the TQM manager FedCo's actions amounted to an act of corporate caprice. The reasoning behind this decision could be attributed to a number of factors. First, it could have symbolised the arrival of a new order. Second, it could simply have been abandoned because

its results were mixed. Third, by 1995, there was increasing criticism being levelled at TQM, furthermore, in the United States other packages were gaining currency at the expense of TQM. This point is germane to my fashion argument in the sense that if TQM no longer possessed, at least in the eyes of FedCo executives, cultural capital then it stood to be effaced. In this sense, CoastElectric's TQM programme was a victim of the vicissitudes of corporate fashion. Whilst TQM was abandoned, the new owners retained the Job Rethink programme, which they were to pursue with considerable vigour. This, I contend, is primarily due to Job Rethink, being resonant with cultural object that were inscribed and regarded as 'high fashion' in the 1995 zeitgeist.

For very similar reasons it possible to see why Job Rethink was retained: the new American Directors, rich in new managerialist cultural capital, recognized the correspondence between the content of Job Rethink and what was considered to be the latest 'thinking'. In this sense the management consultants were used not as cultural intermediaries but rather as apparatchiks, agents in sympathy with the new management.

10.12   Discussion

This paper investigates a longitudinal relationship between senior management, within an organization undergoing organizational change, management consultants and managerialism. Through deploying a cultural capital perspective, drawn from Bourdieu, this paper aims to contribute to the extant debate on the relationship between management consultants and business organizations. The argument I am making suggests that existing dyadic accounts are problematic as they fail to account for the enduring importance of the wider circuit of knowledge production – notably the role played by business schools, management training and the production of popular management texts. The locations of managers and consultants alike in that circuit are not fixed, and changes in position – indexed here by the acquisition of cultural capital – may have implications for the tenor of the consultancy relationship. The paper argues that the ability of consultants to act as 'cultural intermediaries' provides an important source of legitimacy in shaping the consultancy relationship, but this seems to be dependent on their ability to exploit, or create, imbalances in cultural capital with their clients. Where such imbalances are reduced, the consultancy role may tend towards the kind of 'apparatchik' function described earlier. Finally, and following on from this point, the data in this paper casts doubt on the supposed 'essentialist' relationship whereby managers are in some way reliant on consultants for ideas and a sense of security about the future.

The longitudinal data presented in this chapter chart the dynamics of the relationship between the decision-making elite of an organization and new management discourse. We have described three key episodes. One that was characterised by top management being heavily reliant on management consultants to bring new managerial ideas into the organization. A second where managers were

able to operate independently in developing their own interpretations of prevailing discourses. And a third, where a new management retained the existing programmes because arguably they were rich in symbolic value. The comparison between these three episodes suggests that the most important source of the evident difference lie in the internalization of cultural capital relating to new management discourses. In particular, I have argued that means such as Business School executive courses, MBA qualifications, independent reading of management books and workplace assimilation are all significant means through which cultural capital can be acquired.

The implications of this analysis for my view of the consultancy relationship can be summarised in terms of three key observations. First, a purely dyadic view of that relationship would seem to neglect the importance of the wider circuit of knowledge production – notably the role played by business schools, management training and the production of popular management texts. The locations of managers and consultants alike in that circuit are not fixed, and changes in position – indexed here by the acquisition of cultural capital – may have implications for the tenor of the consultancy relationship. Second, the ability of consultants to act as 'cultural intermediaries' provides an important source of legitimacy in shaping the consultancy relationship, but this seems to be dependent on their ability to exploit, or create, imbalances in cultural capital with their clients. Where such imbalances are reduced, the consultancy role may tend towards the kind of 'apparatchik' function described earlier. The data in this thesis casts doubt on the supposed 'essentialist' relationship whereby managers are in some way reliant on consultants for ideas and a sense of security about the future. This may of course be the case, but as the examination of CoastElectric demonstrates, there are other possibilities. Decision making in CoastElectric (t2 & t3) highlights the way in which management consultants did not function as cultural intermediaries, but rather initiatives were developed from within. However, while the initiative Job Rethink was designed endogenously, it nonetheless bore a close resemblance to prevailing notions of 'best practice' from within the discourse of new managerialism. This clearly demands an explanation, which we have sought to provide by linking the development of initiatives to the possession of new managerialist cultural capital.

In summary, it is our argument that the senior managers of the Coast Electric organization, over time, increased their respective levels of new managerialist cultural capital. That is they became familiar with and gained a relative mastery of the lexicon of new managerialism. This reduced their reliance on management consultants but increased their ability to access the new discourses of managerialism on their own terms. This was exemplified through the way in which, in the second episode, senior management devised their own organizational blueprint, inspiration for which had been drawn from reading management books and through talking to other organizations. The suggestion is therefore that the relative cultural capital of a cadre of managers may well be significant in terms of their utilisation of management consultants as cultural intermediaries. That

said, this is not to suggest that management consultants became redundant within the organization. In fact, research over the succeeding period makes it clear that they have remained an underlying feature of the organizational landscape within CoastElectric. It is the concern of future management research to comment on the possibilities for consultants within an organization.

10.13   Conclusion

This analysis of CoastElectric in this chapter has acted as a means of shedding considerable light on many of the current problematics within organization studies. This chapter has sought to analyse the decision making process in both CoastElectric Perhaps the first factor of note is the chronological differences in decision making within CoastElectric. Early decisions were expansionist, emphasising the open strategic choice that existed in the privatised era. Yet within the space of three years this had been displaced by a realism which saw a volte-face, and the return to an internally focused strategy of concentrating on core competencies. The change in orientation had been predicated on the aim of avoiding being subject to a predatory take-over. In so far as it failed to avoid CoastElectric being taken over, the strategy must be deemed to have failed, yet, and as shall be explored in greater detail in chapter 15, in the murky, capricious world of corporate take-overs, often all is not what it seems. The failure to prevent being taken over was attributed to a misplaced strategy - i.e. to defend against take-over from a non-electricity company. The take-over by FedCo obviated the possibility of this tactic proving to be effective. Therefore, the period of decision making from 1990-1995 in CoastElectric is highly significant, for it marks the only period in the history of the organization of 'independent strategizing', the brief period being an interlude between state ownership and that of being a small subsidiary of an American giant. It is therefore worth considering the insights from this period, what in the history of corporate decision making can be discerned from this intermezzo?

I argue that this chapter has three main contributions to make to the extant literature. These are concerned with the role of zones of maneouvre, fashion and the relations between consultants and managers in the strategy making process. I will now summarise the key contributions in turn.

This chapter is illustrative of the way in which, contrary to the exhortations of some strategists, strategy should not be regarded as a trans-historical concept. Prior to the privatisation of the Electricity Supply Industry, with the concomitant creation of the Regional Electricity Company (nee Board), there had been little call for 'strategy'. For instance, Hickson et al (1986) characterised Electricity Boards as being 'paralytic': that is constrained by external agents to the extent that very little 'strategic' decision making could in fact take place. In this sense, strategy was not, at least in the case of the privatised electricity supply industry, a trans-historical concept. Privatisation heralded a new epoch, not least because the epistemological space for strategy (c.f. Knights &

Morgan, 1995) was opened up. In short, the decision making elites of the privatised regional electricity companies were now expected to formulate missions, and to have strategies (c.f. Wilson, 1992). In CoastElectric's case strategy was an object of discourse between November 1990 and September 1995.

Interestingly, in this short period of strategizing, the 'managerial meditations' were such that they very much acted as a microcosm for the last thirty years of strategy discussion. In the first instance, CoastElectric romanced the market – engaging in what Clark has described as corporate fantasies. In show of corporate virility, the newly privatised utility proposed to go boldly into unregulated markets to compensate for the 'iron cage' that Professor Littlechild was allegedly constructing in the Electricity Supply Industry. The excitement that accompanied the first throes of privatisation was perhaps understandable given the 'paralytic' nature of the organization in the past, at least in relations to corporate decision making. That there was such a sharp volte-face and the move towards an entrenchment around a narrowly defined core business at once alerts us to the fantastical elements of some 'market' led strategies. Moreover, it acts as a sharp reminder that organizations exist within contexts that place institutional, temporal and capability constraints on a firm. The analytical apparatus of the 'zones of manoeuvre' provides a means of exploring the opportunity for the interplay between social constructions and more objectivised issues of the business environment, especially through the recognition of the corrective role that the latter can play on the former. Until now while the case for 'Zones of Manoeuvre' has been theoretically convincing, they have also been empirically under-supported. I am therefore suggesting this case makes an important contribution to the debate. The intention was not to judge normatively whether a particular strategy was 'right' or 'wrong'; rather this paper seeks to prise open strategizing through paying close attention to the interstices of objectives/subjectivism in terms of the construction and (re) construction of an organization's zone of manoeuvre.

The second contribution of this chapter is in terms of addressing the so called (see chapter five) 'fashion' debate. In contrast to many contemporary applications of the fashion discussion, this chapter has attempted to articulate a corporate fashion thesis that incorporated notions of consuming managers. At this point, in my view, it is necessary to construct a robust understanding of corporate consumerism in order to appreciate fully the nature of contemporary organization/consultant relationships. It is my contention that on the basis of the data presented, managers are to be considered as consumers of 'managerialist packages', with the content of the packages being secondary to the spectacle of the image attached to that package. The image of 'world class' organizations seems to mesmerise and seduce managers into embarking on particular managerialist programmes; managers thus demonstrate to the corporate world their virility (and by association that of the organization); constructing their identity as managers and the identity of organizations through a pastiche of images. The parallels between organizational consumerism and personal

consumerism are striking; for instance, a purchase of a relatively prestigious car is used in a similar way to the purchase of a managerial initiative such as TQM. Moreover, the attainments of standards, such as Investors in People, are indicators of an organizational 'fitness', a measure of their cultural capital. This process was particularly marked in the case of CoastElectric, whereby a system of objects was assembled as a means of demonstrating that the organization was at the 'cutting edge'.

The construction of the organization's identity by way of cultural signs functioned as a device through which CoastElectric could position itself in relation to external agents such as City analysts and the Electricity Regulator, OFFER. City analysts, in particular, were highly sceptical of the ability of the executives of Regional Electricity Companies in general to be able to navigate their way successfully through the privatisation process. This doubt combined with the epochal change in the industry undoubtedly heightened the need for CoastElectric to build a new 'private sector' identity through a phantasmagoric pastiche of imagery. Yet this process, as Veblen noted nearly a century ago, is far from simple purchasing. Indeed, to do so would risk not being taken seriously. Rather it is the careful appropriation, the skilled assemblage of a system of objects, replete with the correct management of *patina* that is central to a successful identity project, both for individual managers and more generally. Yet there can be no doubt about the importance of the 'symbolic' realm in the instance of CoastElectric, at least in the early stages, there was very much a case of conspicuous consumption: it confirmed the re-casting of Cartesian logic to 'I consume, therefore I am'. More attention needs to be paid to, the establishment of new managerial fashions, as well as the exit of out-of-vogue fashions. For instance, how does a consultancy that has dallied with, for example, Total Quality Management in the early 1990s,espouse Business Process ReEngineering in the mid 1990s and KM in the late 1990s? This raises important questions about at which point do consultancies and managers detect prodromal tendencies within a cultural sign? Furthermore, how do the consultancies deal with démodé products?

The third contribution is in terms of attempting to understand in more detail the relations between consultants and managers in the strategy making process. The proliferation of the discourse of managerialism with the concomitant growth of the consultancy industry has established consulting firms and their relationships with organizations as an important site for research. Simple explanations of consulting/client relationships do not account for the baroque profusion of the use made of consultants. I accept that consultants can be deployed by virtue of their facility in political situations, as well as for their practical know-how; we also agree with interpretations advanced by Czarniawska-Joerges (1988) and Clark and Salaman (1995). However, we argue that in order to gain a fuller interpretation of the role of consultants their role in this corporate consumerism must be addressed. I have demonstrated how consultancies can act as cultural intermediaries; whereby through the virtue of their possession of superior cultural capital they are able to exert influence and

guide organizations. The analysis of consultants is distinctive in that it has attempted to inject a sense of temporality into the analysis of the relationship between consultants and managers in organizations. Furthermore it has sought to make sense of the consultancy-manager relationship through recourse to notions of cultural capital, whereby management consultants have possessed a relative richness in new managerialist cultural capital. The corollary of this relative richness has been the ability to act as cultural intermediary to corporations, such as CoastElectric, in terms of proferring advice on new managerial discourses.

The argument in this chapter is that the relationship between consultant and corporation may not be as straightforward as has been represented in some widely cited dyadic, static accounts. This chapter has demonstrated, at least in the study of CoastElectric, that relations commenced with a confirmation of the consultant as cultural intermediary. This was however soon to change, with management consultancies being bypassed in favour of in-house decision making which was nonetheless owed a heavy debt to the discourse of new managerialism. My argument is that this can be made sense of through the enhancement of new managerialist cultural capital within the organization. Put simply, the organization no longer required the services of management consultants as cultural intemediaries: they can access the canon of new managerialism at their own volition. Consultants were to remain an enduring part of the corporate landscape, but their role was to change significantly: they were to take on the mantle of an 'apparatchik' to the senior management within CoastElectric.

In my view one of the main contributions of this chapter is to introduce notions of cultural capital, drawn from Bourdieu, which conceptually have, I believe, a great deal of purchase in terms of attempting to understand further the relations between management, consultants and the diffusion of new managerial discourse. Moreover, I would argue that a cultural capital perspective is a rich vantage point from which to seek to try and make sense of the complex interactions between management, consultants and new managerial ideas. The three periods examined in this paper demonstrate that management consultants were an enduring part of the CoastElectric environment. Such an observation however must resist the temptation to treat the relationship as exhibiting similar properties over time. The argument presented in this paper highlights the shifting relationship between CoastElectric and management consultants, which saw the consultants go from being a cultural intermediary to apparatchik. Further work is needed in this area in order to gain a richer understanding of the means through which cultural capital is generated. Such a project will involve examining the way in which 'explicit' management knowledge is transmitted, through means such as MBAs, to the way in which cultural capital is generated through workplace assimilation and legitimate peripheral participation.

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[i] Marks and Spencer has for many years been used within popular managerial discourse as an exemplar company as Knights and Kerfoot's (1995) have noted.

Chapter 11: The Process of Organizational Change in CoastElectric

11:1   Introduction

The previous two chapters have addressed corporate decision making and the effects of those decisions. In brief, chapter 10 captured the way in which the decision-making elite of CoastElectric were normalised too, or perhaps consumed by, the discourse of New Managerialism. The chapter captured the 'big' picture of how pervasive fashionable management ideas were to CoastElectric, as with the corporate landscape more generally. Chapter 12 will concern itself with issues of implementation: it will provide an immanent critique of the consequences of the initiatives adopted by CoastElectric. As we will we see, the degree to which unintended consequences are perhaps the only predictable outcome of such implementations is striking. It is now time to turn our attention to the dynamics of the organizational change within CoastElectric. This chapter will investigate and outline the changes that took place in CoastElectric from a perspective that attempts to understand the micro-politics of the organizational changes.

11:2   Antecedents: Homo Engineericus and the pre-existing context

The huge expansion of the electricity network that took place in the late 1940s saw electrical engineers become the managerial and technical elite of the electricity industry. Engineers were constituted; both by themselves and others in the industry, as being 'professionals' in contrast to the other occupational groupings were seen as being crucial to the maintenance of the electricity network. In this respect it is argued that the electricity industry differs from other sectors in which the accounting profession gained ascendancy, thereby making the parallels between engineering and accounting more direct. This position of hegemony was consolidated through an organizational structure that virtually excluded the possibility of a non-engineer reaching senior management; for instance within the Coast Electric prior to privatisation only one non-engineer had ever reached senior management. The centrality of engineering within Coast Electric was embedded through language, with the middle and senior positions in the hierarchy being defined solely in engineering terms. For instance, in climbing the Coast Electric hierarchy one would go from being a Third Engineer to a Second Engineer to a First Engineer before entering the senior ranks of Coast Electric as a Principle or Chief Engineer.

The training of engineers within the industry was largely conducted by the Institute of Electrical Engineers in conjunction with the electricity companies through a lengthy programme (seven years from 'A' level) of on-the-job-training and block release study. In latter years this gave way to the recruitment of engineering graduates who were then provided with a two - year training course which culminated in their qualification as Associates of the Institute of Electrical Engineers. Throughout the 1960s and 70s the Electricity Boards trained more engineers than they required, resulting in newly qualified engineers having to compete for jobs. This process undoubtedly added

to the image of the engineer as being 'special', serving to legitimate their status within the organization. The term 'engineer' was reserved exclusively for professional engineers, and they were responsible for designing, planning and checking technical work.

11:3   The Visible, Invisible Hand: Activating Organizational Change.

Privatisation was a highly significant event in CoastElectric's institutional environment. It marked the start of a new epoch that was to open CoastElectric up to the broader gaze of powerful new stakeholders, most notably those of the shareholders and the industry regulator, OFFER, that was charged with creating market conditions in the industry. The hermeticism of the industry that had prevailed for the previous forty years could reasonably be expected to be scrutinised by an amalgam of consultants, media pundits and the like. The major question was however, would attempts at organizational change prove to be successful or would they instead be regarded as what Hinings has termed 'unresolved excursions'. Would attempts at organizational change succeed in unpicking the pre-existing context to deliver a 'brave new' organization. Chapter 11 was illustrative of the way that to an extent decision-makers in CoastElectric could be considered to be 'dedicated followers of fashion'. Yet fashion perspectives all too often privilege diffusion, at the expense of implementation. This chapter seeks therefore to provide an analysis of how the organizational changes played out in the context of CoastElectric. It is concerned therefore with going beyond the imagination, bluster and hyperbole of the comfy confines of the Boardroom, in an attempt to understand 'organizations in action'.

One of the most notable characteristic features of privatisation was that it resulted in a new institutional framework for the Electricity Supply Industry. In addition to becoming a stock exchange listed company, CoastElectric was also to come under the gaze of the newly established regulator – OFFER. It is easy to understand the potential consequences of CoastElectric coming under the ownership of shareholders, which after a matter of months were to be largely made up of institutional shareholders (City Pension funds and the like). The position of OFFER requires further examination: OFFER was run by the monetarist economist, Professor Stephen Littlechild; who was charged with creating competition in the sector. Put simply, his role as the highly visible hand of the market, was effected through regulatory reviews that were to control the price setting and cost increases open to each regional electricity company. A concomitant feature of such a regulatory regime was to produce league tables that pitted company against company. It is of course little surprise that there was pressure on the organization to change. As a Hayekian, Littlechild believed in the veracity of unfettered markets. The challenge became, therefore, how to hollow one out of a natural monopoly.

11.4   Opening Moves

If substantial changes take place in the institutional and/or business environment, we can expect that this will have an impact on the relative position of management versus engineering in the organization. Changes in structure, language, legitimation and processes were recursively related. The organization commenced with a shift to a functional structure. This was not discussed in any particular detail in chapter 11 above, as it was deemed as a relatively benign form of organizational change. At the time of privatisation CoastElectric was organised into four broadly autonomous regions (which corresponded with the four counties within Coast Electric's spatial boundary). In 1991, six months after privatisation, CoastElectric was restructured into two regions (East & West), this change being enacted in order to realise a reduction in operating costs.0The restructuring resulted in the voluntary redundancy or early retirement, on very favourable terms, of about 20% of the engineers within the organization. The restructuring shifted the organization from being organised as a geographical hierarchy to a functional hierarchy: with particular functions, such as Personnel, Administration etc. being directed from Head Office, rather than from a regional manager in charge of all functions. The consequence of this restructuring was to reorient organizational relations into terms of functional expertise, and although this could have been expected to lessen the hegemony of 'professional engineering' the effect appeared to be liminal. There was no particular *managerial* philosophy behind this, other than the recognition that it would enable CoastElectric to make some cost savings through dismantling some of the replication.

The senior management / directorate decided that the key to the competitive success of the organization, as was seen in chapter 11, was the adoption of a Total Quality Management programme. At the time, as Tuckman (1995:66-7) has noted, *'Total Quality Management has been extended ... to almost a panacea for all organizational ills across the spectrum of activity now encompassing health, welfare'*. TQM was the first major managerialist initiative embarked upon by CoastElectric, as such it was inscribed with huge symbolic significance. In the following paragraphs I will investigate the political aspects of TQM. Firstly, in symbolic terms it marked the first major managerialist initiative ever embarked upon by engineering dominated CoastElectric. As Dawson (1994) has argued, one of the prime functions of TQM is to 'ask questions of the organization'. The commitment made by CoastElectric to TQM was significant, it was well funded and the initiative was the personal project of Barry Reed, the Chief Executive. A senior executive, Peter Marsh, was appointed internally to act as TQM projects manager; he was to report directly to the Chief executive. A senior manager from an electricity retailing background was appointed as 'TQM' manager with a direct reporting link to the Chief Executive. The next 18 months saw a TQM training initiative, in which all 5,500 staff attended either a two or four day residential course in which they were instructed in the philosophy and practice of TQM by Quality Champions. The training took place in hotels away from the organization and it was argued by the organisers that this

was important in order to remove staff from the pre-existing conceptual confines of Coast Electric. This training was accompanied by the establishment of a TQM nomenclature, which aimed to, '*promote, and drive the TQM message throughout the organization*'. This was engendered through the infrastructure that was established to 'drive the TQM message'; it consisted of a Quality Council at a senior level, regional quality boards and Quality Champions at the operational level. The '*Total Quality message*' was fanatically conveyed by the TQM Manager and his 60 'Quality Champions'. This is characteristic of Tuckman's (1995:63) description of '*an evangelical crusade*'. The TQM programme promoted the importance of process improvement, and empowerment. Employees were encouraged to form and / or participate in process teams which aimed to improve Coast Electric's operations. The particular focus was upon reducing operational costs, which was in line with the broader corporate objectives. TQM was well received by staff in general and engineers in particular. It was viewed by most to be a '*fantastic concept*', although there were doubts as to whether TQM could work within Coast Electric. The appeal to engineers revolved around the idea of 'empowerment' which Coast Electric argued would '*unleash people's potential*' and which many engineers comprehended as an extension of their existing autonomy.

This infrastructure was to function in effect as a 'shadow' organization: for instance, relatively junior 'Quality Champions' would report to Marsh, the TQM projects manager, whether managers in their region were 'supporters' or 'blockages' of TQM. Therefore, TQM within CoastElectric was to act as a device that was to open a fissure within the organization between those that were 'pro' and 'anti' TQM. To be labelled a 'blockage' was to be viewed as an anachronism, that is part of 'Old CoastElectric'. This labelling process was but one manifestation of the growing tensions between those for and against TQM. Increasingly there was no possibility of a rapprochement as TQM, with its master concepts of empowerment, customer service and leadership, envisaged a very different future for the organization than that traditionally held in an engineering organization.

That the TQM programme did not deliver what was expected is not unusual (see Wilson, 1992); however, TQM was enormously significant for Coast Electric for the following five reasons:

1. This was the first major management initiative that had ever been attempted within Coast Electric, thus bringing the discourse of managerialism to the fore. In this sense it was a symbolic break with the status quo. It was the consumption of something other than engineering. Moreover, it was a clear articulation of a highly stylised alternative to the pre-existing organization.

2. The TQM emphasis on empowerment, which inter alia leads to employees checking their own work and taking more responsibility, marked the genesis of the reconstitution of the role of engineers. In the past engineers planned and checked work that was carried out by industrial staff; this practice was held to be antithetical to the philosophy of TQM and led to there being a call to

allow staff to check their own work. In Dawson's (1995:63) words *'TQM raises a number of questions about organizational systems and belief systems'*. This raising of questions therefore was the start of a challenge to many of the unquestioned shibboleths of the organization. The control system that existed in the organization was such that engineers had always checked particular types of work; the logic of empowerment was to question whether this was necessary.

3. TQM's emphasis on looking at the organization as a series of processes reframed the notion of the 'professional engineer' in that it brought the content of work carried out by engineers into focus, or into the gaze of managerialism, thereby making it more controllable through being more visible (Miller & O'Leary 1987). Initiatives considered devolving some of the engineer's tasks as a part of the attempt to *'continuously improve business processes'*, and thus to reduce costs. In other words, the 'blackbox' of professionalism was being prised open, and consequently it was being rendered manageable. The analysis of an organization, such as CoastElectric, using processes as a heuristic device was to problematise the role of engineers, for it challenged why an engineer was required to do a particular task, especially if the task seemed relatively simple.

4. The TQM programme utilised staff who acted as Quality Champions to supervise and facilitate the implementation of the initiative. Part of their role was to identify *'blockages'* in the quality message, which were typically considered to be engineers *'not signed onto quality'*. Thus the discourse of managerialism was categorising engineers in binary opposition as being 'for' or 'against' change. Opponents of TQM largely fell into two categories, the first being those that were initially enthusiastic about TQM but became disillusioned as it was implemented, and the second those who saw the talk of the need for 'quality' as an affront to their professionalism, and viewed it as a programme that was unlikely to last. Mindful, of our exploration of TQM in chapter 12, it is probably not surprising that some managers lost any belief in TQM. What was significant though was that employees, especially senior managers and engineers, were being defined not through recourse to engineering terms, but rather through their orientation to organizational change. At a more abstract level, this can be read as a Foucauldian 'dividing practice', whereby a population was categorised and organised through their orientation to TQM.

5. The fifth point of significance, and related to point four above, was the way in which the newly formed TQM nomenclature served to play the role of a *'shadow organizational structure'*. As it was argued, above this was not the realm of an 'informal' organization. It had been consciously constructed as a part of the organizational change programme. The broader significance of this 'shadow' organization was that it acted as an institutional mechanism for the circulation and articulation of the message of modernisation. The practice of the shadow organization; that is to scrutinise and report on the behaviour of managers in their orientation to TQM was clearly an act of surveillance. While it would be far fetched to claim that it constituted a panoptic gaze, quite clearly,

as a mechanism it was effective in generating activity that purported to be furthering the cause of TQM. For instance a Senior Manager explained:

> 'I think the problem we had with TQM was that we were so concerned at being able to demonstrate a result, that we built a bureaucracy on top of it; paper, forms, targets, and numbers of process improvements and all sorts of things. And I think that made it something that most people paid lip service to it as opposed to lets find something that can be done as part of our normal business. They wanted a target and it was very much a competition between senior managers as to how they looked in the league that went up to the Chief Executive at the time, and how they were improving TQM'.

This signifies that the Quality nomenclature was in a short time able to construct a functioning bureaucracy, which managers saw a need to engage with. The shadow organization's relationship with the pre-existing organization raised interesting questions. By virtue of being set up specially, and reporting in directly to the chief executive, the structure bore the sign of the future: the cadre of Quality Champions, under the direction of Peter Marsh, should be regarded as the vanguard of the organization, in CoastElectric's attempt to 'take the great leap forward'. Yet of course, vanguardism, while perhaps being indicative of a future state, also, by its very nature, defines the pre-existing organization as inadequate. I am suggesting therefore that the shadow organization established an alternative discourse that acted to define and discipline, through reports to Barry Reed, the chief executive, the pre-existing organization. That is not to say of course that the reverse was not the case. Following Mackinlay (chapter two), equally, the pre-existing organization defined and categorised the Quality structure. For instance, for some it was an idea to emanate from 'Juraztec Park', a play on the name of the head quarters and the blockbuster early 1990s movie. Others were more vocal 'refuseniks', openly challenging Peter Marsh in training sessions: 'you get rid of Sarson & Reed and then get back and talk to us about Quality'. The opening up of a division through TQM arguably served to galvanise the Quality structure, turning it, among other things, into a social network for modernisers.

11.5 Discipline and Confess: The Partner Coaching Initiative

As a supplement to the TQM programme, 'Partner Coaching' was introduced into Coast Electric. The aim of 'Partner Coaching' was to help managerial staff (predominantly engineers) to talk about the their concerns and aims in their respective jobs. The 'Partner Coaching' programme had been developed, and was largely implemented, by American management consultants. The programme had first been deployed with senior management before being diffused down the hierarchy to pro-change selected staff. One of the sponsors of 'Partner Coaching' argued, '*there is no business drive in this company, partner coaching is a way of gaining commitment and personal responsibility to business results*', and the programme was in response to '*concern about the speed we are moving*

at'. Indeed, the literature accompanying the 'Partnership Coaching' initiative bore the legend, *'Coaching is the oil on the wheels of change'*.

Partner Coaching was a clear attempt to 'reshape' the way selected engineers viewed their respective roles within the organization. Partner Coaching exposed participants to the normalising gaze of managerialism in which engineers were encouraged to reconstitute themselves. The process of Partner Coaching resembled a 'confession' (see Foucault, 1977) in which engineers *'were encouraged to scrutinise their own behaviour, to ask questions about their own normality and to adjust their behaviour accordingly' (Burr 1994:43)*. All the participants in 'Partner Coaching' met occasionally to discuss the *'Way forward'* with an American Consultant. This was a clear case of the participants being exposed to cogent arguments for the need to change in view of the supposed inadequacy of the current organization.

In terms of trying to understand Partner Coaching, I think there are a number of issues that are particularly salient. In the first instance, Partner Coaching was inter-textual with TQM, it shared a similar worldview, that of new managerialism, it differed only in that it focused specifically at the level of the individual. Secondly, the metaphor of the confessional (Townley, 1994) is useful, for it helps to explain the process of soul searching that is underscored by their being a 'right' way of managing. By implication the invitation is there for a manager to purge his sins and to try and attempt to reconstitute him or herself as a subject in line with the 'ideal' manager type advocated by the discourse of New Managerialism. The possibilities of Partner Coaching, namely that as a technology it enables New Managerialism to inscribe themselves on the bodies, and more importantly the minds of managers are of course of great significance.

11.6   Industrial Relations Mechanisms

A year after privatisation Coast Electric unilaterally withdrew from the pre-existing national bargaining agreements. They set up a single table bargaining mechanism, 'The Electricity Business Forum' in which the five unions within Coast Electric were represented on a proportional basis. Coast Electric introduced personal contracts for senior employees, and they were no longer represented by the E.M.A. in issues of pay and conditions. The Employee Relations Manager (formerly titled the Industrial Relations Manager) argued:

> 'They (the E.M.A.) are being hit at the top and the bottom. The membership is down from the introduction of personal contracts. If we're paying someone over £40K we don't need to negotiate through a union we'll do it with them individually'.

The E.M.A. had traditionally occupied what was in essence an advisory role to management on health and safety issues and the like. The EMA had failed to preserve their 'advisors to management

on technical issues' role, and by joining the single table bargaining structure problematised the existing separate pay spine for engineers. The E.M.A.'s participation in the single table bargaining made it difficult for them to sustain a coherent case for the maintenance of the pre-existing pay spine. The E.M.A.'s relationship with the other unions within CoastElectric was uneasy; a point not lost on the Employee Relations Manager, who argued,

> 'The E.M.A.'s position has not been helped by the awkward relationship with the other unions and quite frankly the other unions are welcoming the opportunity to stick it to the E.M.A'.

The industrial relations position within CoastElectric was an interesting one. As has been indicated above the EMA was experiencing great difficulties in coming to terms with the emergent realities of the new industrial relations context. The EMA (cf Smith & Meiskins, 1996) has been characterised as a small right wing Trade Union: so it played out in practice, with the union generally being concerned with issues such as Health & Safety, casting itself as 'advisor' to management. The EMA, to draw from chapter one, simply did not possess within its repertoire the capability to engage with adversarial Industrial Relations. Symptomatic of the EMA's position was that it was usual for senior managers to also be members of the EMA. In most cases, membership was kept up by modernising managers. There was therefore an awkward situation whereby senior management would be privy to the decision-making processes of the Trade Union. That managers over a certain level had moved to personal contracts, and that there was the shift to a single pay spine, in many respects acted to fragment the notion of engineers as a relatively homogeneous cadre. That the engineers received little sympathy from the unions such as the T&G, EPEA, UNISON and the GMB was perhaps symptomatic of their inability to find common allegiance in order to resist managerialism. In this sense, this is very much a re-run of the argument put forward by Smith (1987) and B.Carter (1985), namely that engineers occupy an unusual position in terms of the labour-capital opposition. That the engineers were incapable of aligning with the other worker groups is hardly surprising, for they had been and still were the elite group within the organization. Yet at the same time this exposes the cadre of engineers as a 'structure of domination', albeit dressed up in the rhetoric of technocracy.

11.7   A new mission: The Trident Strategy

CoastElectric continued in its pursuit of lower costs and higher profits, and the continued need to 'drive change' to become an 'excellent' organization, the 'Marks and Spencer' of the Electricity Supply Industry (see Kerfoot and Knights 1995). The organization dropped its mission 'of being the best REC by 1996', and instead adopted what it termed the 'Trident Strategy' (see chapter 11). The expectations from the City, and the Regulator, were that Coast Electric's operating costs could be

reduced significantly further. The pressure to 'normalise' towards these expectations was heightened as from July 1994 when the governmental restriction on the take-over of RECs was to be lifted.

It was widely held amongst the senior management / directorate that Coast Electric needed to change still further. Indeed the make-up of the senior management / directorate had changed, partly through the appointment of a new Chairman from outside of the Electricity Supply Industry; who had been selected largely because of his experience in fighting off predatory take-overs. The modernising managerialists were now a relatively more powerful group within the senior management / directorate, and this in part was attributable to the to the networks, and alliances, that they had formed with external groups such as management consultants and City analysts, who were supporting the 'need for change'. Increasingly the dominance of the 'professional engineer' was challenged and represented as an anachronism. Before moving to the substantive, it is worth noting that in the public exhortations of the senior management team, a number of tropes were deployed with which to legitimate organizational change. These will be explored in further detail below. In retrospective, it is arguable that at this point the organization was at a critical juncture between the dominance of the discourse of engineering, and that of the discourse of managerialism. In my coverage of the relations and power and management thought in chapters 2 and 3 above, I suggested that the discourse of managerial thought may prove to be an important vehicle for defining and categorizing an organization; as such this is an exercise of power. The modernisers within CoastElectric viewed the future of the organization in terms of applying lessons and practices 'from leading companies' as being the path of corporate success. Legitimacy was no longer derived from conformance with engineering standards, but from the application of 'best practices', as was seen in chapter 11. The modernist as a category therefore could be described as one for whom the algebra of corporate success was not a mystery, but rather it was subsumable to tested 'tools and techniques' such as TQM. The modernists within the organization were in sympathy with external management consultants, who were utilised extensively in order to support the process of importation of 'best practices' (see chapter 11, above).

11.8   Job Rethink

The clamour for organizational change, which of course in some way needs to be mediated through managerial technologies, led to the Job Rethink proposals (see chapters 11 & 12). The *Job Rethink'* plans amounted to a comprehensive rethinking of the organization; it was designed to create a 'High Performance Organization'. Bob Peters, one of the progenitors of the Job Rethink initiative, explained that:

> 'Within Regional Engineering we have spent a lot of time looking at ways in which we could deliver customer service and become more cost effective by doing things differently in the future'. Indeed he claimed that, 'as the market

place changes so does our business and we need to be ready to adjust to working in different ways in the future'.

As has been argued above, Job Rethink amounted to a comprehensive restructuring of the organization, which it was claimed would result in large cost-savings whilst improving organizational performance. Job Rethink consisted of:

1.   A shift to autonomous Team Working.
2.   The adoption of Rule Based Engineering.
3.   The flattening of the organizational structure which proposed to reduce the organization to 5 tiers (Directors, Senior Manager, Distribution Manager, Team manager, Team Member) from the existing 7.

The claims of Peters had not been misplaced forWhereas TQM was an incrementally based initiative, Job Rethink was clearly of a different order: the plans constituted a radical break with the status quo. Perhaps the most striking part of the proposals were the claim that 'engineers' were no longer needed, in the same way as in the past. This was especially significant with regard to CoastElectric discussing their plans with self-styled 'World Class' organizations: corporations rich in symbolic capital. As will be further demonstrated below, changes in language and legitimation were recursively related (Giddens, 1984; Whittington, 1992) to changes in work structure, organization structure, HR Processes and systems.

The Job Rethink proposals had a great deal in common with 'Business Process Re-Engineering' (see Hammer and Champy 1993) and a proto-typical form of KM: both of which were important discursive practices to emerge from the discourse of managerialism (Grint 1994). The 'Job Rethink' proposals, it is argued, were a profound threat to the 'professional engineer'. Without wanting to be in repetition of chapter 10 above, it is worth considering the proposals, in more detail, as to why the proposals constituted such a threat to the professional engineer. In the first instance, the shift to autonomous Team Working would imply a reduction in the task autonomy, skill level and task significance enjoyed by most engineers. Indeed, the proposed shift to teamworking was remarkable for the non-mention of professional engineers. In other words, they had been written out of the text. Indeed even specialist engineering positions in the new structure were to be titled 'technical support'. The new titles with their absence of engineering terms symbolise a marginalisation of the discourse of the 'professional engineer' as Burr argues language is the 'crucible of change'.

'Delayering' was the term given to flattening the organizational structure, which was viewed as a fundamental component of Job Rethink. The flattening of the organizational structure was expected to deliver considerable cost savings, these savings were viewed as being essential to the survival of the organization. The '*delayering*' did not simply consist of cutting the layers in the organizational structure, but through the creation of the new positions of Distribution Manager and Team Manager,

it served to reframe the organization. An essential side effect of the proposed flattening of the organizational structure was an accompanying reduction in the number of staff. Job Rethink aimed to reduce numbers by 20-25% over a five-year period; it was anticipated that part of this reduction would take place straight away i.e. through early retirements, while the rest would take place gradually over the five years. The Job Rethink blueprint anticipated that engineers, who were not taking up Team or Distribution Manager positions, would work in a training capacity, imparting their skills to Team Members through workplace assimilation (c.f. Abbott, 1988). Along with the other two prongs of Job Rethink, delayering was common currency in 1994 (c.f. Scarbrough & Burrell, 1996; Mitev & Grey, 1995) and an integral part of the BPR manifesto, that liked to term it 'rightsizing'.

Whilst it was fully expected that the 77 Team Manager positions would in the main be filled by engineers, it was not a prerequisite. Indeed Kevin Watkins maintained that 'CoastElectric didn't need engineers any more, in the way we once did'. This is a change in the way that tasks are described and legitimated, partly as an intended result of work Rethink aiming at task fragmentation – clearly, work processes and the language of legitimation are mutually related. Thus for the first time in CoastElectric's history 'the professional engineer' was not central to the organization. The change in titles was accompanied by a change in the content of the role. Team Managers, and Distribution Managers were constructed according to the Job Competency Model shown below. The Job Competency Model, within the context of CoastElectric, is remarkable for its silence on engineers. Moreover it demonstrates the modernist belief that there is a 'best way' of managing coupled with the notion that by adhering to a particular modus operandi an improvement in the financial performance of the firm can be achieved.

The Job Competency model constitutes a technology (Townley, 1994) that defines what a 'good' employee should be, what the employee should look like in order to be able to perform the job effectively.

Table 11:1 Job Competency Model

The Outputs and Behaviours of the Team Manager / Distribution Manager

Managing Self
- Taking Responsibility.
- Integrity and Belief in Self.

Managing Others
- Leadership
- Planning and Organising
- Developing Others
- Enrolment

Working With Others
- Teamworking
- Flexibility

Managing the Business
- Customer Service
- Commercial Awareness
- Environmental Awareness
- Quality and Excellence
- Health and Safety

Getting Results
- Drive for Results
- Problem Solving and Decision Making

In a clear break with the past, 'Professional Engineering' skills were no longer articulated within Job Descriptions or Competency Models. A Human Resources Manager justified this:

> 'In the past we had people that were technically excellent, now we need excellent leaders - we don't need the technical skills'.

In terms of the everyday tasks of the organization, whatever the exhortation of the techno-managerialists it was evident that engineers were central to CoastElectric. Yet what is interesting is

the emergence and circulation of a discourse that was suggesting that engineers were an anachronism and no longer necessary to the functioning of the organization. In this sense, what is emerging is a binarism of two discourses that are locked into a contest. This contest extends, pace Said (1978), to define the 'other', but also to define the requirements of the organization.

The techno-managerialist discourse within CoastElectric drew upon the elaborate actor-network that was the consulting industry. As was argued in chapter 11 above, the management consultants in terms of their relations with CoastElectric shifted from the role of cultural intermediary to that of apparatchik. It was in this latter role that management consultants were to grade the Team Manager and Distribution Manager posts to the 'market rate', which was calculated to be approximately £18,000, and £33,000 per annum respectively. This compares with a 2nd Engineer salary of around £26,000. The expectation was that most of the Team Managers would formerly have been Second Engineers, thus the new 'market rate' salary constituted a significant pay drop albeit offset by a 5 year 'salary protection' scheme. The suggestion that engineers were 'overpaid' is can be read as an act of symbolic violence by the discourse of New Managerialism, to that of the Discourse of Engineering. This is particularly the case, when it is noted, given the monopoly position of the organization, and the idiosyncratic nature of the work, it is deeply problematic to accept the notion of a market rate as anything other than a highly partial social construction.

The Job Rethink proposals, which in part consisted of flattening the organizational structure; would through a combination of engineering redundancies, and of significantly increasing the administrative function of those remaining engineers, would lead to a shortfall of staff able to carry out engineering tasks. The progenitors of Job Rethink proposed to outflank this problem through 'Rule Based Engineering'. This was a procedure whereby non-engineers would carry out engineering tasks by following a step-by-step guide (see chapter 12). The instructions in the guide were produced by analysing, and then codifying engineering repertoires. Promoters of the 'Rule Based Engineering' concept reported that the idea had come from a collaboration with the Automobile Association, who had employed similar techniques in their 'Breakdown Recovery Service' (see chapter 11). A Senior Manager (and professional engineer) explained:

> 'Professional engineering skill is being turned into a Rule based technique. This is like the A.A. experience.... Where the recovery man comes and basically has a checklist. Is the battery flat ? Is it the spark plugs ? If there is a real problem he loads the car up and takes it away. We can deskill what was done by clever people.... '.

The parallels between 'Rule Based Engineering' and classical Taylorism or more recent KM are evident. The proposals marked a fundamental recasting of the status of engineers within CoastElectric. The proposals were a direct assault on the 'professional engineer', and acted as a decentering, and delegitimating exercise of power. The proposals amounted to a blueprint for the

'creative destruction' of the cadre of professional engineers. The discourse of new managerialism was asserting a legislative role (Bauman, 1987) whereby it was defining organizational requirements. Not surprisingly, all the engineers interviewed felt that engineering as a profession within CoastElectric had lost status and would continue to do so. Whilst most engineers acknowledged that at least in the short term this policy would have considerable cost savings, concerns were expressed about the implications for engineering standards, as illustrated by the following observation:

> 'We all feel that we are no longer seen as being important. Operational engineers believe that they are important but the company doesn't think that. Rule Based Engineering is fine when things are going right but not when things are going badly - this is when you need experience. They are retiring experienced engineers because they are too expensive to keep. The trend will continue to deskill engineers. They think that we don't need to spend £25K a year on an engineer to waggle switch handles ... anyone can do that. But the problem is these people don't understand fully what they are doing and you need to understand. A lot of industrial staff can do things by rote - they have seen an engineer do it before. It is OK until there is a subtle change and there can be a disaster. This has happened with a foreman who used to work here with tragic consequences'.

This extract illustrates the engineering belief as them being a crucial to the functioning of the organization, with non-engineers as being represented as being incapable of adequately performing the tasks. Moreover, it is recognition that the profession is no longer viewed as being important. Where organizations find themselves operating not in a single, coherent environment but, rather, faced by conflicting constraints and/or interpretations, they can adopt three so-called 'segregation strategies' (cf. Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Suchman, 1995, p.590): "(a) exalting ceremony while ignoring performance, (b) displaying cynicism and openly acknowledging that entrenched rituals serve no purpose, and (c) promising reform, thereby segregating today's reality from tomorrow's ideal." In line with strategy (b), the modernisers among Senior Management were largely dismissive of the claims made by engineers: Senior Management was largely dismissive of these claims. The TQM manager argued:

> 'Currently we have senior authorised staff (engineers) to check work. We don't need these checks as a worker is not going to work on a live line as it would kill him - he doesn't need an engineer to tell him that. It is against TQM principles, people need to be empowered'.

This is an illustration of a discourse constructed and enacting a reality, which then is defended against challenges (Smirchich & Stubbart, 1985). In this case there are two competing discourses struggling to impose a definitive reality on the need, or lack thereof, for engineers within CoastElectric. Equally, the 'modernisers' view was dismissed by Senior Engineers as atavistic, one of whom contended:

> 'Only so many rules can be written. Eventually engineering judgements based on technical knowledge need to be made. These can only be made by engineers. Also our larger customers, and architects etc expect the Coast Electric experts to be able to give rational arguments as to why something has to be like it is. In other words you need to know why as well as how. Non engineers tend not to know the issues that are important in engineering matters let alone being able to make judgements'.

Whilst another senior engineer added,

> 'Engineers are involved in planning and logic in separating the physical from the technical problem. An Engineer is a technical person ... my experience is that engineers have to spend a lot of time going back to theory. The implications for foremen to do a lot of the engineers' work is that there is a lot of potential for them to cut corners, I think it is inherent in the Team Structure. I think this is a sad state of affairs. It is always said that safety is paramount but safety costs time and money'.

One Senior Engineer spoke of his anxieties regarding Rule Based Engineering,

> 'There are so many inexperienced people expected to do jobs at all levels. These people often do not know how much they don't know'.

The evident angst among engineers over Rule Based Engineering was dismissed as parochial and anachronistic by the modernists. For instance, one modernist argued that through *'Rule Based Engineering'*:

> 'They have turned bright engineers into managers. They have de-skilled the work of less bright engineers so that industrial staff can do it. If this rule based system works for the AA with their checklist then it can work for CoastElectric'.

The experience of the Automobile Association is therefore cited as an inspiration and a legitimation of the Rule Based Engineering proposal by modernists within CoastElectric. This quote perfectly demonstrates how modernizers *as strategists* "enact fictional futures from creative interpretations of the past" (Barry & Elmes, 1997, p.433).

Among industrial staff there were mixed views on the Job Rethink proposals. Some accepted the managerialist argument that anyone could do the engineering tasks whilst a significant group retained their reverence for the technical skills of the engineer.

The Job Rethink proposals were submitted to the 'Electricity Business Forum' for negotiation. Given the nature of the proposals it was likely that the negotiations between CEB and the E.M.A. would prove lengthy. During the negotiation period the architects of the proposals toured the

organization enunciating the logic, and opportunity 'Job Rethink' offered to staff. They contrasted this with what they argued was anachronistic *'Old CoastElectric'*. It is worth considering the 'roadshows' in more detail for they are illustrative of the way in which the binarism between the discourse of engineering and the discourse of managerialism was opened up. The presentations were interesting to the extent that they in a carefully styled series of rhetorical questions, they captured why the organization, through the eyes of the discourse of new managerialism. Bob Peters and Kevin Watkins made a series of presentations in order to promote Job Rethink; a feature of these presentations was for them to construct the argument for organizational change. The hundred presentations, with sought to enroll, or to quote Peter Marsh, the TQM Manager and a member of the Job Rethink Steering Group, they aimed 'to capture the hearts and minds of individuals. We have done around one hundred presentations on teams'. A deconstruction of the presentations captures the logic of the techno-managerialist position; more specifically it revealed a number of tropes:

Trope One: The Market Gaze: The Inevitability of Change

The techno-managerialists message was underpinned by the notion that the organization had to change. The presentations commenced with the question 'Why must we change now?' before proceeding to announce that 'Cost reduction is unavoidable'. This was presented as being 'non-negotiable'. The rationale that organization had to change was based on the changing institutional environment, or as Bob Peters, a Network Services Manager put it,

> 'What does the real world look like now that threats have become reality? Let me give you an analogy, a bowl of fruit, the shape of the bowl determines the shape of the fruit inside. The monopoly framework and the competitive framework, how do they mix? ...Let me give you an analogy about what CoastElectric will be like in the future, 'Trapeze artists without the net' is it a threat or is it fun? We promised employment in the monopoly business, that is a fairy tale in competitive business. The analogy is that we are playing cricket on a football pitch. Requesting a budget and not getting it, that's reality. When the person you have worked with for 20 years is no longer there fear is not always a bad thing, it can make you more awake'.

Therefore, the 'inevitability of change' trope not only proposed that change was unavoidable, by virtue of 'competition' as juxtaposed against the former 'monopoly' framework, but that it would be an ever present part of CoastElectric. The sporting metaphor captures the notion that from the vantage point of a techno-managerialist the 'rules of the game' had changed. The corollary of this trope is that given the inevitability of change, employees are best advised to regard it as 'fun' or simply to feel 'more awake'. This trope takes as 'unchallengeable' the notion that CoastElectric had moved from a monopoly to a competitive environment. This was however a convenient social construction: except for an element of the 'supply' part of the industry, the rest of the organization

remained, as it does today, resolutely a monopoly. A further instance of the evocation of issues of inevitability and the market can be seen, when Kevin Watkins stated:

> 'There is concern about the speed that we are moving at. People listen on two
> levels at once.... Why is the mattress so lumpy? Are things too comfortable at the
> top, the Golden parachute. External market forces are even greater on those at the
> top. We are in a business framework of uncertainty, in summary, what's reality,
> who's we? What's what? Who's going to tell us?'.

In summary, therefore, this trope takes as axiomatic the 'inevitability of change' as an ever-present part of the business environment. Such an assertion, made as it was by the managerialists in CoastElectric, owed a heavy debt to the exhortations of the 'applicable' school theorists described in chapter one.

Trope Two: The Spectre of 'Not Changing'

The second trope raises the spectre of 'not changing'. This is intertextual with trope one above. The question raised is 'what if we don't make progress?'. This equates the new organization with that master concept of modernity: progress. The argument is that a failure to change will put the 'Business and Jobs at risk'. An appeal is made for unity and assistance, and more specifically for personal responsibility: 'We cannot stand by and let this happen'. This is juxtaposed by opening up the spectre of what will happen 'If We don't Make Progress?'; where a direct link was made between not making progress then 'Cost reductions Must be Delivered by Other Means' and put simply, that 'the Ability to sustain Current Employment and IR Framework Not Possible'.

Trope Three: The New Way Forward

The third element revealed during the deconstruction of the presentations was the presentation of the 'solution', namely the 'Development of a New Organization Structure': this was of course the programmed change initiative.

Trope Four: Win/Win Unitarism

The final trope that was to the fore in the prsentations was that of 'win/win unitarism'. The underlying rationale to this was that there were no conflicts of interest between the techno-managerialists and other groups. For instance, a section of the presentation was given over to 'Why Should We take things Forward?', whereby the paternalist recent past of CoastElectric was invoked, whereby, the 'Past record of Co-operation and Achievement', 'Shared Interests', along with 'Our Genuine Willingness to Discuss and Negotiate on the Proposals' were all presented as reasons as to why staff should co-operate. This unitarism led to staff being asked 'How do we take things

forward?'. Once again, notions of moving forward are pregnant with symbolic meaning. Immanent to the representation of shared interests was the invitation to 'commence Meaningful Discussion/Negotiations', to 'Make Progress/Remove Uncertainty'. For instance, the reason for the extensive communication was explained by Kevin Watkins, who argued,

> 'Other RECs and many other companies across the world have either changed or are moving to Team Working structures. The degrees of success vary but it would seem that the most successful companies are those that have involved their staff in the development of the changes rather than developing the proposals in secret'.

The cooperation in the 'new organization' would help, as Watkins argued, to 'Concentrate Our efforts on Beating the competition and securing our future. For instance, according to Watkins, this placed a great deal of responsibility upon the staff. Watkins argued,

> 'What are the constraints to making savings? We need you to be committed; we need to improve on job programming, on the use of resources i.e. saving scrap copper. We need to get out of the yard at eight am. We want you to try and carry out one additional job per week. So with new business work if you do ten jobs a week, if you can do eleven then that's a ten- percent increase. Enrol other people into what they are going to do'.

Bob Peters added to this,

> 'We need to gain commitment, Personal responsibility to a business result. The problem is that there is no business drive in this company. How will we come together? How can we use today specifically to achieve the delivery of business results through individual commitment and by gaining the commitment of others'?

This trope therefore relied on laying claim to shared interests. Further to this, it called for staff to take personal responsibility for improvements to their own work but also through enrolling other people.

The organization rituals that were the company presentation were therefore a means through which by drawing on particular linguistic tropes to legitimate a position of organizational change. These tropes were, as I have termed them, the market gaze, the spectre, the new way forward and win/win, respectively. These tropes were a means of constructing a cogent, an apparently consistent logic for the need to change and the means of change. Symbolically, therefore the techno-managerialists dismissed the past as anachronistic and doomed to failure. As a corollary change was inevitable, and always would be, and as a means of navigating through this change they promulgated a new organizational form that would deliver results that were satisfactory for 'everyone'. Therefore the techno-managerialists can be regarded as having invested significant effort in attempting to silence alternative constructions in favour of the dominant story (cf. Barry & Elmes, 1997, p.447). For

instance, Peter Marsh argued that the criticisms levelled by staff at Job Rethink had less to do with any limitations in the plans, instead being due to:

> 'People seem to have concentrated on a few negative aspects and concentrated on them rather than looking at all the issues, it's all a matter of perception'.

Meanwhile, Watkins attributed resistance to Job Rethink as being due to,

> 'A minority don't believe in it, they were entrenched in the old way of doing things. They are wrong, I think it is legitimate for them to be concerned, and I don't think people like being concerned without being able to rationalise their concerns. They have to rationalise their concerns which brings them to scenarios such as we won't be able to cope operationally'.

It would of course be an unacceptably Manichean view of power to suggest that staff were accepting of the exhortations of the techno-managerialists. In fact, as the extracts above suggest, this was far from the case, with reservations being raised at a whole range of the features of Job Rethink: not least, as we have seen, issues concerning the role and status of the professional engineer. It is worth dwelling on a few of the reservations:

> 'If staff pay is to be protected and compulsory redundancy is not an issue what major savings will the company make? They have successfully created an atmosphere of discontent and distrust, was that their aim? THIS IS AN ENGINEERING MONEY MAKING BUSINESS NOT AN ADMINISTRATION QUANGO WHEN ARE THE SENIOR ENGINEERS IN MANAGEMENT GOING TO REALISE THIS !!!!!!!?' (From Western Engineers, report)

This extract is illustrative of the clash between the discourses of techno-managerialism and of engineering, in that the engineers question whether there is any financial rationale for the action: rejecting this instead they recognise that the organizational changes constituted a shift in meaning.

The Job Rethink proposals were the zenith of techno-managerialism within CoastElectric; it was very apogee of the techno-managerialists from all functions (employee relations; HRM; engineering; strategy) working together. As I have shown, the programme that corresponded closely with what in the wider environment constituted 'best practice' was emulated.

11.9   Assessment Centre

During the negotiation period with union agreement, 'Designate' Distribution Manager, and Team Manager posts were advertised, and were open to applications from all staff irrespective of their occupational background. The Human Resources department created an Assessment Centre for the selection process, which was a first for Coast Electric. Annabel Smith, who had come from outside of the organization and had prior experience of developing Assessment Centres, commented that,

'We were 20 years behind everyone else ... selection just consisted of an interview ... we needed to revamp the existing selection techniques'.

It was represented as '*bringing Coast Electric up to date*', and purported to '*make scientific selection decisions*'. The selection process that followed comprised of appointing personnel that had scored highly on the Job Competency Model. The CoastElectric Assessment centre was constructed with a view to being able to measure the '*expected behaviours of the successful candidate*'. Staff that '*expressed interest in the Team Manager/Distribution Manager' positions'* received an information pack in which, inter alia, they were given details of the '*expected competencies and behaviours for the Distribution Manager/Team Manager roles'*.

The applications that were received for the respective jobs are shown in table 11:2 below.

Table 11:2 The Assessment Centre

Number of Applicants	Number of Jobs
220	For 77 Team Manager Jobs
70	For 24 Distribution Manager Jobs

The Assessment Centre provided an overall score and brief comments, which were used, for debriefing purposes, on each candidate. A participant's score, which was based on the Job Competency Model, predicted whether the candidate would make a good manager. The scores were then passed to CoastElectric's three Network Services Managers (previously titled Regional Engineering Managers) to select both the Designate Distribution and Designate Team managers for their respective regions. One of the Network Service Managers selected his Designate Distribution and Designate Team managers solely on the basis of the scores from the Assessment Centre. This led to some appointments that were met with surprise throughout the organization, amongst these included a 22 year old recent graduate being appointed Designate Team manager, and a 26 year old being made a Designate Distribution manager. One long serving Engineer commented,

'Some of my colleagues have got Team manager jobs, I am really pleased for them, they are all experienced and will do very good jobs, however, there have been a few surprises. They had real difficulty in getting people to be Team managers, so they've appointed some young guys. One is 22, he will be responsible for a team of experienced employees, doing the planning, budgeting etc. Do you remember Paul? He has got one of the Distribution Manager jobs; he is barely trained as an engineer. He knows very little, I wish him well but it will be tough'.

Annabel Smith explained,

> 'We developed competencies, and from them identified behaviours. We designed
> various scenarios that they had to undertake. We had a matrix where we scored
> them. We employed external occupational psychologists to observe and score the
> Assessment Centres'.

In an organization where seniority and engineering excellence were previously requisites for promotion some of the new appointments came as something of a surprise, as did the failure of some 2nd engineers to attain Team Manager status. Kevin Watkins, the Network Services manager (North), explained his use of the Assessment Centre,

> 'In the first time in the 30 years I've been here we have a scientific way of
> selecting managers. That's the point now we want managers not engineers. I made
> some decisions that shocked people but they will work out! It was useful in a
> number of ways; it confirmed some of my thinking about managers. Some of the
> Behavioural Personal Inventories gave me a better insight into what makes them
> tick. The Assessment Centre also opened up potential for some people. It also
> gave a benchmark, those that have performed well in the past; it gave a template
> of the kind of person we were looking for'.

Bob Peters also made use of the Assessment Centre findings when selecting his staff. However, Richard Preston, the newly appointed Network Services manager (West), made little use of the scores from the Assessment Centre; a Training Manager described the Network Services (West) Manager's actions, *'He paid little attention to the Assessment Centre he just told us this is who I am going to appoint'. I replied that some of them had performed badly at the assessment centre, he shrugged and said I know them they're just right for the job'*. Similarly when Richard Preston, the Network Services Manager (West) was interviewed he commented,

> 'I know my staff, I know who will get things done and who is right for the
> challenges ahead. All this psychological stuff is very well, but the reality is when
> it's the middle of the night, a storm has just taken out supply over half my area....
> that's when I need people to perform'. He continued, 'I said to Annabel 'you tell
> me on a single piece of paper who is good, who is not. They spent £80 grand on
> the Centre and it's crap. Annabel has made a fool of herself over this, she is a
> joke. The next report I get from her will go right in the bin'.

In my view the Assessment Centre constituted an important technology of power in the organization, for it constituted the means of passing judgement on a population of applicants. In turn, I want to argue that the feedback from the Assessment Centre served to constitute successful candidates as subjects through the discourse of managerialism. Many of the successful candidates were engineers, and they were joined by non-engineers that the Assessment Centre predicted would become 'good' managers. The response of Richard Preston to the Assessment Centre was glossed over by Annabel Smith, who commented,

> 'There were one or two decisions that we didn't agree with. There were some
> political decisions and it will be interesting to see whether they succeed, when our
> Assessment Centre predicted they will not'.

Thus far I have described the strategic overview of the Assessment Centre, as seen from the vantage point of various managers. It is noteworthy for a number of reasons. In the first instance, it is clear that the veneer of 'science' that is immanent to the Assessment Centre held great appeal to some of the managerialists. At the same time it opened up, or at any rate, crystallized a fissure between the managerialists: those that believed in the Assessment Centre against those that did not. That the Assessment Centre should become an axis around which conflict and difference could emerge is perhaps a signal of its potential importance; namely, it was not a game just playable at the level of an ethereal language game. Rather it was a technology that by virtue of its capacity to translate employees into an algorithm that defined success or failure, it had important 'power effects'. The Assessment Centre is therefore to be viewed as a potentially important disciplinary mechanism, of the type identified by Townley (1994) in her application of Foucauldian thought. It is now time to turn to the experiences of those that underwent this disciplinary mechanism, namely the internal applicants.

11.10   Experience of Participants (and Non Participants) at the Assessment Centre

Appointed Distribution Managers

Those who had been appointed to the new Distribution Manager posts seemed, not surprisingly, to have a high regard for the Assessment Centre, but perhaps more interestingly described their attributes in terms of the feedback they received from the exercise. For instance, the following feedback was related to a successful applicant for a Distribution Manager position:

> 'The candidate showed very strong evidence of realising the importance of
> business results, he also demonstrated problem solving ability. He showed strong
> evidence of being an effective communicator but little evidence of being aware of
> the importance of developing others'.

In an interview when asked to describe his management style the candidate responded:

> 'My strengths are that I am focused on getting results, and taking the decisions
> and overcoming problems to achieve those results'.

This is an illustration of the positive effects of power, as outlined by Foucault (1977), whereby the outcome of being an object of the Assessment Centre leads to an advantageous outcome for the candidate. Moreover, it is suggestive of the way in which the reality created by the Assessment Centre is then reproduced through the talk of the candidate and represented as 'human capital' (Becker, 1977).

Appointed Team Managers

Candidates that were appointed as Team Managers fell into two broad categories, (i) those that viewed being a Team Manager as an effective demotion, and (ii) those that regarded it as a promotion. In taking the former group, their career expectations were shaped before the new structure, and they now saw themselves as having reached a career plateau on a reduced grade. One Team Manager commented:

> 'I'm 35 my pay is frozen on £26,000 ... I'm told I'm doing a job worth £18,000 yet I'm doing more work than ever before. I feel unappreciated, the feedback from the Assessment Centre told me that I did not have enough leadership skills (to become a Distribution Manager)'.

Many of the Designate Team Managers interviewed saw their new post as a downgrading despite of the added responsibilities. Most of this group had applied for and hoped to get a Distribution Manager post. The remainder of those appointed to Designate Team Manager positions seemed to be satisfied with their appointments. Many of the appointees in this category were younger 2nd/3rd Engineers or former foremen. The latter group particularly welcomed the opportunity to enter the management structure that had hitherto been restricted largely to engineers.

Unsuccessful Candidates

The implications of being an unsuccessful candidate were that unless a lower grade job was accepted, it effectively meant not having a place in the new look 'Job Rethink (ed)' organization. Many of the older respondents accepted their fate without much complaint, broadly accepting the discourse of modernization, this was characterised by a comment by one such employee, '*new, younger staff deserve the opportunity to have some responsibility. We were right for the company but now its all changed'*. Younger employees, especially those that had held 2nd or 3rd engineer positions within the organization, were somewhat alarmed about their effective loss of position and the consequent prognosis for their career within CoastElectric. They were in effect déclassé, having lost the status that their professional credentials and caste membership had afforded them.

The Non-candidates

Although applications for the new posts outnumbered the posts available by a ratio of about three to one, CoastElectric's management were surprised by the relative dearth of applications from experienced engineers holding middle management positions, many of whom chose not to apply for jobs in the new structure. One manager explained:

> 'For the last 4 years they have told us that we (engineers) are
> dinosaurs, and that anyone can do our jobs - well let's see them
> try. I've got a job when it disappears on the new structure I
> expect they will offer me terms (redundancy)'.

Many existing middle managers appeared to simply not want to be part of the proposed new organization, and many appeared to be waiting for offers of early retirement. This can be read as a form of resistance, i.e. not participating in the marginalisation of engineers, but nonetheless accepting their fate. Such resistance had not been anticipated by the organization. The dilution of the proportion of engineers holding Team Manager / Distribution Manager posts was greater than anticipated as many of the older engineers simply did not apply for any of the new posts, preferring instead to be offered early retirement. Some engineers reported that they wanted to leave the organization as they were discontent with the constant *'engineer bashing'* which they claimed was going on. An engineer commented:

> 'For the last 4 years I have been doing a difficult job, and all the time, have been
> told that anyone could do my job, and that I was overpaid for what I am doing.
> Well I've had enough; hopefully I will get out on early retirement and then they
> will find out what my job is really like'.

The apparent opting out by many Middle Managers prompted Annabel Smith, the Training and Development Manager, to comment, *'To be honest I am concerned about all the experience that we are letting out of the door'*. Perhaps, in the original plans for Job Rethink it was tacitly expected that experienced middle managers would in effect be demoted into Team Manager positions (whilst having their pay protected).

Structure to Selection

Virtually all the staff interviewed welcomed the Assessment Centre as means of adding structure and openness to selection decisions. Many staff felt that this was fairer than many previous decisions that were often interpreted as being made for political reasons, rather than because of the ability of a particular candidate. Annabel Smith argued that, *'We would find it difficult not to (use the Assessment Centre in future), those selected by it, are very for it. We need some data on everybody. There will be a lot of internal assessment work'*. This is illustrative of the Assessment Centre representing a professional project for HRM: making a central obligatory passage point (Clegg, 1989) through which organizational activities such as recruitment and selection had to pass.

11.11   Emergent Contests

Thus far the predominant contest has been between the discourse of managerialism and the pre-existing discourse of engineering. I have demonstrated the way in which the discourse of

managerialism, through the activities and rhetoric of its agents has sought to problematise and label as an anachronism, the discourse of engineering. While Job Rethink and its concomitant new structure and work design, has not been implemented, it nonetheless stands as the preferred alternative by management to the existing structure. Thus far, the discourse of managerialism has seemed fairly united and coherent; this has seen the establishment of a broad front or network of modernisers. The contest has hitherto been the discourse of managerialism versus the discourse of engineering. Another contest was emerging within the discourse of managerialism, between those that felt disturbed by the gap between TM rhetoric and the realties of (lack of) change.

As far as the first contest is concerned, in the words of the techno-managerialist, senior employee relations manager, 'we consulted, we consulted to death'. Yet despite the hitherto unprecedented company wide series of presentations and workshops concerning the efficacy and inevitability of Job Rethink, there was manifest resistance to the initiative. This resulted in a problem for the techno-managerialists, were they to engage in macho-management and unilaterally impose Job Rethink, or were they to continue negotiating with the Trade Unions, of which the EMA was of greatest significance. The techno-managerialists made appointments to the new positions on the condition that they were 'designate'; that is only actionable on an agreement with the unions. For over a year there was in effect a stand-off between the techno-managerialists and the professional engineers. Each time the management made an attempt to push the unions into accepting Job rethink, then the unions would respond with a minor dispute, such as an overtime ban (footnote pointing out that this was highly significant in an industry that relied on 24 hour flexibility). The conundrum for senior management was that they could not risk widespread industrial action for it would be likely to irreparably damage their reputations as being 'effective' managers. Alternatively, to do nothing would also damage their reputations, at the very time where the media glare was turned on the so-called 'Fat Cat' utility bosses.

Under the stewardship of Reed, as has been outlined above, the modernists gained the ascendancy within the organization; in so doing they were locked into an antagonistic relationship with the cadre of professional engineers. This was the major clash: new managerialist vs. engineer. Yet within the organization, especially in more peripheral geographical and, for that matter functional areas, there was the emergence of a new grouping: the 'DIY managerialist'. In short the 'DIY managerialism' whilst openly supportive of initiatives such as TQM were privately sceptical, they were convinced that CoastElectric needed to change but were frustrated at the way in which change was enacted, and the lack of congruence of managerial rhetoric and change in practice. The new managerialists as I have shown displayed an intense attachment to the idea that by adhering to particular 'behaviours' and by utilising certain 'tools and techniques' the result would be improved organizational performance. In this sense, and to distinguish them from the emergent grouping of 'DIY' managerialists, I will term the techno-managerialists. Thus if we revisit Table 1 above it can

be seen that there was an exacting articulation of what was considered to be 'good' managerial practice in newly privatised companies.

11.12   The Forward March of the Managerialists Halted?

The Job Rethink proposals met with the first sustained resistance from the E.M.A., with industrial action being mooted. The E.M.A. was able to protract negotiations over both substantive and procedural points. The effectiveness of the resistance was, however, constrained by the following factors:

1.   The E.M.A. contained a significant number of members who identified with the changes taking place in Coast Electric, and acted as propagandists for the change. Indeed the senior managers who were the architects of 'Job Rethink' retained their membership, and thus their voice, within the E.M.A. In this sense as much as being attacked from outwith, the cadre of engineers was imploding. In short, some engineers were constituting their identities through the discourse of new managerialism. Therefore, one young engineer reflected, 'that he used to be an engineer, but no he was a manager'. This switch is important, as once the two terms were totally interchangeable: now however, they were constructed as being mutually exclusive. The leadership of the engineers however, the most senior engineers, such as Kevin Watkins and Bob Peters, were among the leaders of the 'New Managerialists'. Watkins, widely regarded as a brilliant engineer, was a great tribune for new managerialism, claiming that engineers were no longer required.

2.   Many experienced engineers and members of the union were nearing retirement, and thus were not wishing to engage in any industrial action for fear of jeopardising any retirement package. The demographics mitigated against serious action: in cash terms there was simply too much to risk. This factor therefore acted as a constraint on the 'zone of manoeuvre' of the union.

4.   Younger E.M.A. members were taking a more active role in negotiating, and were encountering experienced Coast Electric Industrial Relations negotiators.

5.   The poor relationship with other unions resulted in there being little collective solidarity over the issues affecting the professional engineer. This led among other things to the engineers being stranded, exposed as merely attempting to preserve their own terms and conditions; trying rather forlornly to protect a stature of domination that was increasingly represented as anachronistic.

6.   The recursiveness within the union prevented it from taking adopting the organizational repertoire – or knowledge base – that would allow it to take an effective, antagonistic stance.

It was only at the point of the Job Rethink proposals that the Trade Union and its membership, realised the full extent of the assault on professional engineering; and that, there was no room for accommodation or some form of negotiated order. The E.M.A. was thus struggling to preserve the vestiges of the privileged status of the engineer within Coast Electric. One initiative that they promulgated was the launch of an EMA MBA degree, to be provided in conjunction with an UK Business School. The response to this, from Annabel Smith, in a high profile practitioner magazine, was that an MBA was a high level business qualification that was unsuited to the cadre of professional engineers. The MBA is an interesting thought, for it would have schooled members in the language game that is management education. While this was undoubtedly a sensible idea, it was arguably far too late: an cadre of engineers fluent in the lexicon of managerialism 5 years before could perhaps have significantly re-shaped the future of organization through being able to engage in immanent critique and the like (see chapter four).

As I will analyse in greater detail later on, two contests ensued: one with the 'forces of reaction' that felt more comfortable with an organization run by professional engineers. Another contest with an emerging new group who felt disturbed by the gap between techno-managerialist rhetoric and the realties of (lack of) change. As far as contest I is concerned, in the words of the new managerialist, senior employee relations manager 'we consulted, we consulted to death' yet despite the hitherto unprecedented company-wide series of presentations and workshops concerning the efficacy and inevitability of Job Rethink, there was manifest resistance to the initiative. This resulted in a problem for the techno-managerialists: were they to engage in macho-management and unilaterally impose Job Rethink, or were they to continue negotiating with the Trade Unions, of which the EMA was of greatest significance. This was a conundrum, for to impose Job Rethink would have been a transgression of the 'participative leadership' advocated by the organization. The techno-managerialists made appointments to the new positions on the condition that they were 'designate'; that is only actionable on an agreement with the unions. For over a year there was in effect a standoff between the modernists and the professional engineers. Each time management made an attempt to push the unions into accepting Job rethink, then the unions would respond with a minor dispute, such as an overtime ban. The conundrum for senior management was that they could not risk widespread industrial action for it would be likely to irreparably damage their reputations as being 'effective' managers. Alternatively, to do nothing would also damage their reputations, at the very time where the media glare was turned on the so-called 'Fat Cat' utility bosses. The paradox was therefore that the Job Rethink proposals were the very apogee of the techno-managerialists from all functions (employee relations; HRM; engineering; strategy) working together. The

programme that corresponded closely with what in the wider environment constituted 'best practice' was emulated. The intended new archetype could be termed 'techno-managerialism'. Yet at this juncture, for all the work that had been undertaken; Job Rethink remained an ethereal language game: until implementation could be agreed upon.

The relations between the Directors and the engineers had reached a nadir. Unsurprisingly, there was a great deal of resentment to the proposed changes, and while the Union was unprepared to engage in militant action; it could, and did, engage in stalling exercise; and raising the spectre of industrial action. The invective that was reserved for the Board of Directors, especially Sarson and Reed, was compounded by the 'fat cat' scandal. At the very time, where they were advocating cuts in real wages for members of staff, through share options they had become millionaires. As I have argued above this was being justified through recourse to notions of the market rate. This is captured by Peter Marsh, the TQM Manager:

> 'There has been a lot of criticism of our directors from staff, with them being dubbed fat cats over salaries and share options. This has been blown out of all proportion. The salaries are simply market rates, whilst the share options were actually created by the Government. Staff have got to realise that we are in a global marketplace, they must not just be able to compete with other RECs, they should also be able to compete with India, Singapore and the Far East'.

This is a fascinating insight into the logic of the market rate, that in a globalized economy: the top table of corporations command stratospheric 'deals', while the 'workers' are constantly needing to be able to 'compete'. A manager commented: 'Before a lot of the staff personalised the bonuses etc., it was a tabloid reaction but in spite of that it was no less real'.

11.13   The Looming Crisis

On privatising the electricity companies in 1990 there was a restriction on mergers and take-overs until 1994, the corporate development division of CoastElectric had been working on plans to prevent a take-over. In spring 1994, for instance, CoastElectric declared it was 'going to asset strip itself' in order to deter any potential predators; this process consisted of further redundancies and a sale of some land and buildings. A momentum for change was further prompted by the changing sectoral conditions that saw the lifting of the Government's Golden Share, something that fuelled speculation in the influential pages of the Business press that takeovers of Regional Electricity Companies were likely. This had been made more likely following a regulatory review by Stephen Littlechild, which was generally considered to be lenient on the industry. As a relatively small, and therefore relatively inexpensive, REC, CoastElectric was widely viewed as a prime target. This sword of Damocles waiting to strike the organization prompted a heightened momentum in the search for new means of transforming the organization. In the August of 1995, coinciding with the British holiday season,

FedCo, a large American Utility, announced that they were making a predatory take-over of CoastElectric.

Peter Marsh, the TQM manager, and close confidant of the Chief Executive Barry Reed explained:

> 'One day I was sitting with Barry in the Chief Executive's room, and the share price started to move. We were up 20 points when a call came through from investor relations that FedCo had bought up 5% of our shares. We knew that they meant business'.

Integral to their take-over strategy was the claim that the directors and senior management within CoastElectric was relatively unimpressive, the implication being that FedCo was more capable of managing the organization. This was quickly followed by an announcement from the director of FedCo's international development arm that CoastElectric was an integral part of the organization's future strategy and a bid would soon follow. FedCo argued that the current CoastElectric directors and senior management were performing badly, and that they were better suited to run CoastElectric. They claimed that their record of running numerous electricity companies in the USA qualified them to take control of CoastElectric. CoastElectric's Board of Directors rejected the take-over bid, and mounted a long planned defence The CoastElectric chairman rejected FedCo's overtures and claimed that their offer 'seriously undervalued CoastElectric', and in a communiqué to shareholders, urged them not to be tempted by the offer. A manager working on the Bid Defence recalled,

> 'I was involved in the bid defence against FedCo and we looked for some dirt on them, and basically there was none', she explained that she had become involved in the defence, 'By accident really, I was looking up information on them on the Internet. At the time no one had access to the Internet in CoastElectric, basically I was gathering information on FedCo. For a long time we had been given small projects without ever being told what they were for. When the bid came in, I was accessing information about them on the internet. Because of the Regulation in America they have to give very explicit data, so I was accessing this at night and printing it off, and doing a report in the morning'.

However, after an initial few days of activity the defence became decidedly half-hearted, Peter Marsh explained:

> 'Our defence strategy had been based on defending ourselves against a company like Hanson, we were going to turn around and say you don't know the business, you can't possibly run an Electricity company. When we saw we were being taken over by one of the most successful American utilities we couldn't use that argument'.

The seriousness of the Bid Defence was speculated about by some staff. This included those that were actually involved in the defence, for instance, one Senior Manager commented,

> 'How serious was the Bid Defence? That is something I would really love to know; there are all sorts of conspiracy theories. I would love to have been a fly on the wall. At the start it was a hostile bid, but at what point it became a friendly bid I don't know. Some of the time I didn't know whether I was providing information for the Directors so that they could fight off the bid, or whether it was for the directors to show to FedCo to induce them to buy us. It's something I will never know'

FedCo made a revised, and marginally improved, offer that the Directors recommended shareholders to accept. Marsh argued that it *'became a friendly take-over, more of a merger if you like'*. Many in the organization, however, concurred with the view expressed by one long serving Middle Manager,

> 'Once FedCo had made it's move to acquire CoastElectric I would have been amazed if it hadn't succeeded. I was not at all confident that our Board of Directors were any match for those experienced in the jungle of company take-overs. In the end it seemed that the Chairman and Directors put up a token defence, and then 'cut and ran' all the way to the bank'.

Virtually all of the staff interviewed felt that being taken over was inevitable, if not by FedCo then by another predatory organization. The seeming inevitability of being taken over was explained by managers, although this was tempered by surprise at how quickly the Board abandoned its' resolve to fight:

> 'I think it was inevitable, but the management could have made more of an effort to ward off the take-over. I was surprised that it was so sudden. I was surprised that they capitulated in the way they did. One day they were going to fight and the next day it was all over. I suspect we were sold out by the Board'

A number of Senior Managers contended that a take-over was inevitable, but only in view of the decisions and strategy that had been adopted in the previous years by the Board, for instance,

> 'We were a high cost organization, and there was a lot of cash spare in the organization. We were a small REC with the wrong sort of customer base for expansion. I think we had to either change our strategy and be more aggressive and attack or get taken over'.

> 'Yes, (avoid being taken over)if they had wanted to. Their strategy was very unadventurous, they didn't want to diversify or acquire new businesses. They took a very low risk approach, there wasn't going to be a change in strategy. Whilst we did go into businesses like printing and gas it was not radical like starting a theme park! If we had adopted a different strategy two years ago it would be different'

However, Peter Marsh who, inter alia, had been privy to CoastElectric's strategy development dismissed such notions, arguing that 'CoastElectric was constrained by the City'.

There were various rumours circulating around CoastElectric at the time of the take-over, which included:

1.   It was suggested that David Lickey, a Senior Manager, had spent three months with FedCo in the United States prior to the take-over. Another Senior Manager claimed that *it would be naive to think that didn't happen, it was much better than a British REC taking us over, that would have been bad news'.*

2.   It was alleged that FedCo had also used the Merlin Programme, that was run by the Miami Consulting Group, the inference being that consultants had supplied information to FedCo on CoastElectric and its cadre of Senior Management.

It is of course hardly surprising that an occurrence as dramatic as take-over would prompt a great deal of speculation and stories, whether apocryphal or not.

11.14   FedCo's entrance

After CoastElectric had succumbed to FedCo's bid, the old Board of Directors tendered their resignations. After a brief hiatus, in which the FedCo directors spent a week in Ireland awaiting their work permits, the new Board was installed. The new Board came from Electrico, which was FedCo's leading subsidiary Utility. Peter Marsh explained,

> 'I think they thought We'll get our guys to run it, our most successful utility is
> Electrico, we'll send them over from there. They got Brad Hopstein from Electrico
> and said to him, take in whoever you want and he brought in Tex Nicholls as
> Chief Executive, and Adam Petersen to be in charge of electricity'.

There was a good deal of publicity, in both the local and national media, directed towards the new Directors, for instance, the Chief Executive, Tex Nicholls was being described as a 'Public Relations' expert, holding a Degree in Mass Communications, and having previously worked as a newscaster on American Television. The Americans on taking control of 'CoastElectric' embarked upon a tour of the company making a series of presentations, as well as attempting to meet as many members of staff as possible. The response to the Americans was generally favourable, as many staff noted,

> 'By and large most staff view the Americans as a breath of fresh air. Also, of
> course, they are not branded as 'Fat Cats' like the previous directors who were
> very skilled at writing their own contracts and lining their own nests with share
> options'

'The New Board do not face the same cynicism as the Old Board. Its almost like staff have been waving the new management in, welcoming them with open arms. Their attitude is if its American its got to better than what we got previously. A problem is that they might have created too much hype. Tex and the team went out and spoke to everyone. I think they have got more chance of remaining human than the previous management'.

Tex Nicholls announced that he was going to spend three months examining CoastElectric before any changes were made, in order to assist in this task he employed the well-known consulting firm, AK Solutions, to carry out a systematic appraisal of the organization. A consultant commented *'We're in for three months to look at processes.... To cut out any waste'.* AK solutions were resident at a hotel opposite the Head Office, and as one Senior Manager recalled,

'We all had to go over to the Copthorne (Hotel opposite the Head Office)) individually to see AK Solutions. I went into the meeting room, and it was pretty intimidating, there were six consultants who grilled me for about two hours on how the company could improve.... and they asked me, so how can you justify your position in CoastElectric'.

This process, namely that of senior managers, hitherto organizational leviathans, having to walk from the Head Office, across the green to a hotel, where they were subjected to a grilling is a far cry from the disciplinary power explored by Foucault. Instead, this should in my view be read as a naked act of symbolic violence that clearly demonstrated that the old order had been displaced. Furthermore, it was a highly visible means of emphasising that the old system of patronage and preferment was finished. This was combined with an 'examination' of senior management, whereby they were assessed and encouraged to 'confess' their reservations about the current organization. The Americans themselves had an interesting style of management; hailing from the Southern Bible Belt, management meetings started with a parable and alcohol was banned. Yet behind this was a management style that demanded immediate action and was to follow Tex Nicholl's exhortation of 'think like a customer, act like an owner', something he claimed to be the 'Golden Rule'.

Peter Marsh, whose TQM project group was disbanded, was placed in charge of an internal project team, he recalled,

'They have been looking at our key areas, they came in and said to all of us 'we've got a copy of your defence strategy so we know what you would do'. In looking at the structure they have been trying to eliminate duplication of functions, and looking for end to end processes. There is quite a lot of room for saving although only 10% of our operating costs are from labour so there is very little we can actually cut. They got in and looked at the current management team, now there are a few ex-AK Solutions guys so they thought they can't be that bad. They then had a good look at the company, they got a team from AK Solutions, and to give it credibility a team from CoastElectric which I headed up. We were told that certain things wouldn't survive, and to look under the floorboards at looking what we could cut back on. Everything we looked at, we had AK solutions looking over our shoulders. Initially we had to go across to the

Copthorne Hotel to report our findings to AK Solutions, but it was crazy it was like Master and Servant. They told us at the start that certain things wouldn't survive such as the TQM support group, Business consultancy and obviously Investor Relations. With AK Solutions it was a bit like them telling us how to suck eggs'.

In addition to shelving various groups within CoastElectric, FedCo also set about appraising the current management. A manager explained,

'The American Directors wanted a profile of our top managers and asked Annabel Smith to provide one. They sat personality and aptitude tests, which were analysed by Annabel and American Psychologists. All the Senior Managers had a two-hour interview with an American Psychologist'.

One of the Managers within the Training department reflected,

'They had AK solutions do a survey on the company, looking over management's shoulders all the time. This made managers wary... the very fact they did all this testing was very significant, some of them were very anxious. It became clear that they were not just going to be our American overlords, but they were going to shake up the business. FedCo said they wanted to leave it in tact as much as possible. They removed some of the blockages. They are very interested in getting the right people into the right positions. I think there is a bit of an American clique at the top, but most people seem to like the people they are now working with'.

FedCo disbanded the TQM project department (see chapter 11) arguing that it constituted an unnecessary expense. Moreover they asserted that CoastElectric was going to adopt the 'FedCo way' which aimed to deliver 'Excellent customer satisfaction'. This was followed by a redundancy programme in which around 25% of staff left the organization in a six-month period. Despite the shelving of TQM, FedCo retained the 'Job Rethink' proposals. However, Tex Nicholls raised the importance of three monthly performance indicators:

1) Complaints to the Regulator due to poor service.
2) Number of Customer Minutes per month lost due to electrical failure.
3) Keeping within budget.

The Trade Unions were quick to agree to the new structure in spite of having resisted them from the previous management. The agreement seems to be borne from the calculation that the American management had made it clear that there was no room for compromise. The proposals were implemented in the 2 regions in very different ways. The eastern region managed by Kevin Watkins adopted an incrementalist approach that he argued would 'gradually create the blend necessary for 'Job Rethink' to work'. This was in sharp contrast to the approach taken by newly promoted Richard Preston, who had replaced Bob Peters, as he adopted a strategy that he described as 'the Big Bang - Success or bust' strategy which involved a 6 month period of frenetic change. Preston gained a reputation as being a 'hands-on, do-er' who was completely geared towards getting results. As a senior

manager his sole concern was that the monthly figures 'looked alright' and were an improvement on the previous months figures.

11.15   Competing Managerialisms

The take-over presented an apparent paradox. At a stroke the Industrial Relations 'problem' had been solved. Tex Nicholls, the new chief executive had offered a 'once in a lifetime' deal to the unions. Job Rethink, which fitted better the organizational context of the acquiring company: the implementation of Job Rethink was continued, but the time span shortened. FedCo's newly installed Directors, following a favourable report by their retained management consultants AK Solutions, announced that they were retaining Job Rethink, adding that they wanted to implement it over six months rather than three years. FedCo's embrace of Job Rethink is interesting for it would appear to signal a legitimation of the techno-managerialists within CoastElectric that were responsible for designing it. This is one reading; another would be that it was an acceptance that the Job Rethink programme fitted better the context of the acquiring company than TQM did. FedCo's own imprint, that of hugely reducing the implementation time, can be interpreted in a number of ways. This highlights the emergent dynamic of change. The zenith of techno-managerialism was being translated out of recognition by virtue of the radical change in temporal visioning. How are we to understand this change?

Firstly, the newly appointed directors were on three-year contracts, and therefore needed action quickly; Secondly, if the implementation went awry, with the organization collapsing into entropy, it could be plausibly blamed on the previous Board; Thirdly, the nature of temporal reckoning between Anglo-American societies in general, and more specifically in management (see Clark, 1987; 1998; 1999) is such that it should be of no surprise that the American management advocated a different and more exacting time schedule; Fourthly, the foreshortening of the time schedule for implementation obviated or at the very least reduced the possibilities of workplace assimilation whereby, following Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), tacit-to-tacit knowledge transmission would take place between the out-going engineer and the newly empowered team worker. Such a policy elevates the efficacy and importance of explicit over tacit knowledge, something that was characteristic of the bulwark of twentieth century American management theorizing (see Clark & Staunton, 1989).

It is the fourth point that marks a clear distinction between the American management and the British management. The latter as has been shown has an intense attachment to corporate fashion, not too mention consultation and participation, something that among other things was to have the effect of prolonging decision making and of imbuing the organization with a paralysing sense of inertia. The corollary of these factors was to lead to the opening of a space in which the new 'DIY managerialist' could move. With the ending of TQM, it was no longer taboo for managers to openly

discuss their misgivings. The change in ownership and dismantling of elements of the techno-managerialist power structure was of potential significance. In the first instance, what was clear was that at the time of the takeover for all the elaborate plans and endless circulation of rhetoric (100 plus meeting on Job Rethink) of the techno-managerialists, they had quite simply not unpicked the pre-existing context. While the pattern of the change was uneven, a point reflected upon a few months before the takeover by Peter Marsh:

> 'The most difficult thing to change is the attitudes of those remote from immediate management. People become socialised into a culture (i.e. in an office environment), but some people are remote from influence (i.e. industrial and engineering staff). The process of changing the mindset, changing the attitude is fundamental to restructuring the organization ... incredibly (from the Industrial Society Employees survey) they are not interested in working for a successful company. We are in a never-ending battle of change'.

The supremacy of techno-managerialism that believed that the algebra of corporate success was reducible to a series of planned steps towards creating the 'right' culture. Critically, whatever its problems in practice, the techno-managerialists were consecrated and legitimated by Barry Reed. As former chief executive, combined with the death of TQM, there was in short an assault on the Praetorian Guard of techno-managerialism. To the hard-headed American managerialists, the techno-managerialists simply had not delivered.

Indeed, one could argue that the values of techno-managerialists were not fully congruent with structures and systems: for once, actual change in practices lagged behind the changed structures. But values-in-use were also changing much more slowly than the rapidly progressing ideology, and engineering values had by no means disappeared. Furthermore, the techno-managerialist ideology was partly out of touch with the organizational reality of the acquiring organization, which constitutes a third factor acting as a potential obstacle to the 'techno-managerialist' intentions. The gap was narrowed, not by practice catching up, but by the emergence of action-biased management, i.e. DIY managerialism. So how was DIY managerialism any different from techno-managerialism? Whereas techno-managerialism placed great faith in the grand, externally legitimated management theories of the day, DIY-managerialism was far more action-biased and organization centred, elevating the personal attributes of the individual manager. This, in the case of CoastElectric, often manifested itself in 'personalized management theories', which in a sense are ultimately trivial, thus reflecting a deep scepticism towards the value of grand management theory:

> 'The difference between the new Directors and the old Directors is the decisiveness, there is no fannying around anymore. We've got a clear direction. It was frustrating before and there was an element of personal risk about doing anything before.... I think the difference is: (i) Clearness, and (ii) Decisiveness. Before we had lots of fudge and mudge. We had lots of meetings. They (the old Directors) were just examining their navels. After 4-5 years I was getting pissed off with it. We were stuck in this consultative approach; we had indecision at the

top level, slowness of decision making. Basically it was a mush, no action just talking about things. There were many layers and nothing got done. I've got an expression I use, J.F.D.I. - Just fucking do it. Before there was a lack of personal responsibility throughout the organization, people would just talk about it and nothing would get done. Now I say to my managers: J.F.D.I".

This characterises the nature of DIY managerialism that demonstrated far greater concern with end results, being unconcerned how they are achieved. For instance, Preston explained that he had three key objectives, namely to (i) Reduce customer minutes lost; (ii) Cost reduction; (iii) Reduce OFFER complaints. Moreover, he added that he reported directly to Adam Petersen, the American Director of Operations, who *is fully behind me'*. Whilst some of the national, UK discourse on best practices meant little to the new American owners, and thus had become partly de-legitimised, action bias had a more universal appeal. The action bias was pronounced, particularly when compared with the perceived procrastination of the modernists. This initially peripheral discourse, which could be seen as a trivialisation of the trivial (such as Peters & Waterman, 1982), gradually gained in strength and began to represent a serious challenge to the dominant discourse. The DIY managerialism is an example of the karaoke style of management identified by Clegg & Palmer (1996); in that it emphasizes the Herculean efforts of personal managers in terms of overcoming obstacles.

There was a powerful geographical East-West distinction in terms of the approach to organizational change within CoastElectric. This was to be witnessed in the approach to the implementation of Job Rethink. Watkins, the chief progenitor of the project, now had to implement Job Rethink in the context of people leaving the organization and a foreshortened timetable. Despite these considerable constraints much of his original plan was implemented in his region: young distribution managers were matched with older, more experienced Distribution managers; there was extensive training and an emphasis on building the 'right culture' for a team-based organization. In contrast to the approach of Watkins, Preston adopted an action-biased strategy of implementation, which he referred to as the 'Big bang' approach:

'I started on the first of January but basically I was brought in to stop the flying in the clouds that was going on ...To start doing something and to stop all the crap... I am set specific goals and they are fairly stretching but I think that they are achievable ... Job Rethink was stuck in a theoretical hole, and my job was to drag it out. I had to be seen to carry out everything quickly, we reached a far-reaching agreement with the unions and I was determined to carry it out to the letter. I was taking unskilled people and making them skilled to do a job whilst de-skilling our engineers. I counselled 600 staff and explained the new organization and told them if they weren't on board they should apply for voluntary redundancy. I targeted a plan, which involved a 23% redundancy of staff. I selected some of my Distribution Managers, and Team Managers but some I had inherited from Bob Peters. I decided to push Team Manager development, my tactics were shit or bust ... if we are going to have a mess let's have a good one...'

Whilst the new, techno-managerialist archetype was essentially about progressing through the application of codified management knowledge, one tension was created through the emergence of the action-biased management style, which has as one of its values the criticism of lack of 'practicality' of the prevailing techno-managerialist ideology. This is indirectly borne out in a quote from another senior manager based at Head Office and responsible for Design specification across the whole organization, who explained the difficulties that he had with the two managers:

> 'My department is responsible for the electrical design and policy throughout CoastElectric, which means I write policy which Richard and Kevin carry out, when we have discussions together, well we've got one Network Services Manager who is very task focused, and we've got one Network Services Manager who is more theoretical. Their views can diverge quite rapidly in what is necessary and you tend to avoid the conversation really because you never come to a conclusion. It's probably a bit of an exercise in politics for them.... They are both in competition with each other, and they are both convinced that they are right.'

Regional competition, personal competition and competition between discourses were related to each other. This is a point picked up on by an HRM Manager, who recounted:

> 'I had a meeting with Richard this morning, he spent the whole time telling me how much better his region was than Kevin's'.

What is clear is that while the new Directors at FedCo were playing a prominent role in terms of managing the external relations of the organization, that in terms of the organization of work they were content to preside over an internal competition between the Eastern and Western regions. This marks a departure in thinking about the organization that is of great significance. The authority of the modernists with the previous regime rested on the notion that they were bringing 'managerial science' into the organization, and in due course this would have positive benefits. In our discussions above we have highlighted the reason why such arguments were afforded importance. In the changed context following the FedCo takeover, the saliency of such arguments was open to question. FedCo made much of being a leading utility; it was happy to describe itself as 'world class' and as such did not require the external legitimacy of programmes such as TQM. In a sense this is reflective of Garnsey & Frances (2000) in their study of UK supermarkets. FedCo was sure of its sign value, it was confident about its abilities; it did not particularly require the possible identity amelioration afforded by becoming a dedicated follower of fashion. At the same time as FedCo was eschewing such initiatives it was also demonstrating a greater acceptance of a range of behaviours from its managers. For instance, Preston gained a reputation for his 'no-nonsense, action based approach'; one engineer commented,

> 'He humiliated Derek Coogan (a 1st engineer), Derek is in his late fifties, a shirt and collar engineer, from the old school, there had been a problem and Preston exploded telling him that he was fucking useless in front of a group of managers'.

This is in sharp contrast to the management training that Watkins was providing for his group of managers:

> 'There are particular types of 'managerial behaviour' that are required to make Job Rethink function successfully … 'A successful Distribution manager should be (i) Change orientated, (ii) Determined, resolute, and (iii) People-aware in the way they behave, a people person. We do talk to managers about the way they manage, as it is critical to drive down a particular style if we want functioning teams. This won't happen if the managers are very authoritarian'.

The East-West managerialist conflict was something that was widely recognised throughout the organization. For FedCo, it was an unintended consequence of the take-over; but as the Training and Development Manager pointed out:

> 'With the old board Kevin was the most Senior Network Services manager, Richard was always out on a limb. When he took over a lot of us thought he would fail, now, with the new Board I think he will win. At the moment I think the new Board are happy to have two very different styles to see which one is better'.

The contest between discourses and how this impacted on the pre-existing context is portrayed, admittedly in a simplified format, in Table I below. Whilst DIY managerialism was more in tune with the U.S. parent, TM was not suddenly finished. In fact, two regions, embodied by their respective Network Service Managers, were locked into a competition that sought to demonstrate the superiority of their particular brand of managerialism. A senior manager at Head Office claimed:

> 'Kevin and Richard are totally different, and they have implemented Job Rethink in totally different ways, in six months the two regions have become like two separate companies'.

Table 11:3 A Schematic Representation of Archetype Transition and Contestation at Coast Electric

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 2/3
Requirements of organization legislated by	professional group (engineers)	techno-managerialists (managers)	DIY managerialists (managers)
Dominant Orientation	normative compliance technical excellence engineering need safety 'maintaining the network'	Mimetic learning TQM, BPR the need to change 'changing the culture' 'the need to change'	Action bias 'the bottom line' financial return
Management Executives. Positions Filled by	Professional engineers	former Professional engineers describing themselves as managers Incoming managers from the Private sector	American Incumbent modernisers action bias managerialists.
Language customer	Dominated by Engineering terms	Customer Service Empowerment Partnership Quality Improvement Inevitability of change.	JFDI competition 'think like a act like an owner'
Closure	Professional membership	'being a moderniser'	anti-procastination.
Role of Training	technical	aimed at allowing individuals to 'change their style' and work in a new way.	No formal role
Professional Autonomy	Full jurisdiction	Attempt to encode and remove professional autonomy	Professionals removed.

Another Head Office manager argued that,

'If you look at the way the title of the names of teams in Network Services between East and West they paint a different picture. Let's just say that I get the impression that South have adopted the Team Structure in terms of perhaps size and responsibility but I feel they stayed very close to effectively they called a team in one area 'rural construction' which you read as overhead lines, or urban construction which you read as underground lines, and then you look 'Oh we've got an overhead team, and underground team what did we have before? Whereas in the north they've tried to, they've fully entered into taking on the stuff. It could be because of the nature of the two managers in the sector, Kevin in the east was very instrumental shall we say in designing the Team structure, and perhaps therefore he's more encouraging into seeing it implemented, into what he truly believes as the right way. In fact, the guy down west came in later in the day has

adopted it and doesn't feel that ... I think if you asked him truly if he thought it was the right way to go he wouldn't say it was, he's tried to mould it the way he wishes to work, I think there certainly are fundamental differences'.

This quote is a demonstration at the way in which while the two discourses are not reducible to people, they are nonetheless played out and embodied by individual agents. This was, however, far more than a personality clash: this was the contest between two views and the implications they hold for the organization in its aims and in its attempts to enact organizational change. In my analysis, therefore, I want to suggest that we view the personal clashes as projections of the broader clash between two contrasting world-views. One personifies institutional mimetic learning, the other an action-biased management style that has as one of its values the criticism of lack of 'practicality' of the prevailing techno-managerialist ideology. This is indirectly borne out in a quote from another senior manager based at Head Office and responsible for Design specification across the whole organization who explained the difficulties that he had with the two managers:

> 'My department is responsible for the electrical design and policy throughout CoastElectric, which means I write policy which Richard and Kevin carry out, when we have discussions together, well we've got one Network Services Manager who is very task focused, and we've got one Network Services Manager who is more theoretical. Their views can diverge quite rapidly in what is necessary and you tend to avoid the conversation really because you never come to a conclusion. It's probably a bit of an exercise in politics for them.... They are both in competition with each other, and they are both convinced that they are right.'

This is a point picked up on by an HRM Manager, who recounted:

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What is clear is that while the new Directors at FedCo were playing a prominent role in terms of managing the external relations of the organization, that in terms of the organization of work they were content to preside over an internal competition between the Eastern and Western regions. This marks a departure in thinking about the organization, that is, of great significance. The authority of the techno-managerialists with the previous regime rested on the notion that they were bringing 'managerial science' into the organization, and in due course this would have positive benefits. In my discussion above I have highlighted the reason why such arguments were afforded importance. In the changed context following the FedCo takeover, the saliency of such arguments was open to question. FedCo made much of being a leading utility; it was happy to describe itself as 'world class' and as such did not require the external legitimacy of programmes such as TQM. At the same time as FedCo was eschewing such initiatives it was also demonstrating a greater acceptance of a range of behaviours from its managers. For instance, Preston, who as has been seen, gained a reputation for his *'no-nonsense , action based approach'*, and one engineer commented,

'He humiliated Derek Coogan (a 1st engineer), Derek is in his late fifties, a shirt and collar engineer, from the old school, there had been a problem and Preston exploded telling him that he was fucking useless in front of a group of managers'.

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The East-West/ Techno-DIY managerialist conflict was something that was widely recognised throughout the organization. For FedCo, it was an unintended consequence of the take-over; but, as the Training and Development Manager pointed out:

'With the old board Kevin was the most Senior Network Services manager, Richard was always out on a limb. When he took over a lot of thought he would fail, now, with the new Board I think he will win. At the moment I think the new Board are happy to have two very different styles to see which one is better'.

Any organizational change process, especially within a large organization, is likely to be complicated. In CoastElectric, this was hardly likely to be different. In fact, in my view the case is complicated: in the first instance, there was not a 'full' transition; rather, remains of the professional engineering remained recursively embedded within the organization; for example, there were continuing concerns about the safety of changed working practices. Secondly, the techno-managerialist discourse that was at once both the reproduction and emulation of zeitgeist management thought was challenged by internal critics – even the new board was happy to watch over this internal competition, and wait and see which style would carry the day. In this sense, the board applied a 'market' based, survival of the fittest type perspective to the organization. This competition was conducted in the form of a contest between discourses and their respective utility for putting the organization on what was conceptualised as constituting a sounder competitive footing.

After three months of the takeover, as we have seen, the Job Rethink proposals were implemented. In addition, The new Directors unveiled a Voluntary Severance Scheme in which all the staff who wanted to leave could, with them departing under relatively generous conditions. The corollary of this scheme was the reduction in staff by a further 25% over a one-year period. A significant proportion of employees taking voluntary severance were engineers; the number of engineers within Coast Electric had reduced from 600 at privatisation to 200 by the end of 1996. A Senior Manager explained,

'The Americans want to downsize quickly, I think this is because the take-over has been financed by a lot of debt. Also I think that under American taxation law they can write off some of the expenses if they do it within the first year... they are downsizing very rapidly, they are losing 25% of the staff, this is mainly older more expensive staff'.

To enact the policy a relatively generous redundancy/early retirement package was agreed with the Trade Unions. This led to a flood of applications from staff at all levels of the organization; in fact the number of people expressing interest in the redundancy package was greater than anticipated, some 850 applications against a planned loss of 600 staff. One Middle Manager commented,

'I will find out on thursday. Hopefully, I will get terms, I want to get out. This will be the last time they have generous redundancy terms, we heard last week that 850 people have gone for it, and around 600 people will get it. I don't want to be hanging around here, they don't want dinosaurs like me around. There is a possibility that I might me kept for a year training people, we shall see'.

Whilst another Manager commented,

'At the moment I'm waiting to hear whether they will be offering me Voluntary Severance. Should know by Thursday this week. I hope I can go as I don't relish being a minion in the new organization, after holding a managerial post in the present set up'.

Tex Nicholls announced that, *'anyone who wants to go can'*, which surprised many staff, as did the lack of any scheme whereby reiterated staff could return to the organization, for a short period, in the case of an operational emergency. The retirements/redundancies commenced in January 1996 and continued throughout the year. The first exits were at Executive level, Senior Managers, according to Annabel Smith, the Training and Development Manager, they were generally those that were regarded as being particularly close to the previous Board. Thus, some of the architects and promoters of change departed. This can be read as symbolically constituting a removal from the organization of the past: given the diaspora of engineers, it can be considered as a cutting of the Gordian knot with its engineering history. In this sense, the redundancies, which were targeted at 25% of the workforce, constituted a huge act of creative destruction or exnovation; that is the removal of existing practices. This physical removal of the professional engineer, the strange death of the professional engineer, extinguishes with it the discourse of professional engineering. It was now a discourse that was no longer only represented as belonging to the past: it was the past. This rupture is highly significant and it allowed for the contest between techno and DIY managerialism.

The impact that this reduction in the number of engineers would have upon Coast Electric was disputed. Most engineers argued that Coast Electric would face operational difficulties in the future, making such comments as:

'Wait until there is a storm - Coast Electric won't be able to cope'.

One senior manager (and professional engineer) on the verge of retirement argued,

> 'The company is mistaken in its obsession with doing away with engineers. Over many years, in fact since nationalisation in 1948 engineers have been responsible for maintaining technical standards in Coast Electric. They are the only members of staff who understand its distribution system'.

A minority of senior managers acknowledged that they were uneasy about, *'letting our experience out of the door'*. In the main, however, senior managers remained confident of the capability of the 'Job Rethink' team structure for maintaining, and ultimately improving, standards. A senior Employee Relations manager when commenting on the future of engineers in Coast Electric argued,

> 'If you come into Coast Electric in 2 years, you will not be able to tell who the engineers are, they will be a role in the structure not an engineer'.

11:16   INTERPRETATION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The cult of organizational change that has been an enduring part of the last twenty years has intensified pressure on professional organization to become more 'business-like': deregulation in many Western societies; technological developments, intensified cross-border competition in formerly protected sectors; and globalisation in a more general sense of the word have all played a role in this process (Powell et al. 1999). These pressures were manifest within the case of CoastElectric. The case study illustrates a grand sweep of organization change within a 6-year period. Yet what does this case have to tell us about the processes of organizational change? In the first instance, it is clear that this chapter has concentrated upon concerns of event and not task (see chapter 12). It is also clear that the organization had a concerted effort to transform (*or transmogrify*) itself into a mirror of a 'world class' organization. As I argued in chapter 11, this is hardly unusual. In terms of going beyond the rich empirics in this chapter I have tried to make sense of particular instances. In this section I will try and outline what I consider to be the prime theoretical contributions of this chapter.

In the first instance, this chapter has highlighted the contest between an emergent techno-managerialism and that of engineering, the pre-existing hegemonic discourse. To this end, it demonstrated the way in which the techno-managerialist emerged as a power base, particularly through the TQM structure, that served as a shadow structure to the organization. T Firstly, the way in which TQM should be understood less as a management technique and more as a symbol of modernisation. As such a symbol it acted as the first dividing practice within the organization. That is it opened up a binary opposition between those that were for and those that were against

organizational change. While in the early stages, there was room for competing discourses, or at least a significant amount of pluralism, this was soon to change. Significantly, the TQM nomenclature, by virtue of Marsh being independent, quickly started to function as a shadow organizational structure. It was less an informal organization, and more, by virtue of its official status, an alternative to the pre-existing organization. The TQM shadow structure, and the process of implementing TQM, served as a means of surveillance on the population of CoastElectric. This was not surveillance in a day-by-day, minute assessment of someone's activities. Instead, through specific instances, managers would become labelled, that is branded, a moderniser or a blockage. This was a highly significant dividing practice.

The discourse of techno-managerialism in essence was about problematizing the status quo, which is opening up a violent hierarchy between itself and the discourse of engineering. This was legitimated through the use of tropes that among other things had as their theme the inevitability of change. The adoption of externally legitimated best practices was a core principle of Techno- . Managerialism. Techno-managerialism demanded acceptance of fashionable programmes of Quality Management and Job Rethink. This 'articulation of external knowledge' was therefore fundamental to the praxis and underlying rationale of the techno-managerialists.

The techno-managerialist project was a useful illustration of the technologies through which staff became 'techno-managerialists'. The TQM route, I have mentioned, but, in addition, through partner coaching there was the opportunity for managers to confess their sins and re-constitute themselves through the discourse of new managerialism. In this sense, and following Townley (1994), such techniques are not innocuous, but rather they have important power effects. This chapter confirms the Foucauldian pre-occupation with technologies, and demonstrates, I think, the way in which, broadly speaking, subjectivities can be constructed as objects of discourse. This does not of course have to take place in the space of a carceral, total institution: but rather, this study demonstrates that such techniques are immanent to liberal democracy. Perhaps no more were the effects of a technology of power, seen more vividly than in the Assessment Centre. A new organization, through Job Rethink, had been 'imagined'. The 'techno-managerialist' person, rather like Soviet or Entrepreneurial man, had been constructed. The Assessment Centre, an amalgam of techniques masquerading as objective (sic) science, then translated existing employees into algorithms; which determined whether they would be effective, or not, at becoming a Team or Distribution Manager. Further implications of the Assessment Centre were such that there was prima facie evidence that was suggestive that the judgments produced by the Assessment Centre were internalised as 'objective truth' by the candidates. The effects in terms of self-definition, but more importantly in terms of material occupational position illustrate that such technologies are important means in terms of trying to effect organizational transformation, through the means of socially constructing reality. The constitution of employees as subjects was particularly pronounced

in the case of engineers. Techno-managerialism offered engineers an alternative discourse through which they could constitute their identity. It is significant that the attack on engineers was carried out as much as from within as from outwith. Thus the Latourian blackbox of professional mystique was less prised open and more imploded from within.

Crucial to the deconstruction, and unravelling of the 'engineer' within CoastElectric was the part played by senior management and by engineers themselves. Many of the cadre of senior management, and that of engineers, constituted themselves through the discourse of managerialism and actively promoted the changes. In trying to assess whether the experience of professional engineering within Coast Electric was inevitable, it is useful to consider the broader UK societal experience of engineers, and the tensions that exist between profit-making and a profession. It is argued that the power exercised through the managerialist change initiatives led to the reconstitution of the organization, and the marginalisation of the engineer. The implementation of managerialist initiatives actively questioned and challenged the role of engineering. The engineers were unable to mount an effective resistance because as a group they were divided, and their representative body did not have sufficient prescience regarding the potential consequences of managerialist initiatives / practices being implemented within Coast Electric. Engineers simply failed to assert the case for having a 'strong, engineering profession', and instead allowed the discourse of managerialism to shape the organization and to be represented as teleological progression towards a superior organization. However, the formidable alliance of groups promoting organizational change within Coast Electric's environment calls into question what more effective resistance could actually have achieved.

In trying to explain this unravelling of the professional engineer, it is important to consider the relations of power within the organization for as Townley (1994:1) argues *'the experience of work is located in, and constituted by, power relations'*. In analysing the relations of power the role of the City with its rapacious fetish for 'short-term' profits (see Hutton 1995, Keegan 1994), which as Smith & Whalley (1995) has argued *'renders engineering always vulnerable'*, is undoubtedly important. Similarly the role of the Regulator in shaping Coast Electric's operational arena through cost reductions and Guaranteed Standards of Service is also evidently of critical significance. It is argued that these two factors played a considerable role in persuading the decision-makers within Coast Electric that the organization had to change.

The decision that CoastElectric had to change in turn led the organization to adopt the practices and initiatives that are conceptually located as discursive practices within the discourse of managerialism. The managerialist initiatives adopted included Total Quality Management, and a clone of Business Process Re-Engineering. These initiatives were supported by Partner Coaching, the Assessment Centre, a shift to a more unitarist Industrial Relations policy, and a relatively

generous Voluntary Severance policy. The implementation of managerialist practices in Coast Electric were introduced simply as it was *'the way to go'*, and were bolted on to the existing mode of organization. In this sense, there was a co-existence between Managerialism, the new domain of knowledge within the organization, and Engineering. However, the continued clamour from the City for higher profits, and from the Regulator for lower costs / improved customer service, combined with the threat of a take-over, led to a continued search for new methods of organising. The result was the Job Rethink proposals, which were informed by consultants and characteristic of Business Process Re-engineering. This represented the end of the co-existence between managerialism and engineering, and marked a new epoch in which the discourse of managerialism usurped engineering's dominance. The pace of change was quickened and the new supremacy of managerialism was bolstered by the take-over of CoastElectric by FedCo, an American organization.

This chapter does much therefore to confirm the importance of various technologies of power. Yet it also highlights the way in which such technologies are used by 'agents' determined for particular outcomes. The techno-managerialist project was a huge act of agency: recasting Nietzsche, it constituted a 'will to change'. Yet equally, despite the undoubted effort and resources put into the attempt at organizational change; the problems of change were highlighted. For instance, TQM did not live up to its expectations. In a recursive manner, it succeeded in creating a new bureaucracy. In the first wave of organizational change, there were considerable institutional constraints placed upon the techno-managerialists: an influential union and a power professional group. Into such contexts, especially in an economically lucrative organization, change is not easily realisable. The techno-managerialists seemed to have little sense of the time challenges or power relations that would mitigate against a successful implementation of their plans.

The unintended consequences of organizational change seem perhaps to be the only predictable outcome from a change programme. For instance, the decision to implement Partner Coaching, may well have led to the take-over of CoastElectric, through confidential information reaching FedCo. The decision of CoastElectric to asset strip itself may well have led to the take-over by a utility. The attempt to escape bureaucracy; actually served to create fresh layers of bureaucracy.

The takeover of the organization was clearly a major, if not the major episode, in the process of organizational change. Analytically, the takeover was useful, for if nothing else it took us away from Foucauldian inspired 'disciplinary' concerns, to an appreciation of the 'symbolic violence', pace Bourdieu (1986), that constitutes a part of organizational life. The takeover was also a major epiphony, for the removal of some of the techno-managerialist backers and their power structure gave rise to a backlash against techno-managerialism – but from a new form of managerialism – that of DIY managerialism. Whereas the techno-managerialist interpret and advocate externally-

known management tools and techniques, such as 'benchmarking', and want to see them implemented in a more or less undiluted format like in a 'black box'. The techno-managerialists were changing the organization structure towards a flatter, more team-based design. The more introspective, DIY managerialists were partly taking their starting point from lack of implementation of 'talk', which is in fact an illustration of the 'schizoid state' described by Cooper et al. (1996). The DIY managerialists thus emerged as a, formerly hidden, 'force' partly because of the increasingly apparent contradiction between interpretation and actual structure. In reaction, the techno-managerialist put the action-biased argument in the same box together with the old professional archetype. It viewed DIY managerialism as a discourse that was rendered redundant by events, and that harks back to the old days. The emergence of DIY managerialism can partly be seen as a reaction to the apparent contradictions in techno-managerialism, especially in work processes lagging behind change in rhetoric. The 'JFDI' exhortation is a powerful expression of the obvious dissatisfaction arising from such (perceived) contradictions.

The 'DIY managerialists' do not articulate external knowledge; instead they rely on home-spun wisdom, firmly embedded in the organizationally-defined context of what is possible, and have a strong inclination for getting things done. This is reminiscent of critiques by Clegg & Palmer (1996) of karoke managerialism, and the general elevation of the heroic 'leader'. The emergence of a distinct grouping heightens our sense of process, in the sense that the DIY managerialists were in effect created by the techno-managerialists – another unintended consequence. This can be thought of in the following terms:

1) false, because inflated, confidence was partly due to the availability of national, institutional recipes which carried substantial legitimacy, but first needed to be tailored to the specific circumstances of Coast Electric

2) some were still attempting to enforce professional institutional expectations, namely those that emphasized engineering safety

3) disappointment did arise and give rise to a third alternative of managing, which was inherently critical of the attachment to management theory, and very much down to earth

Following the creative destruction of the cadre of engineers, combined with the foreshortening of the implementation time-scale of the Job Rethink programme, there was no longer a robust discourse of engineering: its history had collapsed. A new binarism had opened up, as has been explained, that of techno-managerialism versus DIY managerialism. In short, following the work of Said (1978) and Derrida (1978), what is apparent that in a changing environment there is the tendency for one discourse to attempt to challenge, suppress and subjugate other discourses. What was in play in the organization was a contestation, presided over by the new American management, between two analytical discourses. Both discourses confident of themselves, and dismissive of the

other, were in competition, attempting to demonstrate the veracity and superiority of their respective worldview. That within months of implementation, the two regions could have been considered to be like different companies is a testament to the differences immanent to the two managerialisms. It is also evidence of the emergent nature of organizational change, which points to the difficulties in imposing a particular model on the organization. The role of the American management within this process is interesting, for they encouraged both 'sides', apparently genuinely interested in the outcome of the contest between the two groups. Clearly, at micro-political level the clash between different discourses can play out differentially. The pressures emanating from the changing institutional context provided substantial legitimacy to the TM approach. However, partly due to changes in the organizational context, i.e. the takeover by FedCo, institutional pressures towards acceptance of fashionable, packageable programmes became gradually weaker: expectations were no longer enforced. Non-isomorphic, non-fashion following 'DIY managerialists' entered the scene, proposing more idiosyncratic, more action-biased answers.

In chapter two I asserted that one of that the process of organizational change has been undertheorized. In an argument drawn from Clark (1996), I suggested that analyses of organizational change too often suppress process treating it as relatively unproblematic. The subsequent chapters that have turned their attention to the relations of power and to the discourse of new managerialism give further credence to the difficulty facing organizations in enacting organizations. In this chapter, it has been shown how discourses are created and play themselves out in the everyday life of an organization. This chapter has also demonstrated the limits placed upon managerial agency through their own mindsets, but more importantly by the powerful pre-existing organizational context that problematizes organizational change by CoastElectric. More than anything, I think this chapter has demonstrated the contingent nature of organizational change. For instance, at any number of times history could have taken a different turn: the counterfactual is always a spectre looming large awaiting the managerialist teleology.

Chapter 12:   Programmed Change Initiatives and their consequences

12:1   Introduction

Chapter 10 above has chronicled the initiatives that were adopted by CoastElectric. In view of the insights gleaned from chapters three and four, the initiatives that were adopted can hardly be regarded as novel; yet in the context of the organization, they must be viewed as being highly symbolically significant. Yet as it has been argued earlier in thesis, while assembling a 'system of objects' within an organization is undoubtedly important. The question of what happens when a rhetoric intensive initiative is translated into action is of equal importance. This is the question to be addressed in this part of the thesis. This chapter concentrates on the impact of the TQM and Job Rethink policies on the organization. The focus on these initiatives stems from them being symbolically important to the organization. In particular, the chapter seeks to address to what extent the claims made on behalf of the initiatives in action can be substantiated in practice. Furthermore, it seeks to address what, if any, unintended consequences were associated with each programme of change. This chapter commences with a discussion of TQM; this will then be followed by an analysis of Job Rethink. The chapter closes with a discussion around what the experiences of CoastElectric have to tell us about zeitgeist programmed change initiatives in more general terms.

12:2   A Brave New World?

A great deal of hope was invested in the TQM programme within CoastElectric; it was to be the elixir through which the organization would travel to attain the status 'world class'. At the time of implementation, TQM was a programmed change initiative that was sweeping the corporate world (see chapters three and four above), and it was probably of little surprise that it was appropriated by CoastElectric as a means of navigating itself through the privatised environment. In symbolic terms, as it has been argued, TQM was of massive significance: for it was the first new managerialist initiative ever to be embarked upon by CoastElectric. In this sense, as has been demonstrated earlier in this thesis, it opened up questions about the pre-existing organization. The initiative aimed to give everyone a 'new way of working'. The TQM programme was legitimated along the lines of organizational change being socially constructed as an inevitable part of the privatised environment. The TQM initiative was legimated along the lines of it being represented as a 'proven' way of operating.

Inevitability, views on TQM, among the workforce at CoastElectric, varied considerably. The training programme and TQM message was highly stylized and careful to concentrate attention on the positive features of the organizational change. Among the engineering and managerial staff, many of them considered 'TQM to be a fantastic concept', and reported themselves as being real enthusiasts for change, 'being enrolled into the TQM culture'. For instance, one

engineer recalled:

> 'I went along to the training as a sceptic, but the training was really excellent.
> I felt that we could really get involved in the future of CoastElectric. The idea
> was good and it could really work'.

Others were less certain as to whether TQM could work within CoastElectric. The Training
programme had clearly persuaded many engineers and managers of the potential efficacy that
TQM could have within the organization. However, some staff regarded the emphasis on
'Quality' as being something of an insult as they already regarded themselves as being
producers of high quality work, and high levels of service. Indeed as one manager commented;

> 'I am a professional engineer, I have always done a quality job, I resent being
> told that now we have to do a quality job, we have always done one.'

In broad terms, however, such was the persuasiveness of the training that only a small minority
were openly hostile, exemplified by a foreman describing TQM as a 'load of American bull'.

12:3   TQM in Action

There was a great deal of activity by members of staff, Quality Champions, Quest Consulting
and Peter Marsh in the implementation of TQM. Marsh kept a book chronicling the cost savings
resulting from TQM improvements. Within a year some £1 million savings per annum were
reported, however one manager claimed that these figures obfuscated the reality of the situation,

> 'We couldn't get money for obvious improvements for year, the TQM comes
> along and we can have what we like. So it was not TQM but being able to
> have a computer to work on and things like that'.

There was a tension between the existing hierarchy and the newly created TQM nomenclature.
Many Senior Managers whilst they claimed to support TQM reported that they found it difficult
to change their management style. Consequently, there were instances whereby staff reported
that their managers were not acting in a 'TQM way'. For example, one engineer recalled:

> 'We have radios fitted to our cars (personal vehicles not company owned) for
> when we are out on jobs. CoastElectric decided to upgrade the radios.
> Additionally they wanted to fit new receivers. They told us they would have
> to drill a hole through the car roofs to fit the new receivers. We responded by
> saying we will have the new radios but the old receivers will work just as
> well. It will save you money, as it will not be necessary to drill the cars and
> seal them when they are sold. This was rejected by management and all of a
> sudden a conflict situation occurred whereby management eventually issued
> an ultimatum saying ... if you do not have your cars drilled then you will lose
> your car allowance. All this conflict over nothing. We do not feel we were
> listened to. This embittered a lot of people'.

This illustration is a confirmation of the issue of leadership raised by Wilson (1992). For the
language game of participation and empowerment founders on the rock of organizational

recursiveness as managers are incapable of 'changing' their style. This is a problem of considerable magnitude for TQM and something that has been downplayed in the 'positive' TQM literature.

Another factor that mitigated against CoastElectric realising their TQM aims was the simple factor that with the shift to a functional structure with its concomitant intensification of the labour process meant that many engineers/managers considered that they simply did not have time to work in a TQM way. This was particularly the case in regard to the consultative approach expected when making decisions.

> 'The TQM idea is absolutely right, but the techniques of achieving a result are quite ponderous. A project in TQM training came to a point where you had to pick a solution i.e. make a value judgement, we had a vote and you might not get an answer that you were expecting, but there was an answer but it took three days. The Business plans took 90 flipcharts dealing with how you wanted to be, and how you were going to get there. We were split into groups and then sub-groups and we had to come up with short-term objectives. We then had to split into sub-groups and come up with a phrase. This was just for the Western region'.

Peter Marsh reported that another response among managers was that *'they do TQM on Friday'* thus appending it on to their existing tasks when they felt they had time, rather than changing the way in which they worked. This element of duality between the pre-existing mode of organization and that of TQM was summed up by one 2nd Engineer who stated:

> 'Sometimes we will do things in a TQM way, whilst other times when we are busy our boss will tell us what to do'.

Marsh, Quest consulting, and Reed recognised that if TQM was to pervade the organization then it had to be filtered down. They considered that this was being prevented from happening by some managers. Marsh spoke of some managers as *'blockages'*, and relied on reports from 'Quality Champions' to ascertain what role managers were playing in the TQM process. Quality Champions were encouraged to challenge managers that were felt not to be fully supportive of TQM. Difficulties encountered with the TQM programme included:

> 'The problem is they are afraid of change, they feel their role is threatened and they can't cope with it'.

> 'I'm not being managed in a TQM way. If we take what the TQM culture means i.e. Generous Listening and Employee Empowerment then that's not happening. There is a failure to communicate; managers are not seen to be leading the transformation to TQM'.

> 'In the day-to-day running of the business, management are very reluctant to accept employee suggestions ... with projects it is a bit different as they know

they have to be seen as operating in an empowering way'.

'My manager is draconian, he is totally against TQM and blocks anything to do with it'.

'Diktats from on high are issued, you will do this'

The difficulty of organizational transformation is highlighted from the extracts above. It is a confirmation of the enduring recursiveness of the pre-existing organization. From the inability of managers to modify behaviours it inevitably followed that TQM could not realise its goals and its aims. While the TQM nomenclature liked to represent the failures as being the preserve of 'blockage' engineers, it was clear that such difficulties pervaded throughout the organization. For instance, one senior employee stated:

'The Directors are not really committed to it, they are just playing games. They like to say in the City that we've introduced TQM but (they) don't actually make any changes on the ground'

This is a confirmation of the difficulty of translating a template or blueprint of an organization into a reality. Moreover, the disappointments experienced in the implementation of TQM led to the questioning of the role of the senior executives within CoastElectric:

'We are constantly told by the directors that we have got to improve. They have changed us around if you like; changed some players, changed some tactics ... now if it has not worked then surely it is time to change the manager'.

'We have had enough of Sarson and Reed ... they are idiots. You get rid of them and then come back and talk to us about TQM'

'You've heard about our Operations Director, Peter Sarson.... He wasn't a supportive manager... I could call him that. So he didn't encourage people; so going back to the TQM issue that's where there wasn't any real commitment to the whole process of TQM. And so people didn't feel that you could change, if you wanted to make a change, you could argue, write papers and all sorts of things ... what he actually did was to make people jump through hoops, he made them convince him about something, and after a while they would give up. Mechanically it takes a huge amount of time, so a change that could have been done in a couple of months could take 6 months to a year, 2 years sometimes before it was finally agreed'.

'Management's policies have completely destroyed the morale of the workforce'.

In this sense, an unintended consequence of the TQM programme was to create a form of reverse-panopticism whereby the actions of senior management were compared against good management as defined in the texts and training courses of the TQM canon.

TQM was therefore experiencing difficulty in maintaining its early momentum and enthusiasm. An illustration of this, for instance, was that *'Power Projects'* were acknowledged as having been a failure and had been abandoned. Peter Marsh largely attributed this to *'being due to some managers not being committed enough'* and also through the role played Operations Director, William Sarson, whom Marsh described as a *'blockage'*. Moreover, he argued that the Chief Executive, Reed, ought to stand up to, Peter Sarson, the Operations Director. Many Senior Managers acknowledged that the results Power Projects had been disappointing, and the following reasons were cited:

Many staff viewed projects as being a euphemism for job cuts, for instance one Engineer argued that 'Projects are ideas to do away with people's jobs'.

There was a good deal of competition between managers, with them vying to make massive savings through ambitious projects. This, it was argued, was counter-productive and led to very modest and somewhat underwhelming improvements. Furthermore, some staff reported that projects were very often myopic; in the sense that while the outcome of a project may reduce one department's operating costs it may actually increase the costs of another department.

So what are we to make therefore of the record of TQM? From the vantage point of Peter Marsh, the TQM Manager, in 1995 argued that it had: -

> 'TQM has developed into a sounding board for directors. It has commitment from the top. Richard Preston has encouraged people to come up with improvements, and has been speaking to managers about the need for change. We know see CoastLife magazine as a communication tool. CoastElectric's design is that now we have the Directors, 25 Senior Executives i.e. like myself, and the middle management. Now there are not the career opportunities in CoastElectric that there used to be. CoastElectric can't change overnight; we have to look at how it is improving and accepting that there is a lot more room for improvement. It is a dynamic situation. The TQM support group had the Industrial Society carry out a staff survey, the Staff survey recognised that there is a high level of empowerment, lots of resistance in engineering, communication between departments is poor, Power Projects have died a death'.

Peter Marsh claimed that,

> 'The most difficult thing to change is the attitudes of those remote from immediate management. People become socialised into a culture (i.e. in an office environment), but some people are remote from influence (i.e. industrial and engineering staff). The process of changing the mindset, changing the attitude is fundamental to restructuring the organization ... incredibly (from the survey) they are not interested in working for a successful company. We are in a never-ending battle of change'.

Many managers and staff testified to the relatively disappointing performance of TQM given the expectations that were created. For some this was simply due to TQM being an alien concept to British culture. For instance, two Senior Managers lamented:

'Within CoastElectric it has not turned out how we imagined it, its a Japanese thing, we got the impression that staff would look for improvements daily, they (employees) would be like Japanese people who thought of a couple of improvements before they got through the door in the morning'.

'TQM will never be the success it is in Japan. The national culture is different. It has been a bit of a disappointment as we came out of the training with big expectations. We were all enthusiastic but there are things that we can't do. Head Office still direct'.

The TQM programme, as has been discussed, was viewed positively by many staff on its introduction to the organization. However, CoastElectric had difficulty in sustaining the initiative, as one manager reported:

'The introduction was highly successful because there was great commitment, it was difficult to keep this going. The drive was lost, it was a good idea but it faded off. Now we don't see much activity, just from a few managers'.

A senior manager argued that the organizational structure and the 'old' hierarchy constrained, and ultimately limited the impact of TQM. Indeed, he argued that:

'There was a kind of hiatus as TQM, came in, coughed and spluttered a little bit. That was because the hierarchy of the company wasn't up to it. You know TQM requires a degree of commitment from the very top to really work, and also a degree of almost risk taking in the sense that you are losing some control of what's been a very prescriptive and hierarchical organization, and the confidence to do that the empowerment you're actually going to empower people, let them make decisions for themselves. When we didn't really in truth have that. We had it up to a point but you rose up and because I was a field manager, you know we all got quite enthusiastic. But we reached a kind of barrier. You're empowered up to a point, but then as we use to call 'Old CoastElectric' would reappear'.

Another senior manager mirrored this criticism, arguing that the problems with TQM were due to,

'I think the problem we had with TQM was we were more concerned at being able to demonstrate a result, that we built a bureaucracy on top of it, paper, forms, targets, and numbers of process improvements, and all sorts of things. And I think that made it something that most people paid lip service to it as opposed to lets find something that can be done as part of our normal business. They wanted a target and it was very much a competition between senior managers as to how they looked in the league that went up to Barry Reed at the time, and how they were improving TQM'.

These organizational difficulties were seemingly compounded by the behaviour of some of those at the very top of the organization, which in light of the observations of staff highlighted above, must be regarded as something of a recurring theme. For instance, one senior manager argued that:

> 'TQM wasn't demonstrated conceptually by senior management.... Maybe TQM doesn't work in Britain', whilst another argued, 'With TQM our Directors have always come down far too low in their decision making. They have come down and got involved in day-to-day operating issues, this isn't TQM, they should have stayed at the top and got on with the strategic direction of the company'.

While another Senior Manager contended that,

> 'I'm quite frustrated in how slowly CoastElectric has changed, I think we've been through a huge organizational change that has perhaps inhibited our technical change but we also, under old managers were very risk averse, very opposed to change. If you wanted to change a policy you had to write a 20 page report, then go and argue with the Operations Director, and he'd correct the English and a 101 other things. When I first joined CoastElectric we were leaders in certain areas of activity. Now many years later we are definitely not, we are now towards the back of the pack'.

Throughout the implementation of the TQM programme, there was a great deal of tabloid newspaper coverage of the remuneration of CoastElectric's directors, whom were labelled as *'Fat Cats'*; this caused considerable difficulties within the organization particularly as many sections of CoastElectric were facing downwards pressure on their salaries. Marsh argued that,

> 'There has been a lot of criticism of our directors from staff, with them being dubbed fat cats over salaries and share options. This has been blown out of all proportion. The salaries are simply market rates, whilst the share options were actually created by the Government. Staff have got to realise that we are in a global marketplace, they must not just be able to compete with other RECs, they should also be able to compete with India, Singapore and the Far East'.

That TQM had evidently encountered difficulties is clear, equally evident however was the tendency within the cadre of executives to maintain that TQM was delivering great benefits. For instance, Barry Reed argued in 1995 that,

> 'This years (1994) improvement in performance has been due to the application of TQM principles, we are very pleased with its progress, and look forward to future gains.'

As a result of the highly publicised nature of TQM within CoastElectric, one manager felt that,

> 'Because Reed, the Chief Executive, was keen for TQM to work, it had to be seen to work ... Peter Marsh kept the thing alive'.

Moreover, the manager considered that the unsettled organizational environment did not assist in the implementation of TQM, he argued that:

> 'As a nationalised industry staff were always cosseted, people in the company

are still trying to be kind but the company doesn't give a damn. It doesn't place the same value on staff as before. TQM has to be a 2-way process - staff want security and commitment back'.

This insight highlights the difficulty posed by TQM: an attempt to obtain extra commitment while at the same time removing the central tenets of the existing psychological contract. This paradox has been noted generally within the psychological contract literature. Taking a rational choice perspective, why would employees seek to commit themselves to something that leads to their own (or their colleagues) destruction.

In order to elicit commitment to TQM in the first place, rhetoric intensive claims were made on its behalf. Mindful of the discussion in chapters three and four, this is not something that should be criticised, on the contrary, it should be regarded as an immanent part of such an initiative. That said, the heroic expectations raised by TQM were then not realised in its implementation. For instance, the TQM programme gave the impression to some managers that,

'It sometimes raised an expectation that you were going to be able to make radical changes to policy, manpower, vehicles everybody got up to all sorts of things'.

Many managers however were to claim that, in fact, their ability to make changes was tightly constrained. While other managers, after having seen TQM in action, questioned its' originality,

'I have to say that I felt myself with TQM, that as they say there is nothing new under the sun, and that for many people in fact were always using TQM they hadn't just called it TQM and gone through all the bureaucracy of ... I mean when I was a field manager I used to get together with them and say well this is the problem, this is what we have got to do and use their skill and they would come up with some ideas as to how we might go about it. In TQM you have to meet, and then record it, and then log it and say what the benefits were, the cost savings to us and all this sort of business'.

In spite of the relative disillusionment with TQM, there were nonetheless benefits that were brought to the organization. Staff highlighted numerous contributions, which included the following themes:

12:31   Enhanced Organizational Skills

Many managers argued that TQM provided a formulaic approach to the ritual of organizational meetings. In a sense, this constitutes a manifestation of the language of new managerialism, in that it provided cultural artifacts (flipcharts) and tools (fishbone diagrams) through which to structure company meetings and the like.

'In CoastElectric a more British culture of TQM has emerged, it started with many process improvement groups. TQM got people thinking, people were taught about the TQM toolbox from brainstorming to the fishbone diagram. Very rarely now do we have meetings without a flipchart ... this was never

done before. In addition to this we all take minutes as we go'.

12:32   Introduction of Empowerment

The pre-existing CoastElectric organization can be characterised, as having been dominated by engineers, for whom there was a great deal of autonomy. Outside of the elite of the engineering cadre, there was however less opportunity to play a role in terms of editing the organizational repertoire or innovating new procedures. As such, many people within the organization felt that one of the 'positives' of TQM was to open up opportunities for the organizational laity, i.e. non-engineers.

> 'I think that the benefits have remained in that people feel that they have a part to play, and that are not just running around to so what they are told, they can contribute'.

> 'TQM process improvement groups, before TQM in the past CoastElectric was ruled by command management 'this is what we are now going to do'. We introduced empowerment, and now no one wouldn't mention an idea. People are used to justifying their ideas'.

> 'People realise that they can come up with something and give to their manager. In the past this just would not have been possible and in the past very often improvements were not made'.

> 'As a Senior Manager I have welcomed it because it has helped share the burden helping to bring about innovative new methods. Managerial work has spread down lower levels. In a flatter, leaner structure we had to train non-managers to think like managers. Managers are able to get praise; there has been kudos for people who think up the projects. Most of the significant projects probably would not have happened without TQM'.

12:33   Some Successes?

Whilst the impact TQM has had upon the organization was, as has been seen, in the main viewed by staff as being modest, within some departments it was judged to have been a great success. For instance,

> 'Certain sections have had more success with TQM than others. In the Wayleave section at Avalon we have had great success. It was the result of a Power project, which came from TQM. These projects were an attempt to try and manage the culture of the company. With the projects we used gimmick names such as SOD (supply on demand) to get things going'.

> 'TQM certainly works, we used TQM techniques in departments where there are identifiable processes. Improvements were readily made; a lot of this was because the existing procedures were out of date. TQM seems to have worked where it was linked with the implementation of new technology to a department. The Wayleaf example is seen as a classic of how TQM works ... There was also success in the drawing office. This was also linked to the introduction of IT'.

The affinity with IT, identified in the extract above, was emphasised by many staff,

> 'TQM is certainly used, sometimes we don't realise that it is part of the culture, however I say we use it guardedly but we don't use it every day, it is less well used in the field function. It is only widely practised where IT is applied'.

12:34   Resistance to TQM

The data presented above are suggestive that while the rhetoric intensive claims for TQM within CoastElectric went unrealised, there were nonetheless 'improvements' that took place in the organization. Such improvements would have formed part of the expected pattern of outcomes for TQM. It is another question of course as to whether such 'improvements' should be universally welcomed. While these questions are dealt with more philosophically in chapter 14, it is quite clear that the notion that it was in everyone's interests for the organization to improve must be subjected to critical scrutiny. For instance, the Trade Unions were wary of TQM, in particular they were suspicious of empowerment; viewing it as a force that could potentially, (i) compromise safety in the workplace, and (ii) redefine negotiated Job boundaries. The corollary, of these factors, was that the Trade Unions were not keen on their members participating in 'Projects'. In spite of this, the unions only mobilised serious resistance on one occasion, which was when the TQM team wanted to appoint a job that was outside of the current payscale/agreement. That said, with the exception of this incident, the lack of antagonism between the Trade Unions and TQM was such that some employees that played a dual role of Quality Champion and Union Representative, without there being a conflict between the two roles. Once again, therefore TQM engendered a sense of organizational duality.

12:4   Post-facto Appraisal of TQM

As has been highlighted in chapters ten and eleven above, TQM was discontinued with in CoastElectric in September 1995, following the take-over of the organization by FedCo. This prompted a useful opportunity to explore the extent to which, if any, after about a year of its death, TQM could have been held to have made a sustainable difference to the organization. Turning firstly to a reflective Peter Marsh, after his retirement, he claimed that the realisation of TQM was hampered in three key ways:

1. The Role Played by the Directors

> 'My feeling is that we weren't really pushing TQM hard enough, as the directors were concerned that they might precipitate industrial action. Peter Sarson was a major problem in implementing TQM. In reports from a psychiatrist, every manager said that they didn't get on with Sarson. Barry Reed who was very much a driving force behind TQM was not strong enough in getting his own view across to Sarson. Sarson made the right noises, but it was not in his heart, it was not his style. After he came back following an illness from cancer he still couldn't change his spots. I would like to have a conversation with him sometime, as to why he didn't support TQM more'.

2. The Role Played by Management Consultants

> 'We used Quest Consulting and to be honest they were not particularly good. There was no knowledge transfer from them to us. The guy thought, this is it I'm in, now I am going to try and get everything I can from them ... at least that's the impression I got. The man at the top of TQM must get over the right values, and you must have the right people. We spent a lot of money on the consultants and gained very little'.

3. The Emphasis Placed on Measurability

> 'Barry Reed concentrated on measuring TQM by the improvements made. There is a lot more to TQM than behaviours, the unmeasurables are very important'.

These candid insights reveal a great deal about the problems that would never have been acknowledged during the actual implementation. They also reveal Marsh's continued belief in the efficacy of TQM: for him it outlined a superior form of organization that with decisive leadership and hard work could be made *'to work'*. Interestingly, Peter Marsh following on from his exit from CoastElectric established two highly successful businesses, where he claimed to be applying 'TQM principles'.

A year after the formal abandonment of TQM, managers in reflecting upon the impact of TQM argued that:

> 'It gave everyone in the company a different view of the business, and of the way we could and should do things. I don't think it actually changed much other than increasing awareness of how things were done in the world. It went no further than that; the timeframe was not enough'.

> 'In implementing a culture change, or trying to change from the inside, is bound to take a long time. I wonder whether we would have ever got past the awareness and understanding stages. Those that naturally adopt a TQM

culture felt more comfortable, they weren't viewed as being as mad as they used to be!'

Both of these extracts emphasise the importance of temporality, they return to the points made in chapter 2 i.e. by asking how long will it take for a transition to take place. Equally, the way in which TQM is represented as 'how things were done in the world' is revealing. In terms then of the impact, if any, that the transition continued to have in the organization, one Distribution Manager claimed:

'I think it has had little impact, this is an upheaval that it is just seen as part of the history of CoastElectric'.

Many managers claimed however that while the initiative probably had little effect in its purist TQM form, it nonetheless played an important role in unpicking the pre-existing organization:

'I think in practical terms (TQM having an effect) no. In other words I think if you went around the company now I don't think you would find a TQM group or even people really talking TQM language anymore. What I think it probably did, indirectly is that it did open up some communication that helped with the introduction of Job Redesign... But until things like TQM, empowerment those kind ... the start if you like of the cultural change. I don't think you could even have had the conversations that we had well with Job Rethink. TQM started to involve people who traditionally have no role in change, no role in new ideas, no role. They were simply employed to work here, went out to do their job, went home at 4.30 ... but TQM started involving them, if you like, in practical terms it dealt with a whole series of problems because I don't know if we managed it desperately well. But it did raise a level of expectation, a level of consciousness if you like. So we started to have conversations about Job Redesign ... I'm not sure if we hadn't been through TQM, if we had tried to start the process then, then we might have got a very blank look'.

While another employee claimed that although TQM as a label or a sign had indeed disappeared, much of the content of TQM, continued to be promoted within the organization:

'If you talk to people I think they will tell you that TQ is something we did 5 years ago and if you brought it down to what was the aim of it then I think that the same messages are being sold'.

Individual managers reported that they gained useful ideas from the TQM experience that they embedded into, or at least claimed too, their daily managerial praxis. For instance, one Distribution manager reported that:

'The 2 very useful things from TQM that I take with me are: A customer/supplier agreement this is common sense and very useful that as a supplier of a service I should have an agreement with my customer. Continuous Improvement, we should always look to improve, we can improve the company'.

In terms of assessing the impact of TQM it is clear that its foreshortened life combined with the disapproval towards the initiative displayed by the new owners obviated the programme

moving into a 2nd generation. Yet, the abrupt foreshortening of TQM was at once a signal that on its own terms, the initiative had failed to deliver the benefits expected. This as has been argued, given the *great expectations* can hardly be considered a surprise. The reasons for the relative failure of the initiative are hardly surprising either, given the discussions in chapters one, two, three and four of the thesis. Simply put, the recursive nature of the organization and its actors was such that the acted as an effective fetter, at all levels of the organization, on the ambitions of TQM and its interlocutors. This recursiveness combined with an intensification of the labour process within the organization led, among other things, to a strategy of duality towards TQM. This included 'doing TQM on Fridays' and the like, while working 'normally' during busy periods. In such instances, the definition of 'normally' thus rendered TQM as *ab* or perhaps *para* normal. In many cases there was therefore a good deal of enthusiasm for TQM however when this was translated from the carefully chereographed setting of the training hotel to the gritty reality of everyday work in the electricity supply industry the high aims foundered on the rocks of organization. Explanations ranged from the failure of leaders, the 'blockage' role of middle managers, the obsession with measurement, to the unsuitability of the concept in a Western context.

While the results of the initiative were somewhat disappointing – on their own terms – TQM nonetheless had many consequences. Many as was explored in the previous chapter were of a political or a symbolic nature, there were others however that related to the way in which CoastElectric workers functioned in their commonplace practices. One of the consequences that TQM was to have was to ask questions of the organization. This was in part responsible for the development of the Job Rethink initiative; an analysis of which will concern the remainder of this chapter.

12:5   Job Rethink

Job Rethink within CoastElectric poses interesting questions for organizational analysts, for it in part draws upon issues of BPR and part on those of KM. From the vantage point of contemporary times, it may be read in part as an history lesson – by looking at BPR – whereas the KM elements of the programme have a broader relevance for more contemporary thought. To recap, the reasons for the creation and subsequent adoption of Job Rethink must be viewed as the product of a number of interrelated factors. In the first instance, there was the relative disappointment of TQM; secondly, the threat of take-over required further attempts at modernization; thirdly, there was the perceived for a radical or epochal change within the organization. Given the analysis in the chapter above, it is unnecessary to go into detail as to the composition of Job Rethink, other than to note that it compromised of Delayering, Team Working and Rule Based Engineering. Taken together, this amounted to a radical cocktail; that if implemented would be likely to have far reaching effects on the organization.

As was discussed in the last chapter, there were in fact a number of difficulties faced by the

management in the organization in terms of negotiating the implementation of Job Rethink. In fact, it was only after the organization was taken over by FedCo, the American utility, that Job Rethink was translated into an organizational reality. FedCo were to put their imprint on the Job Rethink programme by radically foreshortening the time period for the implementation of the initiative, and subsequently changing the nature of the initiative, too something radical and implemented in the here and now, rather than over a longer time period. What is striking about the Job Rethink programme is the manner in which it was assumed from the vantage point of management that a *radical* restructuring was possible. Job Rethink, especially through Rule Based Engineering, indeed offered the historic opportunity for the new managerialists to cut the gordian knot with the pre-existing recurrent action patterns of the organization: this jettisoning the hegemony of professional engineering into history. That it was radical is not in doubt, and as has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, it was to prompt a very real threat of industrial action. This was to translate Job Rethink into an object of discourse, a spectacle, where rhetoric intensive claims were made by both supporters and opponents of the initiative alike. In terms of immanent critique, how are we to make sense of Job Rethink ? Empirically and theoretically, does it stand up to examination?

Before proceeding to answer this question, it is the worth reminding ourselves of the binarism that had emerged over Job Rethink as an object of discourse. The supporters of the initiative viewed it as a means of constructing a superior organization, while detractors represented it as a surefire means of bringing about organizational entropy. At the level of an ethereal language game, the positions, defined in opposition to one another, could hardly have been more polarised. The implementation is Job Rethink is documented in more detail elsewhere in this thesis; but what of its pattern of outcomes: did it deliver the 'world class' organization imagined by its interlocuters ? Firstly, what is clear is that the collapse into entropy did not take place. Whilst undoubtedly, the professional engineers had been the key knowledge agent (see Lam, 1998) within the organization; either enough 'knowledge' had been retained to allow the smooth functioning the organization, or the new team structure had materialized into a 'High Performance organization'. In support of the first point, while the professional engineer had disappeared from the organizational structure, and was a 'subjugated' knowledge, it had not entirely disappeared from the organization. As has already be seen in the discussion of the Assessment Centre, many but not all, of the Team and Distribution Managers were engineers. Therefore, while they were the 'profession that dare not speak its name', they nonetheless, in their everyday praxis would have approached tasks as embodied 'professional engineers'.

While there were engineers that remained in the organization, it is important not to overplay their importance. In a year, the cadre of professional engineers had haemorraged, with their being a huge diaspora of professional engineers over a year long period. That combined with the changed role of the professional engineer; whereby their administrative and management responsibility was greatly increased. That said, it was noticeable that through the way in which, as a product of the Team structure, that at the level of the team manager a great deal of personal

responsibility was invested in them. As an organizational control system this produced Herculean efforts in individual Team Managers. This was visible through the hours that were being worked by some team managers, stating that they worked in the region of sixty hours a week.

Yet, from the new managerialist perspective, what was important or worthy of note was that the organization was functioning. Viewing fixed working hours as the antithesis of work in the globalized era, such working practices would not feature as an organizational problem. The discussion therefore becomes not so much that the organization was building new practices. Rather, however, it can be read more as an act of 'exnovation' followed by a shift in the innovation/efficiency dilemma. The expense that this was to have was in the richness of the organizational repertoire. Job Rethink, more than any other programme within CoastElectric, enabled the creative destruction of the professional engineers in the organization.

12:6   Analysis of Job Rethink

As we have seen in chapter 10, it was through the reading of management texts that Kevin Watkins, a senior operations manager at CoastElectric, devised Job Rethink. He explained that

> 'Within Regional Engineering we have spent a lot of time looking at ways in which we could deliver customer service and become more cost effective by doing things differently in the future'.

The Rule Based Engineering element of Job Rethink is interesting as it constituted an active attempt to manage knowledge in the organization. As has been noted, the Rule Based Engineering initiative proposed to remove the professional engineers from the organization, with engineering tasks being encoded into a rule-book, with them then being carried out by an autonomous team. This proposal constituted a radical change for CoastElectric; it also marked a highly ambitious attempt to manage knowledge for it was predicated on the notion that professional engineers were no longer required within the organization. It was a proposal for the creative destruction (see Clark, 1999) of the organization, for the engineers the axeman loomed (see Scarbrough & Burrell. 1996). In a 1996 interview, a senior executive at CoastElectric stated:

> 'Professional engineering skill is being turned into a Rule Based Technique. This is like the A.A. experience ... where the recovery man comes and basically has a checklist. Is the battery flat ? Is it the spark plugs ? If there is a real problem, he loads the car up and takes it away. We can deskill what was done by clever people ...If you come into CoastElectric in two years, you will not be able to tell who the engineers are, they will be a role in the structure not an engineer. If it works for the A.A. then it can work for CoastElectric'

The Rule Based Engineering naturally required the construction of engineering rules, this involved transforming the tacit knowledge of the individual engineer into codified, collective

knowledge. This of course resembles the quintessential knowledge creation process as described by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995). Given the discussion of cultural capital above, this process required a documentation of the mastery of a particular aspect of electrical engineering. This immediately raises esoteric questions as to how much 'tacit' knowledge can be made 'explicit', and in more practical terms how the problem was tackled within CoastElectric. The prevailing view was that knowledge could be captured through the engineers in the organization keeping diaries as to how they spent their time and by getting engineers seconded to projects which aimed to chronicle the way in which a particular job would be carried out. This was supplemented by reports from management consultancies on Rule Based Engineering. There are obvious problems with this attempt to make tacit knowledge explicit. For one, why should the engineers seek to participate in their own removal from the organization? Secondly, even if the engineers were willing to share their tacit knowledge, would they be able to express it ? And, thirdly, given the management consultancies lack of cultural capital in terms of engineering, to what extent would they be able to add to the process of codifying the knowledge of the engineers ?

In contrast, in defence of the Rule Based Engineering approach, it should be noted that the approach was designed by Kevin Watkins and supported by Bob Peters, the two most senior engineers in the organization. In this sense, the progenitors of the initiative stood within the blackbox of the professional engineer and embarked on removing the mystique from within. A second point to note is that although four hundred engineers were to leave the organization, two hundred would be staying in capacities as Team Managers or Distribution Mangers. In this sense it can be argued that the tacit-explicit transmission of knowledge would be supplemented by the tacit-tacit sharing of knowledge that was possible through workplace assimilation (see Abbott, 1988). The argument therefore would be that much of the training of the professional engineer was otiose in its curricular attentions to the instruction of arcane knowledge, such as an esoteric level of mathematics. The argument was therefore that that team members would be able to assimilate much of the skill of a professional engineer without requiring recourse to advanced electrical engineering theory.

This dilemma speaks to the knowledge management discussion where understandings of knowledge in knowledge management are constructed through a root metaphor (see Smirchich, 1983) that presumes that knowledge is both codifiable, storeable and transferable. Alvesson (1998) points out the way in which writers talk of knowledge in terms of being robust, hence being storeable in a data warehouse. To accept this core metaphor is to make it possible to talk of knowledge as being something that is a resource capable of being stored and transmitted by management, it is treated as an entitative product (see Hosking and Morley, 1991). The tendency within this metaphor of knowledge is for it to be treated as a functional resource rather than as a social process. For instance, Swan et al (1999) note that there is the assumption that 'that valuable knowledge can be codified'. It is apparent therefore that functionalistic forms of knowledge seem to prevail within the discourse, something that has arguably facilitated the

dominant position which information system analysts currently appear to occupy in knowledge management. The attempt at managing knowledge within the organization aimed at turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. As we have noted above, this is according to Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) the 'quintessential ' form of knowledge creation. Swan has noted that extant work on Knowledge Management, or at least its textual canon, uses a mining metaphor in terms of conceptualising knowledge: through data mining techniques, knowledge is leveraged out, that is it is extracted and recorded. This orientation has privileged practice based 'how to do it' style literature which inevitably places emphasis on the tools and techniques of managing knowledge. In turn, this has led to the dominance of information systems in the current KM discourse.

12:7   Consequences: intended and otherwise

The previous chapter dwelt on the process of implementation (see Carter, 2000), I now wish to turn to the consequences of the implementation of Rule Based Engineering within CoastElectric, one year after the policy was implemented. Following the insights of Giddens (1984), I shall look to both the intended and unintended consequences, from the perspective of the management, of the implementation of Job Rethink.

12:71   The ablation of the embodied professional engineer.

A year into the implementation of Rule Based Engineering there had not been an operational disaster, something that was predicted by many professional engineers. Instead the organization was described by many as being 'stretched' was managing to fulfill its obligations to supply and distribute electricity throughout the region. In this sense the argument put forward by the progenitors of Rule Based Engineering that engineers 'were no longer required' was not refuted in any major way: organizational life went on. Of course, this served to legitimate the claims of management and to embed the new mode of work organization.

These statements made by a senior executive, which were representative of the general view being espoused within the upper echelons of the organization, would have been inconceivable in 1990. The subjugation (Foucault, 1972) of the power / knowledge discourse of engineering was apparent at two levels. Firstly, there was the emergence of a robust managerialist power / knowledge discourse which was circulated and reinforced through the implementation of programmed change initiatives and through the use of management consultants. This discourse possesses its own 'regime of truth', its own 'perceptual filters' which looks at the world in terms of customer focus. The second level at which the subjugation took place was through the dismemberment of the subject position held by professional engineers within the power / knowledge discourse of engineering. Professional engineers lost their legislative role. The disembodiment of engineers took place through a redundancy programme and through the reconstitution of engineers as managerial subjects. Quite clearly, the removal of the professional

engineer was an intended consequence of this programme.

12:72   The limitations of codifying engineering knowledge

Bold claims were of course made on behalf of the efficacy of Rule Based Engineering. While I have noted that there had not been an operational breakdown or concomitant organizational entropy. Other than the organization passing through a crucial 'obligatory passage point' (see Clegg, 1989; Latour, 1987) this however hardly tells us much about to what extent the organizational repertoire was codified through Rule based engineering. A year on from the initiative was a timely point at which to assess the impact of RBE on the organizational repertoire. As part of this process, it attempted to codify the tacit knowledge immanent in the discursive practice of the professional engineers. These tasks could then be distributed to other newly created subject positions within the power / knowledge discourse. In terms of organizational knowledge, it attempted to turn 'tacit' knowledge into 'explicit' knowledge. One senior manager commented:

> 'I mean we've had people leave, and I've thought why on earth did we do it
> that way, we don't need people doing that, and then six months later
> something goes wrong and you understand why they did it like that. We are
> losing are organizational memory'.

This illustrates the point that it is not always obvious at the time why something is done in a particular way, executing a task in a particular way may seem superfluous or anachronistic, yet this is suggestive the richness of the cultural capital of the professional engineers were ignored. Moreover it points that the limitation of a codification programme can only be seen after a time lag, prior to this an initiative is merely a site for contestation its interlocutors and their detractors. The complexity and contextual nature of professional engineering knowledge is reflected in the extract below.

> 'Again there are things you cannot learn them in a book. OK I'm fresh from
> college with an understanding of electrical engineering, do a course in
> protection or relays or whatever; suddenly you've got this problem at Glaston.
> What the hell is this? What are all these secondary wires left? Why don't these
> wires go anywhere? Oh its because there used to be a synchronising machine
> in here, it used to sit over there, and that's all to do with that. Yeah so I
> remember commissioning that, or I used to do the testing of it, so I understand
> because I had to test it periodically. Its something you know, and people are
> going, and that knowledge, people may know the theory and be able to pick
> up from the theory what was happening, but it would take you hell of a long
> time, and in an emergency situation you want someone to go in and sort the
> problem out, and get it working as soon as possible. So again the expertise,
> the experience that is leaving the company.'

In terms of making sense of these claims, it is clear that explicit knowledge is has limitations in terms of what an engineer actually does, something that is reminiscent of Latour's seminal work on what it is scientists actually do in the laboratory. Building on this theme it highlights the complex interaction between certified, explicit knowledge and the more localised tacit

knowledge that comes through the experience of 'doing'. Central to this thesis is the contention that traditionally the professional engineer within CoastElectric had been the 'key knowledge agent'. The the extract above illustrates that the physically embodied expertise was leaving the organization. This personalisation of knowledge recurs once again, in the extract below:

> I'm fairly dependent on someone who is retiring next month. I sit next to him and I'm always bouncing ideas, is this alright ? How would you deal with this technical situation? We're going to miss him a lot. I'll miss his knowledge, he even says things like 'oh there's a couple of 33KVs in the ground that are dead and not being used, you want to get one of them going at 11 KV. I know you can put 11KV through 33 KV, but he knows that they're going through the ground at this particular spot. Its knowledge like that you're losing, generated over years. Like I say maybe it'll mean at the end of the day we won't be designing, or the systems and that will be electrically efficient but perhaps cost wise it will cost more to achieve it because I did that laying new cables and Tom would have used the old cables in the ground and made it work somehow. He's got a reputation for doing that, you can always tell when Tom has been, there are all these different sets of cables, and he costs half the money to do it than laying fresh cables'.

In this case, once more knowledge is ineluctably linked with individuals, activated in their day to day labour process. The suggestion in the quote above is that the codification of tasks, which in this case were to render the professional engineer obsolete and hence reduce organizational costs, may on its own terms fail. More generally the case of CoastElectric demonstrates the difficulty of turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge through codification. The case instead emphasizes that 'knowledge' is contained in relationships and in practice, rather than in a rule-book. To codify the full repertoire of an organization is difficult to the point of impossibility given the complex nature of organizational life. What has been seen in this case is that rather than making the organization more robust, that the organization in the present and future is actually far less able to deal with engineering complexity than was previously the case. The engineering repertoire of the organization was therefore more limited than it had been in the past. By this I contend that while the organization was able to perform its basic operating cycle, it was probably much less able to innovate or to deal with crisis situations than it is was prior to the Rule Based Engineering programme.

The insights gained from the experience at CoastElectric have a broader relevance for the study of organization especially in view of the current popularity of Knowledge Management programmes throughout the corporate world. This chapter suggests that the management of knowledge is an inherently political process, with knowledge being ineluctably linked to the relations of power within the workplace. The contestation over what counts as knowledge and the groups that are able to legislate over that knowledge are of central concern to this chapter, as is the impact that this has upon the operational capability of an organization. In particular, this chapter is demonstrative of the limitations in the attempts by CoastElectric to codify tacit knowledge. As such this thesis argues for an approach to Knowledge Management that transcends the rhetoric of the gurus and is mindful of the complexity and dynamics of organizations. While it has been demonstrated that there was a loss of engineering capability,

that this did note result in organizational entropy opens up important questions about the perfomativity of knowledge. In defence of the engineers, one would argue that the organization was resting on continued good fortune. In contrast, the position of the supporters of Rule Based Engineering could be said to be vindicated, as the organization continued as it were to keep 'the electric on'.

12:8   Discussion and Conclusions

It is a theme of this thesis that one of the key properties of the academic-consulting complex (see Grey and Mitev 1995) is its ability to generate new packages which frame and offer solutions to apparent organizational problems. As I have argued the phantasmagoric characteristic of the diffusion of such initiatives has led a number of theorists to speak of 'fads and fashions' (see Abrahamson 1991; 1996; Huczinski 1993). Yet what this chapter demonstrates, is that the impact of such initiatives, does not end at the point of consumption. Instead, initiatives have important power effects in terms of the organization. This has been demonstrated with regards to three of the most popular of programme change initiatives of recent times: TQM, BPR and KM.

The two initiatives that were implemented promised a great deal. As I have argued, such rhetoric intensive claims are an immanent part of the phenomenon of the programmed change initiative. It has been suggested earlier in this thesis that such initiatives necessarily must be rhetoric intensive in order to problematize some element of the pre-existing context. That said, what are we to make of both TQM and Job Rethink within CoastElectric ?

In terms of TQM, it has been seen that there was widespread support, as well as some resistance, for the concept. Yet in the practicalities of implementation, much of this enthusiasm was to founder on the rocks of frustration. The frustrations included issues of leadership, culture and the slowness of the results. This was combined with the sheer difficulty of 'working in a different way'. As such, TQM did not deliver the benefits that had been hoped for. That said, given that the initiative's life was foreshortened, this is probably not such a great surprise. When Dill (1962), asks how long will it take for a transformation to take place ? In respect of a corporate culture change, it would be safe to say that two years was hardly time enough. Turning to the unintended consequences of TQM: recursively so, it served to create an extra bureaucracy; it opened up a 'process' based critique that was eventually to lead to their demise; the frustrations associated with TQM marked the genesis of a faction of managerialists that were anti-management theory; it problematized the reputation of Barry Reed, as he was so closely associated with the initiative; it led to a frustration with incrementalism that was to give birth to the Job Rethink proposals.

Job Rethink as I have demonstrated can be considered to be a success in that it avoided the domesday scenario that many engineers had been promulgating during the negotiation period.

In this sense, the knowledge contained within Job Rethink can be regarded as 'performative': in that in the context of application 'it worked'. Yet is also clear, that much of the expertise in the organization was physically embodied in the 'knowing subject' i.e. the professional engineer. As such it is not difficult to imagine a scenario, or a virtual history, where circumstances might (have) prove(d) to be very different. In conclusion therefore, while the engineering repertoire was much weakened, both in terms of its scope and capability, 'the electric stayed on'. The case of CoastElectric while it was not labelled 'knowledge management' nonetheless presents an illuminating example of a corporation's attempts to manage knowledge.

Chapter 13: Regimes of Knowledge, Stories of Power: Changing Discourses in CoastElectric

13: 1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to try and make sense of the organizational changes that have taken place within CoastElectric from the perspective of looking at the shift in the underlying relation of power and knowledge. More particularly, this chapter tries to encompass the shifts, in a relatively short time, which has taken place and the impacts that they have had on the functioning of the organization. The function of this chapter is therefore to situate more broadly the changes that had undoubtedly taken place in the organization. The theoretical framework that is developed draws on the insights from chapter two, but distinctively tries to link issues of meaning and the systemic pillars that support such meanings to the everyday, commonplace functioning of the organization. It is claimed therefore that one of the fruitful contributions of this chapter is introduce notions to the study of the organization of the sacred and the profane. This chapter deploys a somewhat synthetic view of power, but in its 'deep' concentration on two periods, it draws from Foucault's methods. The chapter is organized as follows: I commence by introducing the 'regime of knowledge' circa 1990, T1, before proceeding to the 'regime of knowledge', circa 1997, T3. Following from chapter 11 on the processes of organizational change this chapter alerts the reader to how seismic or radical a change had actually taken place. What is also noteworthy, is that this chapter deliberately does not engage with a T3, i.e. the time when the organization was undergoing transformation. In each of the time periods a discussion is given as to how the dominant relations of power were implicated within the knowledge system of CoastElectric: put crudely, it addresses how the organization was able to 'keep the electric on'. The chapter closes with some thoughts about how such a framework contributes, if at all, to the study of organization.

13:2 CoastElectric (t1): The Regime of Engineering

I begin by outlining the pre-existing regime of knowledge in CoastElectric (T1). CoastElectric, a regional electricity company, was privatised in 1990, the regime of knowledge was characterised by a dominance of the regime of engineering, which was physically embodied (Lam, 1998) in the cadre of professional engineers. In contrast to the typical experience in the UK (see Lee & Smith, 1992; Meiskins & Smith, 1996), engineers in CoastElectric enjoyed a high status and as an occupational group were sharply delineated from other workers. They enjoyed full jurisdiction (see Abbot, 1998) over engineering matters and, for that matter, more general organizational issues, they were legislators (see Bauman, 1987). Given the differences between CoastElectric's engineers and the more general UK experience how are I to make sense of this? In my view the starting point of the institution, its founding conditions, have a vital role to play in explaining the emergence of a

particular regime of knowledge (c.f. Whipp & Clark, 1986). As such the surface of emergence (see Foucault, 1972) in which CoastElectric was formed must be located within the broader context of political economy. The post-World War Two wave of nationalisation, by the Attlee Government, was predicated on the notion that 'state experts' were required to run the country. This was particularly evident in the influential writing of both the Webbs and that of Beveridge, important social policy influences on the Attlee Government. An application of this technocratic thinking was to have the electricity supply industry run by state employed professional engineers.

As such, the engineers in CoastElectric could be considered to be organizational professionals (see Reed, 1996), that is, professionals brought about as a result of the expansion of the state rather than being part of the earlier growth of liberal professions. It was not solely the influence of the exhortations of Fabian social science that shaped the need for engineers; it was also the physical, material demands of establishing an electricity distribution network. The fifty years of development of the network prior to World War Two was based on local municipal and private projects, which led to a sporadic kaleidoscope of different system designs. The network as it stood was also extremely limited in its reach. This patchwork tradition was continued in that rather than adopting an American system of manufacture (see Rosenburg, 1969) style approach to engineering, of the type chronicled by Noble (1978). Electricity supply industry professional engineers in the UK were able to rely on their own professional judgment, something that led to idiosyncratic designs across towns and regions. This is illustrative of the arguments about the craft traditions of British engineering (see Meiskins & Smith, 1996), it also questions the whole notion that British electricity boards were in fact the lumbering, inflexible bureaucracies that some theorists have likened them too. I would argue that the representation of Coastline Electric as a bureaucracy is somewhat problematic, perhaps a more accurate characterisation would be to describe it as a form of Clan organisation (See Ouchi 1980).

These founding conditions help explain the formation of CoastElectric as an organization that was to value and elevate engineering over other concerns. The political economy at the time of foundation was a unique factor that led to the pre-eminence of the discourse of professional engineering. The statist technocracy was sustained by three factors: first, the demand for electricity doubled approximately every seven years between 1945 and 1970; second, the inherited network and the climactic conditions (high rainfall levels and winds) led to a good deal of maintenance and repair work being required. The huge expansion of the electricity network that took place in the late 1940s saw electrical engineers become the managerial and technical elite of the electricity industry. Engineers were constituted; both by themselves and others in the industry, as being 'professionals' in contrast to the other occupational groupings were seen as being crucial to the maintenance of the electricity network. This position of hegemony was consolidated through an organisational structure that virtually excluded the possibility of a non-engineer reaching senior management. For instance

within CoastElectric prior to privatisation only one non-engineer had ever reached senior management; third, the absence of profit expectations above the requirement to generate a profit of 6% return on capital employed. The absence of capitalistic profit expectations, which avoided the inherent tension (Whalley 1986, Marques 1993) between the values of the organisation, and that of the engineering profession. Such were the politics of budgeting that the latter factor meant that CoastElectric would make its target but no more, the rest of the resources being redirected into maintenance, training of engineers and the like. The absence of other objectives such as financial performance served to support the centrality of the regime of engineering. This was further evident in the overarching objective of the organization, which was to maintain the electricity distribution network. The organisational objectives for the nationalised electricity boards were to maintain the network, thus in a Copernican way this cemented the pre-eminence of engineers. In theoretical terms the maintenance of the electricity distribution network constituted the power of meaning - the raison d'être of the organization - while this was enforced through the power of the system, which consisted of techniques for measuring the performance of the system.

In trying to explain the position of engineers within Coastline Electric it is argued that their position was a consequence of a combination of the following contributing considerations. For instance, the training of engineers within the industry was largely conducted by the Institute of Electrical Engineers in conjunction with the electricity companies through a lengthy programme (seven years from 'A' level) of on-the-job-training and block release study. In latter years this gave way to the recruitment of engineering graduates who were then provided with a two - year training course which culminated in their qualification as Associates of the Institute of Electrical Engineers. Throughout the 1960s and 70s the Electricity Boards trained more engineers than they required, resulting in newly qualified engineers having to compete for jobs. This process undoubtedly added to the image of the engineer as being 'special', serving to legitimate their status within the organisation. This is reminiscent of the 'defence of the corps' described by Bourdieu (1986), in the sense of a reproduction of an elite.

The term 'engineer' was reserved exclusively for professional engineers, and they were responsible for designing, planning and checking technical work. Engineers inhabited subject positions within a rigid tall organisational structure; which was accompanied, inter alia, by exacting, incremental pay scales, and a lengthy decision making process. These of course are some of the classic hallmarks of bureaucracy as expounded by Weber, and researched in the Aston Studies (see Pugh and Hickson 1976). The popular representation of the electricity boards as being bureaucracies conceals the considerable flexibility enjoyed by the engineers in carrying out their engineering tasks. They were expected to use their professional judgement rather than rely on following a prescribed policy. One of the legacies of this is the idiosyncratic distribution of designs in different parts of the network. The engineers were considered to be very much the experts; a senior manager reminisced:

'With cable faults it used to be a science using Wheatstone bridges. Engineers
built up a reputation for digging their heel in the turf and saying Dig here !'

My argument therefore is one that highlights the interconnections between the power of the system
and the power of meaning and the manner in which they reinforce each other. The power of the
system was also evident in the use of the functioning of the engineering nomenclature. For instance
engineering terms were widely used in job titles (for professional engineers), including very senior
management positions. Thus a successful employee starting out, as an associate engineer would
proceed up the hierarchy through 3rd, 2nd and 1st engineer positions, a tiny minority (ten out of six
hundred engineers) would make it to the position of regional or chief engineer. Promotion was
based largely on technical excellence with management positions being totally dominated by
engineers. Other manifestations of the centrality included: (i) the high technical content of senior
management jobs; (ii) the high engineering content discussed in committee meetings; (iii) the
content of training was virtually exclusively restricted to the acquisition of new engineering skills;
(iv) there was a post-qualification competition for jobs, whereby CoastElectric trained far more
engineers than it required, this added to the notion that the engineers that remained were in some
way 'special'; (v) the lengthy training period for engineers (5-7 years post- A level).

The status of engineers within Coastline Electric is summarised in table 13:1 below:

Table 13:1. Engineers in Coastline Electric

High status

A well defined, and demarcated profession

Central to all technical tasks within the organisation.

Natural route to senior management.

Influential professional institute.

The sustained, dominant engineering discourse gave rise to a narrative framework, an organising
mechanism around certain axial dimensions, which placed engineers in a central role within the
organisation. Evidently the experience of the engineers in Coastline Electric differs markedly from
the more archetypal British experience. What then were Burr's (1995:68) 'Practical and Social
conditions of life (that) are seen as providing a suitable culture for some representations rather than
others'.

Under this regime of knowledge the conditions for knowing were such that it was broadly accepted
by those within the organization that engineering was CoastElectric's raison d'être; therefore, to

fulfill this function, a large body of professional engineers was required. This is a useful illustration of the way in which functional arguments get conflated with those of professional projects. For instance, what is seen in CoastElectric is a remarkably successful professional project over a 42-year period, which has secured double closure, of the entry into the occupation and the control over particular tasks. That this was taken as axiomatic and commonsensical indicates the hegemonic position occupied by the regime of engineering in CoastElectric. The dominance of the regime of engineering was therefore embodied by the professional engineers. In extending their jurisdiction over the organization were able to define organizational requirements primarily in engineering terms. They were 'legislators' in Bauman's sense. Previous studies into electricity boards (see Hickson et al 1986) have characterised them as being 'paralytic' in the sense that historically they have been constrained by the external environment. This perhaps explains why within the everyday operating environments engineers were in a legislative position: externally emasculated, but possessing a mastery over the internal domain. Moreover, it is significant that State control seems to have involved a kind of institutional blackboxing (Scarbrough, 1995). That is, the government did not have to know how they functioned but rather that the electricity was distributed, faults were fixed and financial targets were met. In this way, the organization was broadly insulated against influence from the wider political environment, although not of course the physical environment. Further, my research suggests that this regime of knowledge developed in a recursive way (see Giddens, 1984; Clark, 1996, 1999) since the foundation of the organization in 1948; meaning was manufactured and sustained within the organization by the systemic effect of performance measurement as mobilized through the professional norms of the engineers.

The regime of knowledge must therefore be viewed as being constituted by the interplay between language, power and knowledge. Yet thus far this tells us little of the role of the organizational repertoire in sustaining the regime of knowledge. Turning to these issues, and following Clark & Staunton (1989), it is argued that in CoastElectric possessed an elaborate number of structural poses within its repertoire in terms of everyday operational activities of maintenance, establishing new lines and routine repairs. This was bound up with the dominance of the engineering profession and the associated strategic centrality of network maintenance. It was also in part a consequence of the largely rural environment of CoastElectric where the electricity supply was especially vulnerable to faults. This required a work organization that was flexible out of normal working hours, something that was achieved through a call out system, whereby a given number of engineers, technical and manual workers would be 'on call' should there be an emergency in the night. This led to an embedded ability to deal routinely with problems occurring in the electricity distribution network. The professional engineer was pivotal to this operation, making engineering judgments as to what needed to be done and conducting safety checks, while the technical workers and labourers would work, often in adverse weather conditions, to get the electricity supply back on. A high proportion of junior and mid ranking engineers (3rd & 2nd) were regularly involved in call-outs, having opted

for 'standby contracts' which involved them being on stand-by for one week in every four, across all groups of 'operational' employees it was regarded as a being relatively lucrative.

Turning my attention to more extraordinary events, such as gales and other extreme weather conditions, instances that were an inevitable feature of CoastElectric's physical environment, yet they were of course relatively infrequent and wholly unpredictable. An examination of such critical incidents revealed that a structural pose did exist within the organization to cope with such exigencies. For instance, in November 1990 - ironically the month of the organization's privatisation - a hurricane hit the CoastElectric region. Amid scenes of chaos most of the region was without electricity, phone lines were also down so how did CoastElectric deal with such a situation? In the first instance, in the case of natural disasters there was a tradition of CoastElectric operational employees turning up for work, knowing that the organization would be facing a crisis. In 1990, pre cellular phone, a local BBC radio news programme was used for a regional engineer to advise engineers and technical staff. It was on this programme that residents in the area were assured that CoastElectric was doing all that was possible to restore electricity supply, the effort being titled 'Stormforce 90'. In the regional offices, the staff shifted to a shift system so that work was being done on 12-hour cycles. The engineering challenge was to locate major faults, try and get them repaired, in order to establish a skeleton electricity supply network; this was then followed by working through the smaller faults. At regional office level, engineers were no longer attending to their everyday jobs, but rather they were coordinating the construction of a skeleton network. This necessitated consulting old system designs, while in 'the field' the supply was gradually being restored. To set this into a temporal frame, it took about three weeks following the hurricane of this style of working to get the electricity distribution network fully operational once more. 'Stormforce 90' was lauded as a success, a number of CoastElectric staff received honours in the list of the following year.

For the purposes of this thesis, the crucial factor in this incident was the evident capability within the organizational repertoire to deal with an extraordinary event. It was dealt with through staff solely concentrating on the situation, through working irregular hours, through having the ability to plan a skeleton network and repair the faults. In considering the capabilities of the organization I have seen how the organization was able to cope with routine, problems and extraordinary situations. In the latter case, there was no documentation for handling such a situation, yet the capability clearly lay dormant within the organization's repertoire, waiting to be activated. While there were undoubtedly individual acts of heroism, as recognized through the awards, it is not my position to privilege human agency, rather it is my view that the outcomes can be explained through recourse to the specific organizational knowledges within CoastElectric. Linking this, the sense of an organization in action, with my earlier exposition of the regime of knowledge, it is central to my position that the regime of engineering, embodied in professional engineers, reinforced through

performance measures and various institutional systems (central to the whole raison d'être of what the organization was about), was vital to the physicality and materiality of putting the 'electric' back on.

13:3   Shifting contexts: the rise of New Managerialism

In the section above it was seen that Stormforce 90 coincided with the privatisation of CoastElectric. This of course is a telling example of the way in which exogenous factors are a central aspect to a regime of knowledge. The exogenous political economy is of vital importance, in the atmosphere of the time, the New Right project in the UK was ten years old and was increasingly pervasive throughout British Society (hospitals, schools, local Government etc.). One of the verities of the New Right project was to minimise the role of state, preferring instead competition and private enterprise. After a tentative start privatisation was to prove to be one of the most far reaching and (to some) popular of Thatcher's policies, it was one of the few policies that united both the left and right of the Tory party. The Thatcherite mantra of 'public good, private bad' went further by semiotically representing nationalised industry as being lumbering and inherently inefficient, this is exemplified by the (in) famous and perhaps apocryphal story of Mrs. Thatcher telling a meeting of British Rail managers that 'if they were any good they would not be working here!' This climate saw large reductions in the numbers of staff following privatisation (see Scarbrough & Burrell, 1996) and it was likely that there might be a similar agenda within CoastElectric.

Not only was the practice of the New Right in the UK antagonistic towards publicly owned industry, it was also posed a threat to professional labour. This is a point made by Reed (1996; 1999), whom has argued that Government policy was confrontational towards state professionals. The ideological opposition was largely down to state professionals, through virtue of their jurisdiction over a particular domain, being both shielded and at the same time a restriction to the mechanisms of the market. Numerous studies (Aronowitz, 1999; Cooper et al 1988; Ferlie et al 1996; Broadbent et al 1997; Ashburner & Fitzgerald, 1995; Pollitt, 1993) have documented the challenge that has been posed to various state professionals by policies associated with the New Right. Marquand (1991) warns against the terms Thatcherism and the New Right being used interchangeably; at an abstract level it is of course possible to make a distinction, in the reality of the implementation of such policies this is a less easy task. My interest focuses on how the emergence of the New Right began to problematise the status quo, it postulated that radical change was required for organizations in all walks of life. In the UK context this can be understood as an extension of the economic retardation debate (see Barnett, 1983; Kennedy, 1987) i.e. that Britain was subject to a serious economic malaise in the post-war period which required economic surgery.

It was out of this coalescence of political and intellectual forces that what is commonly termed new managerialism emerged; a discourse, which among other things emphasized the need for flat, customer focused, entrepreneurial, empowered organizations. Since the early writing of Peters and Waterman (1982) there have been a range of initiatives talked about by the so-called gurus, blackboxed and imbued with a veneer of science by consultants and diffused throughout the corporate world. For my purposes, the differences between particular initiatives (c.f. TQM with BPR) in either content or relative sophistication (see Fincham, 2000) are less important than what binds them together - their intertextuality - which in terms of content is their messages of anti-bureaucracy, change, managerial unitarism and the celebration of the customer.

The discourse of new managerialism, as we saw in chapters three and four, represented a cogent alternative logic of organization to the regime of engineering. More importantly the regime of new managerialism can be regarded as imperialistic in the sense that it problematizes alternatives ('the old way of doing things') through establishing a binary opposite whereby new managerialism is represented as modern, forward looking and the one best way (see Wilson, 1992) of organizing: any alternatives are viewed as inferior and likely to fail. The emergence of a discourse of new managerialism was therefore a regime of knowledge, which was broadly commensurable with the broader message of the New Right.

13:4   CoastElectric (T3): Regime of Managerialism(s)

The second cameo looks at the regime of knowledge in CoastElectric some six years later (T3). The regime of knowledge was very different, centred on what has been characterised elsewhere as the discourse of new managerialism (see for instance, Du Gay 1996; Jacques, 1996; Reed, 1999) where the objective of the organization was to provide 'world class customer service'. Yet in the wake of the American take-over and the subsequent implementation of Job Rethink, I have demonstrated that CoastElectric, depending on which area (east or west) one was visiting could be characterised either by 'techno' or 'DIY' managerialism. As has been discussed above, this is an important distinction. Yet at the Board level of the organization, the central message, i.e. that of the importance of customers to the regime of new managerialism in CoastElectric (t3), requires further consideration. Thus both Watkins and Preston, each embodying a particular brand of new managerialism, saw their particular mode of organization as being the means to deliver customer service. The competition between the two managers served to fix meaning further within the organization, as both managers pursued 'customer service'.

The logic of new managerialism held that corporate success was achieved through making customers 'extremely satisfied'. This at a surface level seems to be axiomatic, a truism for the contemporary organization. Yet the elevation of the customer as a transcendental category disarms

my attention from treating the very term, especially in relation to receivers of electricity, as a social construction specific to a particular time and space. For instance, in CoastElectric (t1), six short years before, it would have made little sense to talk of 'customers', for as a linguistic category they simply did not exist. There were of course people whom received electricity, paid bills and if their electricity went off rang up to complain, yet they were not constructed as customers. This is profoundly significant and Tex Nicholl's opening speech where by he extolled the virtues of 'customer service' was an exemplar of this.

The drive to deliver customer service is illustrated by the actions of the new chief executive, a former news reader on American television, who implored his staff, through presentations and handwritten exhortations, in the company magazine, to 'think like a customer and act like an owner'. In addition to this he dealt with probably twenty telephone calls from angry 'customers' a week. The centrality of this discourse of customer service was institutionalised through a performance management system (see Townley, 1994) which purported to 'measure' customer satisfaction. One manager recalled:

> 'The old fashioned 'nationalised' mindset has been forced out and the need for efficiency and the drive towards customer satisfaction has replaced it. CoastElectric is much less arrogant now, friendlier towards the public'.

This measurement system, based on monthly questionnaires to customers, acted as a device to construct the reality of how particular work groups were performing: careers, bonuses and reputations depended upon it (see Power, 1994; Tinker, 1988). For instance, one Distribution Manager recalled:

> 'We've got quite a good team now in the south and we're competitive but we're competitive in a nice way. In other words we compare our results with each other and whoever is bottom of the pile will get a bit of ribbing so that its clear that they are bottom of the pile and that they have let us down but they will also get support and help. Its healthy, its a bit of healthy barracking competition and as long as it stays healthy its great'.

In the company magazine monthly figures for 'extremely satisfied' customers were produced. Equally, individual employees were featured in the company magazine for examples of 'exceptional' customer service. While these figures as I have suggested have consequences, it is worth once again reflecting upon what is actually meant by an 'extremely satisfied customer' in relation to the supply of electricity. Equally, there were displays of customer service that were largely symbolic, but exploitable within the mediascape. An illustration of this was where the electricity went off in a small village, and one family had been preparing for a 60th birthday party celebration at their home. As a gesture, CoastElectric put the entire party up at a nearby five-star hotel. Such an instance would have been unimaginable in CoastElectric (T1).

The work was now organized through autonomous teams that comprised a team leader and empowered team members. As one of the progenitors of this mode of organization argued: 'Empowered teams will provide high powered, flexible, customer responsive teams'. Engineers were however remarkable only for their absence. As one senior manager stated 'In the past I had people that were technically excellent, now I need excellent leaders - I don't need the technical skills', while another senior manager commented, 'if you come into this organization you won't be find an engineer in the structure'. What was apparent therefore was that there had been a creative destruction of the professional engineering cadre within the organization: they had been ablated from the organization. In this sense, and building on the professions discussion in chapter 5, the assault on the professional group must be regarded as having been far reaching, far beyond that reported by Reed (1996) and other writers on the professions.

Much attention was played to the importance of team building and leadership; this took the form of Watkins pouring over the results and implications of Belbin tests, while Preston spoke of his attempt to instill a 'sense off identity' among his Distribution Managers:

> 'I have 12 Distribution Managers, all are on board except one. I took my Distribution Managers on a trip to the rugby a few weeks ago, and after we all had a few beers I took him to one side in the box and said look are you with us because I have my doubts.... he said he was and I said right so no more half-heartedness you are either with us or against us... I have Ian (Distribution manager) who is my little shit, his job is to sound out what people are thinking, and to let me know what is going on, and he had told me he was not sure about this guy'.

This is illustrative the way in which a profession, guided by certain protocols and shared understandings, had been replaced by an organization whereby one was either 'with' or 'against' us. In terms of pursuing company goals, at least among the DIY managerialists, there was an individualizing of responsibility; whereby:

> 'Right OK, whereas before I was looking at a particular function which was the underground system now as a Distribution Manager I am looking at a geographical area and basically anything that goes on in that geographical area is my problem. So I'm here to make things happen not to actually do myself but to make it happen... The only person I have above me is the Network Services Manager... so the buck stops here as far as I am concerned'.

Equally, the break with the past was also manifest in what it was to be a manager:

> 'There's actually nothing that constrains me now if I want to achieve something then its down to me there's no external constraints, that's a good thing. In the past there was reasons for non-achievement. We now say we're going to achieve and

it's in my hands and we'll do it. We've got so many options and that really excites me. Before as an Underground Manager I didn't really feel like a real manager because there were so many constraints now they have been lifted ... me and another underground manager (there were six of us) found it very frustrating to the extent that we were almost breaking away from the other four because we wanted to get on and achieve. That to me is one of the most exciting things about now. I'm really enjoying this now, I'm really willing this to happen for those guys out there as well'.

Clearly, CoastElectric (T3) is different from CoastElectric (T1), indeed what is striking is how in a short period of time, one regime of knowledge has been displaced by another; the conditions of knowing had changed radically. The two periods are clear manifestation of two very different regimes of knowledge, namely that of engineering and that of new managerialism. Given the exogenous political context in which the organization was located, characterised by the ascendancy of the New Right, the celebration of the enterprise culture and the dismantling of the state, it is perhaps not surprising that there was a questioning of professional engineering. While the fall from grace of the regime of engineering is interesting, the practicalities of the organization demand that technical tasks be carried out in order to ensure the very running of the organization (imagine an electricity company that was unable to supply electricity). In philosophical terms, the regime of new managerialism had established a supremacy over the pre-existing regime of engineering. In practical terms, engineering knowledge had become 'subjugated', submerged in an organization as the 'profession that dare not speak its name'.

The process of the transformation was chronicled in the previous chapter Without repeating the arguments, it is important to note that the philosophical supremacy of the regime of new managerialism was extended to the practical running of the organization through the implementation of a management of knowledge programme: Job Rethink. The management of knowledge initiative, Job Rethink, which included as a central pillar 'rule based engineering', sought to encode (see Dyerson & Mueller, 1999) the expertise of the cadre of professional engineers (cut from 600 engineers to 200, the remaining 200 now acting as managers). The corollary of this was to enable engineering tasks to be carried out by 'empowered team members', through following the instructions of a checklist. It was described by a senior manager in the following terms:

> 'Professional engineering skill is being turned into a rule based technique. This is like the Automobile Association experience.... Where the recovery man comes and basically has a checklist. Is the battery flat? Is it the sparkplugs? If there is a real problem he loads the car up and takes it away. I can deskill what was done by clever people'.

The rule based engineering programme worked on the assumption that knowledge was codifiable, storeable and transferable (see Alvesson, 1998). Consequently, management consultants were able

to 'mine' and 'drill' for knowledge within CoastElectric, the results being an encoded databank that was translated into instructions for semi-skilled workers.

In terms of making sense of this case, I propose that the regime of engineering became locked into a violent hierarchy with the regime of new managerialism, which inter alia, led to the latter defining the requirements of the former (c.f. Said, 1979; Bauman, 1987) i.e. one senior manager explained during the Rule Based Engineering initiative:

> 'Currently I have engineers to check work. I don't need these checks as a worker is not going to work on a live line as it would kill him. He doesn't need an Engineer to tell him that. It is against TQM principles, people need to be empowered'.

Such a statement in CoastElectric (T1) would have been considered nonsensical, whereas within the regime of new managerialism it made sense, thus is emblematic of the changed conditions of knowing.

The remaining question germane to my treatment of knowledge is to examine the experience of translating Rule Based Engineering into action, were there the structural poses within CoastElectric's (T3) repertoire to allow the electricity distribution network to continue working? This question was the subject of considerable conjecture, as we have seen in chapters above. There was, as we have seen, a fundamental disagreement between the two regimes. The argument from within the domain of engineering is summarised in a quote from a CoastElectric engineer:

> 'Rule Based Engineering is fine when things are going right but not when things are going badly, this is when you need experience'.

Another engineer expanded on this theme, arguing:

> 'Only so many rules can be written, eventually engineering judgments based on technical knowledge need to be made. These can only be made by engineers. Non-engineers tend not to know the issues that are important in engineering matters let alone being able to make judgments'.

Not surprisingly such arguments were dismissed from within the regime of new managerialism, with a very different view of the possibilities of Rule Based Engineering being held. So what a year after the implementation of Job Rethink was the experience within the organization? This is a fundamental question, for it is on this that the whole of the regime of new managerialism – in either its techno or DIY form - as a viable mode of organizing rests. So as we saw that in chapter 11, that there had been a loss of 'engineering knowledge' as the engineers quite literally 'went out the door'. The Director of Operations, however, and not surprisingly represented the initiative as being a success. For instance he argued:

'From an engineering point of view this (Rule Based Engineering) has been a big success. Another big thing of Rule Based Engineering is to take the people that could operate and work the switching systems, to bring that down to a lower level within the organisation. Historically it was engineers most of whom would have been Degrees. I've now taken it down to the craftsmen level the technicians now are people that were once linesmen, and joiners, and its been successful'.

This representation suggests that the Regime of Engineering had in fact constituted little more than a structure of domination that legitimated itself through recourse to an arcane body of Mode 1 knowledge. Was the implementation of Job Rethink the vindication of new managerialism as a teleologically superior 'mode of organizing' to the regime of engineering ? Of course, this is the whole tenor of the new managerialist argument. If I return to the ideas presented in chapter three, the new managerialists appear to have been vindicated in terms of pursuing efficiency in the innovation-efficiency dilemma. It would of course be mistaken, in view of the discussion on organizational repertoires, to take the exhortations of a Director of Operations at face value. In his favour, the organization in a year following implementation had not fallen into entropy. Yet mindful of my discussions on the repertoire, temporally the new regime was still in its infancy. Put in different terms, other than in the minds of the new managerialists, it still remained unproven. The suggestion, however, that rule based engineering would be unable to cope with difficult situations (Clark & Staunton's 1989, extraordinary events), was dismissed by a senior manager, who argued:

'If there is something out of the ordinary I will do something out of the ordinary. That's the way I look at it. I are more focused on what I need to achieve now. Whereas in the past I would go to a problem, find where it was and stay there until it was fixed, I are actually prioritising, what are the issues?'

The belief in personal agency in the quote above should immediately alert suspicion to what can be taken as little more than heroic assumptions. What it would seem is that the new organization is performative in the sense that it works without recourse to Mode 1 knowledge. In its 'everyday' operating environment the regime of new managerialism appeared to function adequately. In the absence of a periodic crisis that on occasion affects the CoastElectric area, it is impossible to legislate on the ability of the organization's repertoire to cope with a crisis. That said, it is possible to offer an interpretation, for instance a Distribution Manager argued:

'It (the organization) has changed radically, too many risks are being taken in the name of economy/efficiency i.e. too many rapid changes in staffing levels and new procedures. Team working has been introduced and experienced/responsible staff lost without regard to the vacuum left'.

This points to the 'cutting of corners', the question being whether such expediencies are justifiable, or whether they are merely a deferral of problems to the future. While:

'In the engineering business the culture has become one of firefighting. With the exception of a few sections, all people I know feel that they are unable to do their jobs properly because of time pressures. The company has become more customer orientated but this is inherently time consuming. What appeared as a laid back attitude to work has changed to that of continual fire-fighting for everyone I know, including myself'.

This highlights an organization 'under pressure' to maintain its basic operating cycle. This seriously questions the ability of the organization to respond, as it did in 1990, to an operational crisis. Indeed, it would seem that an operation sword of Damocles was waiting to strike in the form of a storm or the like.

13:5   Discussion: The Strange Death of the Professional Engineer

In this case an electricity company has recast itself as a 'customer service' company. I have termed the change as a shift from a regime of engineering to that of new managerialism. Central to the regime of knowledge approach that I am developing is the notion that power/knowledge/discourse and practice are interwoven. In this case it is argued that far from being apolitical, the assumptions that underpin the changes in the work organization, such as TQM, BPR or KM, were essential in terms of enabling the shift from one regime of knowledge to another. Far from being innocuous, KM and associated programmes have potentially far-reaching intended and unintended consequences for organizations and occupational groupings alike. In six short years CoastElectric was unrecognisable: the regime of engineering had been displaced by that of managerialism. There had been an act of creative destruction.

Such a change was enabled by a management of knowledge programme (Job Rethink) that sought, inter alia, to objectify and demystify the praxis of the professional engineer. The codification of the tasks of the professional engineer were to become enshrined in the Rule Based Engineering initiative. Its subsequent utilisation by semi-autonomous teams was significant for two prime reasons: first, it marked a total rethink in the mode of work organization operated by CoastElectric; second, it highlighted the shift of power relations away from the cadre of professional engineers. These two points are of course interrelated, with the espousal and subsequent adoption of Rule Based Engineering being symptomatic of a shift of the regime of knowledge within the organization. In terms of explicating the manifest differences that existed between CoastElectric (t1) and CoastElectric (t3), it is worth contrasting the dominant meaning that operated in the organization at different time periods.

In 1990 notions of maintaining the electricity distribution network were of central importance to the organization, engineers as a professional group were seen to be so central to this endeavour. There was a syncretic treatment of them and the network, and to question this would in the contemporary

context of the organization have been considered a profanity. In short, in terms of speech acts, to have claimed that the organization did not require engineers would have been considered an absurdity and therefore was unsayable. It seemed commonsensical and the 'natural state of affairs' that the objectives of the organization centred on maintaining the electricity distribution network and following from this that professional engineers were essential to achieving this end.

Six years later, the dominant code of meaning had changed within the organization to such an extent that not only were engineers' expendable, but they also constituted an anachronism: 'old CoastElectric'. The process of this change is described elsewhere, although it is important to note that in the privatised era there were a number of key turning points which it is argued are central to understanding the collapse of the regime of engineering. The first of these was marked at the time of privatisation when it was decided that the organization 'had to change'. The second was linked with the TQM programme, although it was to prove to be underwhelming in achieving its espoused aims, it asked fundamental questions of the organization and was eventually to lead to the formulation of Job Rethink. The third and arguably most significant change was the takeover of the organization by FedCo, bringing with them an articulated managerialist agenda combined with an American sense of temporal reckoning.

The power of meaning in CoastElectric was one in which the customer was elevated as being of pivotal importance. The corollary of this was that this established different requirements for the organization, with the regime of engineering being displaced by the regime of new managerialism. That such a change happened, in such a short period of time, with so little concerted resistance is worthy of note. The Rule Based Engineering initiative, which so closely resembles contemporary Knowledge Management programmes, directly enabled this shift in the regime of knowledge. The absence of the Rule Based Engineering initiative would have seriously curtailed the possibility of removing the professional engineer from the organization and with it the centrality that engineering enjoyed throughout the organization's history. Rule Based Engineering, through its alleged capacity of being able to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, had the consequence of leading to the subjugation engineering knowledge, subsuming it into one of a number of objectives to be achieved by autonomous teams. This insight, the very demonstration of the far reaching effects of the initiative highlight the absurdity of treating Knowledge Management as an initiative that is in some way neutral or apolitical. Instead it demonstrates that power is at the heart of KM, in this case enabling the destruction and replacement of one entrenched regime of knowledge by another.

An important finding of this thesis is that while KM's focus on the organization's existing knowledge base can only be achieved – i.e. make sense and be seen as politically legitimate - through changes in the broader regime of knowledge. Central to my present thinking on regimes of knowledge is the proposition that organizations constitute knowledge systems which privilege

particular forms of knowledge, based on a transcendental idea of the raison d'être of the organization. In turn, the centrality of a particular form knowledge - the power of meaning – is legitimated through the power of the system i.e. a complex means of performance measures and organizational processes. This also manifests itself in the repertoire of the organization i.e. its ability to carry out particular tasks. In my example of CoastElectric I have suggested that CoastElectric (t1) was characterised by a repertoire that was rich in its ability it deal with engineering problems. Moreover I have argued that this 'knowledge' was largely 'embodied' in the professional engineer – as such the expertise was a dynamic interaction between certified 'explicit' knowledge and the tacit knowledge produced through experience. In contrast, CoastElectric (t3) possessed a repertoire that was far more limited in its engineering capability, something that was evident even in routine conditions. During the data collection period, the ability of the new repertoire to deal with 'extraordinary' circumstances was not tested, but questions were raised, as we saw above, as to whether a 'sword of Damocles' was poised, ready to strike the organization. Yet while the physicality and materiality of a storm cannot be ignored, there are nonetheless social constructions around an event. Whereas it was only in unusual circumstances, perhaps once in a decade, that CoastElectric engineers were brought to the attention it was perhaps the only time that the General Public were made aware of the State Professionals working to maintain the network, 'keeping the electric on'. While under the regime of engineering, the engineering repertoire was undoubtedly rich and robust, as we have seen the organization was inward looking and hermetically sealed. In contrast, under the regime of New Managerialism the organization quickly developed a relatively sophisticated public relations operation, which enabled it to socially construct the organization's performance through such means as customer satisfaction ratings and careful management of the media. As Tex Nicholls, the chief executive, was a former TV newscaster and Public Relations Executive, this should come as little surprise. Unfortunately, this thesis did not explore the means through which this capability in the repertoire was developed. So a manifestation of the difference between T1 and T3 was that under T3 – the regime of new managerialism – there were more likely to be organizational breakdowns and difficulties. Yet these would be mitigated through concentrating the attention of the public on how hard CoastElectric were working in customer interests: the lights might be off, but customers will get a glossy brochure telling them how hard the CoastElectric teams are working to help them! This process of social construction, the rhetoric intensive, front stage 'presentation of self', was therefore vital to compensating for the dislocation of much of the engineering capability.

It was the construction, or rather the translation of an existing PR system from the United States, that arguably constituted the 'innovation' that marked T3 from T1. In other respects, it was an instance of exnovation – the destruction of existing practices – that came to the fore. Clark's (1996) question of how do we know that change has taken place is an important one. In this instance, from the vantage point of T3, it is beyond doubt that change had taken place: the ruling cadre had been

ablated; the key knowledge agents had been decoupled from their expertise, or at least part of it, and jettisoned. In this instance, the events had led to changes in the tasks. What is notable is the dramatic collapse in the cadre of engineering. While the processes of this were explored in the chapters above, it is manifestly clear that this case study is quite markedly different from much of the extant and on-going work. It is far more resonant with the futurology of Aronowitz (1999), Broadbent et al (1997), than the on-going contributions of Cooper et al (1996), Reed (1996; 1999) or Ackroyd (1996).

13:6   Conclusion

This thesis has introduced the 'regime of knowledge' as a lens through which to study the evolving interactions between organizations and forms of knowledge. In the analysis, a case has been made for viewing organization and its structural repertoire as a joint production of the power of the system and the power of meaning. In my study, a complex process of organization change has been interpreted in terms of a regime shift from that of engineering to a new managerialism. Central this change process was the adoption of what can be seen as a prototypical 'KM' initiative, the rule-based engineering programme. This programme was ostensibly aimed at the conversion of tacit into explicit forms of knowledge. However, by locating it within the wider context of changing regimes, I see its effects less as *exploiting* knowledge than as *constituting* knowledge within the Coast Electric organization. Thus, what is important about the codification of engineering expertise is not the explicit attempt to commodify or blackbox technology, but the implicit sublimation of such expertise into a new order in which new managerialist constructions of knowledge and performance are key. In this perspective then, the shift between different regimes was facilitated through a KM practice that is ineluctably intertwined with the unfolding of organizational power relations.

This analysis of the organizational changes at Coast Electric is distinctive in that it stresses the strategic centrality of the operative regime of knowledge. More than a cultural or discursive shift, the development of the new managerialist regime inexorably manifested itself in the repertoire of the organization. Ironically, one implication of my analysis is actually to reinforce one of the key tenets of the mainstream literature on Knowledge Management – namely, that organizational knowledge is critical to performance. However, my account also suggests that this performative centrality is only secured through important changes in what I have broadly termed the 'conditions of knowing' within an organization. In other words, what I have described is not Knowledge Management on its own terms – i.e. a universal management process – but as something much more precarious; in short, as a critical moment in processes of organizational change which privilege particular forms of knowledge.

This account therefore serves to contextualize the current debate on KM by challenging the view of knowledge as an endogenous resource. My case has suggested that both the conditions under which KM may be effectively implemented and the means by which it empowers particular effects are not amenable to the technicist 'conversions' which are the focal point of the existing literature. In CoastElectric, the conscious management of knowledge as an organizational resource was only achieved through a seismic change in the institutional and organizational context – a change capable of disembedding the long-established professional regime. Likewise, the effects of KM could only be produced and sustained through political rather than technical interventions which re-defined and re-appropriated knowledge within a 'customer-driven' system and ideology. In conclusion, this thesis has sought to relocate knowledge within the social context and political economy of organizations. This thesis has demonstrated the embeddedness of knowledge within social relations – i.e. specific conditions of knowing.

Chapter 14: Conclusions and Future Directions

This thesis has attempted to grapple with the complex problematic that is organizational change. Following a comprehensive overview of the relevant theoretical perspectives, I have introduced a detailed empirical investigation of CoastElectric. A feature of this research has been to introduce a bricolage of diverse theoretical perspectives, which I have argued have analytical purchase in terms of their capacity to explain the dynamics of organizational change within CoastElectric. Inevitably, I have made choices about the concepts brought to bear on this thesis. Some colleagues, for instance, have pointed out that I have downplayed the importance of gender. Others have argued that I have not paid enough attention to the vicissitudes of class relations within this thesis. Mea culpa: I would acknowledge these points and add that within this thesis, there are many 'roads not travelled'.

The crux of any thesis rests of course on its claim, however slight, as a contribution to knowledge. In terms of making the case for this thesis, I want to commence by making two secondary claims to the advancement of knowledge. The first is in terms of its empirical contribution. To my knowledge, this is the only rich, multi-dimensioned, empirical study of an UK Regional Electricity Company (REC) undergoing organizational change. To this end, the empirical acts to document the events through the voices of the actors involved in the organization. As such, it is my intention to make available to the public domain, the full narrative, from which this thesis draws in order to enable future researchers to be able to engage with the empirical material. It is an account that will hopefully illuminate what a REC was like and the challenges that were faced.

The rich empirical material presented in this thesis leads to the second contribution of this thesis: that is of contributing to extant understandings of the data gathering process. Therefore, I go to great lengths to try to describe and make sense of opening up access in an organization. Furthermore, this thesis attests to the importance of managing the research process. This is especially so in the highly charged, political environment of an organization undergoing dramatic change. The detail with which I described the process contains within it important insights for the conduct of doctoral research: rather than being an after thought, I argue that such matters should be at the heart of a research strategy. Moving to the more substantive, this thesis has attempted, through the use of a single case study, to tackle organizational change in a holistic fashion. For the purposes of the creation of an analytically structured narrative this necessitated disaggregating the analysis into distinct themes. It is clear nonetheless that each theme enjoys a close elective affinity with the other concerns researched in this thesis. I will now elaborate what I take to be the key contributions under each analytical theme.

14:1   Making Sense of Strategic Decision Making

I argue that my coverage of strategic decision-making has three main contributions to make to the extant literature. These are concerned with the issues of zones of maneouvre, fashion and the relations between consultants and managers in the strategy making process. I will now summarise the key contributions in turn. As a starting part this thesis is illustrative of the way in which, contrary to the exhortations of some strategists, strategy should not be regarded as a trans-historical concept. Prior to the privatization of the Electricity Supply Industry, with the concomitant creation of the Regional Electricity Companies, there had been little call for 'strategy'. Privatisation heralded a new epoch, not least because the epistemological space for strategy (Knights & Morgan, 1995) was opened up. In short, the decision making elites of the privatized Regional Electricity Companies were now expected to formulate missions, and to have strategies (Wilson, 1992). In CoastElectric's case, strategy became an important object of discourse between November 1990 and September 1995. Interrestingly, in this short period of strategizing, the 'managerial meditations' were such that they very much acted as a microcosm for the last thirty years of strategy discussion. In the first instance, CoastElectric romanced the market – engaging in what Clark (2000) has described as corporate fantasies. In a show of corporate virility, the newly privatized utility proposed to go boldly into unregulated markets to compensate for the 'iron cage' that Professor Littlechild was allegedly constructing in the Electricity Supply Industry. The excitement that accompanied the first throes of privatization was perhaps understandable given the 'paralytic' nature of the organization in the past, at least in relation to corporate decision-making. That there was such a sharp volte-face in the strategy making, which saw CoastElectric go from 'romancing the market' to entrenching around a narrowly defined business is illustrative of some of the more fantastical elements of some 'market led' strategies. Moreover, it acts as a sharp reminder that organizations exist within contexts that place institutional, temporal and capability constraints on a firm: that is they operate within zones of maneouvre.

The second contribution of this thesis as related to decision making is in terms of addressing the so-called 'fashion' debate. In contrast to many contemporary applications of the fashion discussion, this chapter has attempted to articulate a corporate fashion thesis that incorporated notion of managers as *consumers*.   At this point, in my view, it is necessary to construct a robust understanding of corporate consumerism in order to appreciate fully the nature of contemporary organization/consultant relationships. It is my contention, that on the basis of the data presented, managers should be considered as the potential consumers of 'new managerialist packages': with the content of the packages being secondary to the spectacle of the image attached to such a package. The image of 'world class' organizations seems to mesmerize and seduce managers into embarking on particular managerialist programmes. Managers thus demonstrate to the corporate world their virility (and by association that of the organization), contructing their identity as

managers, and the identity of organizations, through a pastiche of images. Thiis process was particularly marked in the case of CoastElectric, whereby a system of objects was assembled as a means of demonstrating that the organization was at the 'cutting edge'. The construction of the organization's identity, by way of cultural signs, functioned as a device through which CoastElectric could position itself in relation to external agents such as City analysts and the Electricity Regulator, OFFER. City analysts, in particular, were highly skeptical of the ability of the executives of Regional Electricity Companies in general to be able to navigate their way successfully through the privatization process. This doubt, combined with the epochal change in the industry, undoubtedly heightened the need for CoastElectric to build a new 'private sector' identity through the phantasmagoric pastiche of imagery.

The third contribution as related to decision making is in terms of attempting to illuminate further relations between consultants and managers in the strategy making process. The analysis of consultants presented in this thesis is distinctive in so far as it has attempted to inject a sense of temporality into the analysis of the relations between consultants and managers in organizations. Furthermore, it has sought to make sense of the consultancy-manager relationship through recourse to notions of cultural capital, whereby management consultants have possessed a relative richness in new managerialist cultural capital. The corollary of this relative richness has been the ability to act as a cultural intermediary to corporations, such as CoastElectric, especially in terms of proffering advice on new manaerialist discourses. The argument therefore is that the relationship between consultant and corporation may not be as straightforward as has been represented in some widely cited dyadic, static accounts. The thesis demonstrates, as least as far as CoastElectric is concerned, that relations commenced with a confirmation of the consultant as cultural intermediary. This, however, was soon to change, with management consultancies being bypassed in favour of in-house decision making which nonetheless owed a heavy debt to the discourse of managerialism. My argument is that this can be made sense of through the enhancement of new managerialist cultural capital within the organization. Put simply, the organization no longer required the services of management consultant as cultural intermediaries: they were able to access the canon of new managerialism at their own volition. Consultants were to remain an enduring part of the corporate landscape, but their role was to change significantly: they were to take on the mantle off an'apparatchik' to the senior management within CoastElectric. In my view, therefore, one of the main contributions of the coverage of decision making and of the thesis as a whole, is to introduce notions of cultural capital. Drawn from Bourdieu (1984), the notion of cultural capital has, I believe, a great deal of purchase in terms of attempting to understand further the relations between management, consultants and the diffusion of new managerial discourse. Moreover, I would argue that a cultural capital perspective is a rich vantage point from which to seek to try and make sense of the complex interactions between management, consultants and new managerial ideas.

14:2   Processes of Organizational Change.

The case study of CoastElectric illustrates a grand sweep of organizational change within a 6 year period. I think it helps contribute to extant conceptualizations of an *organization in* action: pregnant with the dynamics and caprice of organizational change. I think the prime contribution of the analysis of the process of change is to highlight and document the emergent contests at play within the organization. For instance, the thesis identified a contest between an emergent techno-managerialism and that of engineering, the pre-existing hegemonic discourse. It demonstrated the way in which techno-managerialists emerged as a power base, particularly through the TQM structure. Further, it highlighted the way in which TQM should be understood less as a technique and more as a symbol of modernization. As a symbol it acted as the first dividing practice within the organization. That is, it opened up a binary opposition between those that were for and those that were against organizational change. While in the early stages, there was room for competing discourses, or at least a significant amount of pluralism, this was soon to change. Significantly, the TQM nomenclature, by virtue of Marsh being independent, quickly started to function as a 'shadow' organizational structure. It was less an informal organization, and more, by virtue of its official status, an alternative to the pre-existing organization. The TQM shadow structure, and the process of implementing TQM, served as a means of surveillance on the population of CoastElectric. This was not surveillance in a day-to-day, minute assessment of someone's activities. Instead, through specific instances, managers would become labeled a *modernizer* or a *blockage*. This was a highly significant dividing practice.

The discourse of techno-managerialism in essence was about problematizing the status quo: thus opening up a violent hierarchy between itself and the discourse of engineering. This was legitimated through using tropes that among other things has as their theme the inevitability of change. The adoption of externally legitimated best practices was a core principle of Techno-managerialism. Techno-managerialism demanded the acceptance of fashionable programmes such as Quality Management and Job Rethink. This 'articulation of external knowledge' was therefore fundamental to the praxis and underlying rationale of the techno-managerialists.

The techno-managerialist project was a useful illustration of the technologies through which staff became techno-managerialists. The TQM route, I have mentioned, but in addition, through partner coaching there was the opportunity for managers to confess their sins and reconstitute themselves through the discourse of new managerialism. In this sense, and following Townley (1994), such techniques are not innocuous, but rather they have important power effects. This thesis serves as further confirmation of the Foucauldian pre-occupation with technologies of power. Moreover, it demonstrates the way in which, broadly speaking, subjectivities can be constructed as objects of discourse. This does not, of course, have to take place within the space of a carceral, total

institution: but rather, this study demonstrates that such techniques are immanent to liberal democracy. The effects of a technology of power were particularly striking in the case of the Assessment Centre. A new organization, through Job Rethink, had been 'imagined'. The constitution of employees as subjects was particularly pronounced in the case of engineers. Techno-managerialism offered engineers an alternative discourse through which they could constitute their identity. It is significant that the attack on engineers was carried as much from within as from outwith. Thus the Latourian blackbox of professional mystique was less prised open and more imploded from within.

Crucial to the deconstruction, and the unraveling of the 'engineer' within CoastElectric was the part played by senior management and by the engineers themselves. Many of the cadre of senior management, and that of engineers, constituted themselves through the discourse of new managerialism and actively promoted the changes. In trying to assess whether the experience within CoastElectric was inevitable, it is useful to reflect back upon the broader UK societal experience of engineers, and the tensions that exist between profit making and a profession. My argument is that the power exercised through the new managerialist change initiatives led inexorably to the reconstitution of the organization, and the marginalisation of the engineer. The implementation of new managerialist initiatives were to actively question and challenge the role of engineering. The engineers were unable to mount an effective resistance because as a group they were divided, and their representative body lacked sufficient prescience regarding the potential consequences of the managerialist initiatives/ practices being implemented within the organization. Engineers simply failed to assert the case for having a 'strong, engineering profession', and instead allowed the discourse of managerialism to shape the organization and to be represented as a teleological progession towards a superior organization. The formidable alliance of groups promoting organizational change within CoastElectric's environment, however, calls into question what more effective resistance could actually have achieved.

In trying to explain this unraveling of the professional engineer, it is important to consider the relations of power within the organization, for as Townley (1994:1) argues the 'experience of work is located in, and constituted by, power relations'. In analysing the underlytling relations of power the role of the City with its rapacious fetish for 'short term' profits, which as Smith & Whalley (1995) have argued 'renders engineering always vulnerable', is undoubtedly important. Similarly the role of the Regulator in shaping CoastElectric's operational arena through cost reductions and Guaranteed Standards is also evidently of critical significance. These factors played a considerable role in persuading decision makers within CoastElectric that the organization had to change.

The takeover of the organization was clearly a major, if not the major, episode in the process of organizational change. Analytically, the takeover was useful, for if nothing else it drew us away

from Foucauldian inspired 'disciplinary' concerns towards an appreciation of the symbolic violence, pace Bourdieu (1986), that constitutes a part of organizational life. The takeover was also a major epiphany, for the removal of some of the techno-managerialist backers, and their power structure, gave rise to a backlash against techno-managerialism – but from a new form of managerialism - that of DIY managerialism. Whereas the techno-managerialists interpret and advocate externally-known management tools and techniques, such as Quality Management, and want to see them implemented in a more or less undiluted form as in a 'blackbox'. The techno-managerialists were changing the structure towards a flatter, more team based design. The more introspective, DIY managerialists were partly taking their starting point from a lack of implementation of 'talk', which is in fact an illustration of the 'schizoid state' described by Cooper et al (1996). The DIY managerialists thus emerged as a, formerly hidden, 'force' partly because of the increasingly apparent contradiction between interpretation and actual structure. In reaction, the techno-managerialists reserved derision for the DIY managerialists, as they had for professional engineering. The emergence of DIY managerialism can partly be seen as a reaction to the apparent contradictions in techno-managerialism, especially in work processes lagging behind a change in rhetoric.

The 'DIY managerialists' do not articulate external knowledge; instead they rely on home-spun wisdom, firmly embedded in the organizationally-defined context of what is possible, this is coupled with a strong inclination for getting things done. This is reminiscent of critiques by Clegg & Palmer (1996) of karaoke managerialism, a signification of the more general fetishization of the heroic 'leader'. The emergence of a distinct grouping heightens our sense of process, in the sense that the DIY managerialists were in effect created by the techno-managerialists – another unintended consequence. Following the creative destruction of the cadre of engineers, combined with the foreshortening of the implementation time-scale of the Job Rethink programme, there was no longer a robust discourse of engineering: it's history had collapsed. A new binarism had opened up, as has been explained, that of techno-managerialism versus DIY managerialism. In short, following the work of Said (1978) and Derrida (1978), what is apparent is that in a changing environment there is a tendency for one discourse to challenge, suppress and subjugate other discourses. What was in play in the organization was a contestation, presided over by the new American management, between two discourses – two world-views. Both discourses, confident of themselves, and dismissive of the other, were in competition. They were both attempting to demonstrate the veracity and superiority of their respective world-view. That within months of the implementation of Job Rethink, the two regions could have been considered to be like different companies is a testament to the differences immanent to the two managerialisms. The role of the American management within this process is interesting, for they encouraged both 'sides', apparently genuinely interested in the outcome of the clash between the two groups. Clearly, at a micro-political level the clash between different discourses can play out differentially. The pressures

emanating from the changing institutional context provided substantial legitimacy for the techno-managerialist approach. Partly, however, due to the changes inn the organizational context, i.e. the take-over by FedCo, institutional pressures towards the acceptance of fashionable, packaged programmes became gradually weaker: expectations were no longer enforced. Non-isomorphic, non fashion following 'DIY managerialists' were entering the scene, proposing more idiosyncratic, more action-biased answers.

14:3   Programmed Change Initiatives: A Critique

The third theme of this thesis is a detailed exploration of programmed change initiatives: in this case TQM and Job Rethink. The two initiatives that were implemented both promised a great deal. That said, the study demonstrated the difficulties associated with attempting to embed rhetoric intensive packages into organizations. Therefore in the case of the TQM programme it was shown how in the practicalities of implementation, much of this enthusiasm foundered on the rocks of frustration. The frustrations included issues of leadership, culture and the slowness of the results. The study also highlighted the unintended consequences of TQM: these included, creating an extra bureaucracy; opening up a process that would lead to the demise of many of her interlocutors; the frustrations associated with TQM marked the genesis of a faction of managerialists that were anti-management theory.; TQM problematized the reputation of Barry Reed, as he was so closely associated with the initiative; it led to a frustration with incrementalism that was to give birth to the Job Rethink proposals.

In contrast, Job rethink can, I have argued, be considered to be a success in so far that it avoided the doomsday scenario that many engineers had been promulgating during the negotiation. In this sense, the knowledge contained within Job Rethink can be regarded as 'performative': in that in the context of application 'it worked'. Yet it is also clear that much of the expertise in the organization was physically embodied in the 'knowing subject' i.e. the professional engineer. As such it is not difficult to imagine a scenario, or a virtual history, where circumstances might (have) prove (d) to be very different. In conclusion, therefore, while the engineering repertoire was much weakened, both in terms of its scope and capability, 'the electric stayed on'. The case of CoastElectric while it was not labeled 'knowledge management', it nonetheless presents an illuminating example of a corporation's attempt to manage knowledge.

14:4   Regimes of Knowledge

The final contribution of the thesis is to attempt to construct a framework, which I will term a 'regime of knowledge', whereby power/knowledge/discourse and practice can be viewed as interwoven. The regime of knowledge offers an attempt to integrate notions of the power of

meaning and the power of the system. Therefore, it is argued that far from being apolitical, the assumptions that underpin the changes in the work organization, such as TQM, BPR or KM, were essential in terms of enabling the shift from one regime of knowledge to another. Far from being innocuous, programmes such as Job Rethink have potentially far reaching intended and unintended consequences for organizations and occupational groupings alike. In six short years CoastElectric was unrecognizable: the regime of knowledge had been displaced by that of new managerialism. There had been an act of creative destruction.

Such a change was enabled by a management of knowledge programme (Job Rethink) that sought to objectify and demystify the praxis of the professional engineer. The codification of the tasks of the professional engineer were to become enshrined in the Rule Based Engineering initiative. Its subsequent utilization by semi-autonomous teams was significant for two prime reasons: first, it marked a total rethink in the mode of work organization operated by CoastElectric; second, it highlighted the shift of power relations away from the cadre of professional engineers. These two points are of course interrelated, with the espousal and subsequent adoption of Rule Based Engineering being symptomatic of a shift of the regime of knowledge within the organization. This shift is shown in the comparison between CoastElectric in 1990 and in 1997.

In 1990, notions of maintaining the electricity distribution network were of central importance to the organization, engineers as a professional group were seen to be so central to this endeavour. There was a syncretic treatment of them and the network, and to question this in the contemporary context of the organization would have been considered a profanity. In short, in terms of speech acts, to have claimed that the organization did not require engineers would have considered an absurdity and therefore was unsayable. It seemed commonsensical and the 'natural state of affairs' that the objectives of the organization centred on maintaining the electricity distribution network and following from this that professional engineers were essential to achieving this end.

Six years later, the dominant code of meaning had changed within the organization to such an extent that not only were the engineers' expendable, but they also constituted an anachronism: 'old CoastElectric'. The power of meaning in CoastElectric was one in which the customer was elevated as being of pivotal importance. The corollary of this was that it established different requirements for the organization, with the regime of engineering being displaced by the regime of new managerialism. That such a change happened, in such a short period of time, with so little concerted resistance is worthy of note. The Rule Based Engineering initiative, which so closely resembles contemporary Knowledge Management programmes, directly enabled the shift in the regime of knowledge. The absence of the Rule Based Engineeritg initiative would have seriously curtailed the possibility of removing the professional engineer from the organization and with it the centrality that engineering had enjoyed throughout the organization's history. Rule Based engineering,

through its alleged capacity of being able to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, had the consequence of leading to the subjugation of engineering knowledge, subsuming it into one of a number of objectives to be achieved by autonomous teams. This insight, the very demonstration of the far reaching effects of the initiative, highlight the absurdity of treating Knowledge Management as an initiative that is in some way neutral or apolitical. Instead it demonstrates that power is at the heart of KM, in this case enabling the destruction and replacement of one entrenched regime of knowledge by another.

A contribution of this thesis is through the development of a framework through which to make sensse of such changes. The thesis demonstrates that organizations constitute knowledge systems that privilege particular particular forms of knowledge, based on a transcendental ideea of the raison d'etre of the organization. In turn, the centrality of a particular form of knowledge – the power of meaning – is legitimated through the power of the system i.e. a complex means of performance measures and organizational processes. This also manifests itself in the repertoire of the organization i.e. its ability to carry out particular tasks. In my study of CoastElectric I have suggested that CoastElectric (t1) was characterized by a repertoire that was rich in its ability to deal with engineering problems. Moreover I have argued that this 'knowledge' was largely 'embodied' in the professional engineer – as such the expertise was a dynamic interaction between certified 'explicit' knowledge and the tacit knowledge produced through experience. In contrast, CoastElectric (t3) possessed a repertoire that was far more limited in its engineering capability, something that was evident even in routine conditions. Whereas it was only in unusual circumstances, perhaps once in a decade, when there was a heavy storm, that CoastElectric engineers were in the media. It was a rarity therefore that the General Public were made aware that State Professionals were working to maintain the electricity distribution network, 'keeping the electric on'. While under the regime of engineering, the engineering repertoire was undoubtedly rich and robust, as we have seen the organization was inward looking and hermetically sealed. In contrast, under the regime of New Managerialism the organization quickly developed a relatively sophisticated operation, which enabled it to socially construct the organization's performance through such means as customer satisfaction ratings and the careful management of the media. It was the construction, or rather the translation of an existing PR system from the United States, that arguably constituted the 'innovation' that marked t3 to t1. In other respects, it was an instance of exnovation – the destruction of existing practices – that came to the fore. In this instance, from the vantage point of T3, it is beyond doubt that change had taken place: the ruling cadre had been ablated; the key knowledge agents had been decoupled from their expertise, or at least part of it, and jettisoned. In this instance, the events had led to changes in the tasks. What is notable is the dramatic collapse of the cadre of professional engineers. The destruction of professional engineering is far more resonant with the futurology of Aronowitz (1999), Broadbent et al (1997), than the on-going contributions of Cooper et al (1996), Ackroyd (1996) or Reed (1999).

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